

Figure 10.1.3.7. Recycling materials

Database: Global Strategies and Solutions

Link type: narrower problems

Network nodes: 36

UIA database: <http://db.uia.org/scripts/sweb.dll/uiaf?DD=ST&DR=S2732>



Certain resources are non-renewable and some renew very slowly. Other materials are not naturally occurring or may be rare. Some materials are damaging to the environment or health if disposed of as waste. Substances needed regularly must over time be used again and again. The cycles which bring the needed materials back for reuse must either occur naturally, like the cycles of water and carbon, or they must be maintained through mindful recycling programs. All countries produce large quantities of agricultural and industrial wastes as well as growing quantities of consumer wastes, none of which are adequately utilized. Common recyclable materials include engine and lubricating oils, plastics, paper, clothes and rags and organic rubbish for use as compost. Any precious, expensive, toxic and hazardous materials are also natural candidates for recycling. For recycling to offer true environmental benefits, whatever the material involved, a number of factors must be taken into account. Most broadly, the resources used to collect, sort and recycle must be less than those used to produce virgin material. In practice this means (1) post-use waste must be easily collected and sorted; (2) the recycling process itself does not require excessive use of resources to produce recycle. The cost of recycling is going up, in part because of labour costs, but the value of recyclables goes up and down.