

Nature's 2016 resource 'budget' already used up, report says

August 4 2016



Greenhouse gas emissions are now the fastest-growing contributor to ecological overshoot, making up 60 percent of humanity's demands on nature, says a report from Global Footprint Network

In just over seven months, humanity has used up a full year's allotment of natural resources such as water, food and clean air—the quickest rate yet, according to a new report.

The point of "overshoot" will officially be reached on Monday, said environmental group Global Footprint Network—five days earlier than last year.

"We continue to grow our ecological debt," said Pascal Canfin of green group WWF, reacting to the annual update.

"From Monday August 8, we will be living on credit because in eight months we would have consumed the natural capital that our planet can renew in a year."

The gloomy milestone is marked every year on what is known as Earth Overshoot Day.

In 1993, the day fell on October 21, in 2003 on September 22 and last year on August 13.

In 1961, according to the network, humankind used only about three-quarters of Earth's annual resource allotment. By the 1970s, economic and population growth sent Earth into annual overshoot.

"This is possible because we emit more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than our oceans and forests can absorb, and we deplete fisheries and harvest forests more quickly than they can reproduce and regrow," the network said in a statement.

To calculate the date for Earth Overshoot Day, the group crunches UN data on thousands of economic sectors such as fisheries, forestry, transport and energy production.

Earth Overshoot Day: living beyond the planet's means

By August 8 we will have used up as many of the Earth's natural resources as the planet can regenerate in the whole of 2016 and created more pollution than it can reabsorb

► Number of Earths needed to sustain human activity



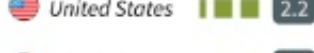
► Overshoot Day happens earlier each year

■ Days before overshoot is reached
■ Days living over budget

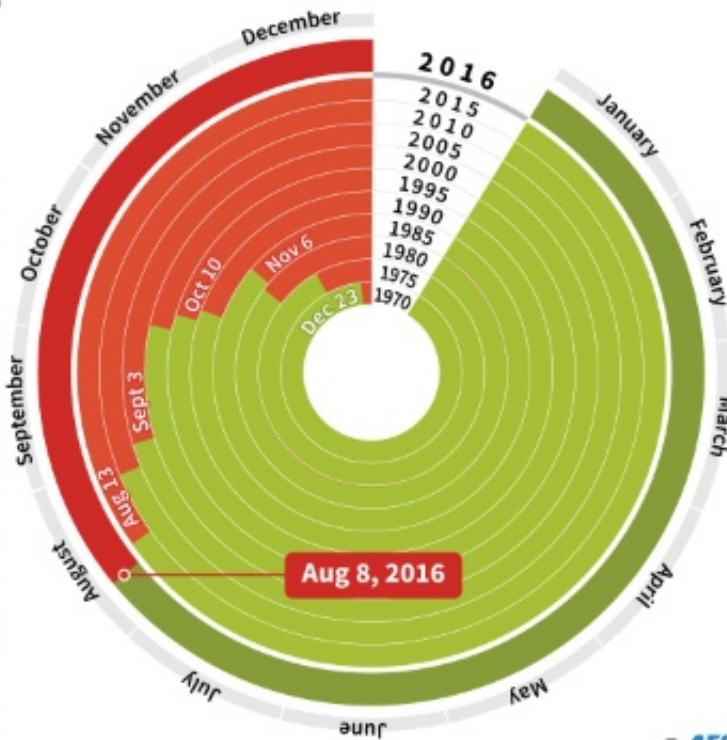
► Using more than they can generate (selected countries)



It would take nearly 9 South Koreas to regenerate what the country consumes in just 12 months



Source: Global Footprint Network



Earth Overshoot Day, the date at which humanity's use of natural resources exceeds what the Earth can regenerate in that given year

Earth-warming [greenhouse gas emissions](#), it said, are now the fastest-growing contributor to ecological overshoot, making up 60 percent of humanity's demands on nature—what is called the ecological "footprint".

According to the UN, the number of people on Earth is forecast to grow from 7.3 billion today to 11.2 billion by the end of the century—piling further pressure on our planet and its finite resources.

But there was some good news, too.

"The rate at which Earth Overshoot Day has moved up on the calendar has slowed to less than one day a year on average over the past five years, compared to an average of three days a year since the overshoot began in the 1970s," said the network.

© 2016 AFP

Citation: Nature's 2016 resource 'budget' already used up, report says (2016, August 4) retrieved 11 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-08-nature-resource.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.