



Essence of Environmental Policy

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Abstract Environmental policy is a commitment to the laws, regulations and policies on environmental issues and sustainability. It may also be regarded as a mission statement for the government or organization when it comes to environmental issues. It is sometimes considered as environmental protection and conservation strategies. Environmental policy making is no longer the exclusive domain of government; private or public organizations assume responsibility for the environment. International environmental policies and agreements are increasingly important in a globalized economy. This paper provides an introduction on environmental policy.

Keywords environment policy, environmental statement, international environment policy

Introduction

The relationship between environmental protection and human rights is natural. People generally support the fundamental human right to enjoy minimum amounts of air and water free of contamination and raise their children in an environment conducive to human life and health. Human rights may provide a mechanism for checking the global environmental excesses.

Environmental policy denotes the commitment of a government or organization to the laws, regulations, and policies on environmental issues such as air, water pollution, energy, toxic substances, and waste management. It is a commitment to communicate your organization's environmental aims and objectives to staff, customers, investors, and other external stakeholders. An environmental policy is usually a one-page written document which outlines a business' aims and principles in relation to managing the environmental impacts of a business. It sets out key aims and principles to train, educate, and inform the employees about environmental issues that may affect their work. An environmental policy does not have to exist in isolation. It may be integrated with other policies such as quality management and corporate social responsibility.

Environmental policy consists two terms: environment and policy. Environment is the earth, our home, where we live, breathe, eat, and engage in other activities. Policy refers to the course of action taken by a government, party, business or individual. Figure 1 shows different components of environmental policy [1].

The standard framework in which economists evaluate environmental policies is cost-benefit analysis. This has resulted in economic-incentive or market-based policy instruments. Environmental policy efficiency can be determined through cost-benefit analysis techniques.





Figure 1: Components of environmental policy [1]

Environmental Policy Issues

Environmental policy involves actions taken by organizations and governmental actions at the federal, state, and local level to protect the environment and conserve natural resources such as fishing, farming and forestry. Environmental policy issues include water and air pollution, chemical and oil spills, smog, land conservation and management, and wildlife protection. Environmentalists have made significant advances since the Earth Summit. Environmental issues are now legitimate concerns for many companies and organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, and the WTO.

The rise of a global environmental movement is perhaps one of the most significant efforts for protecting the global environment, especially in developing countries, the number of environmental nongovernmental organizations addressing international issues has exploded. Nearly every nation has at least one environmental organization that collaborates with their colleagues from other nations. Leading environmental activists such as Chico Mendes and Ken Saro Wiwa have been killed [2].



Figure 2: A typical display of environmental policy [3]



A typical display of environmental policy is illustrated in Figure 2 [3], which shows that Amtek, manufacturer of various connectors, is committed to green policy: energy conservation, waste reduction, resource recycling, and regulatory compliance.

Policy Instruments

Environmental policies usually combine the identification of a goal with some means to achieve that goal, known as “instruments.” Environmental policy instruments are essentially different tools used by governments or organizations to implement their environmental policies. Common environmental policy instruments are [4]: (1) Economic Incentives and Market-based Instruments, (2) Voluntary Agreements, (3) Regulatory Instruments, (4) Mixed Instruments, and (5) International Framework

The choice of policy instrument is a crucial environmental policy decision. There is no universally right choice of instrument for managing a nation’s environment. All policy instruments require monitoring capability, enforcement resolve, and control of corruption. Common Instruments include emissions taxes, tradable emissions allowances, government subsidy reductions for emissions, performance standards, and mandates for the adoption of specific technologies. No single instrument is clearly superior along all the dimensions relevant to policy choice. It is sometimes desirable to design hybrid instruments that combine various features [5].

Sample Environmental Policies

Although there is no standard format or content for writing an environmental policy, it is important that it is done carefully. We present the following three examples of environmental policy [6,7]:

Example 1: Since 1974, ABC Farms has operated a farrow to finish hog farm in ABC County. We at ABC Farms try to produce a consumer-safe product by following quality assurance practices that emphasize good management in the handling and use of animal health products and review of our approach to herd health programs. We strive to protect the environment by minimizing waste within our control and following best management practices. ABC Farms is committed to complying with regulations and is committed to continual improvement of its management practices.

Example 2: ABC Farms Inc. is committed to meeting or exceeding relevant environmental regulations and other environmental related requirements through the continual improvement of its environmental management system and the prevention of pollution. ABC Farms will develop and monitor annual environmental objectives and targets to assist in meeting this commitment.

Example 3:

Company Name is committed to reducing its impact on the environment. We will strive to improve our environmental performance over time and to initiate additional projects and activities that will further reduce our impacts on the environment. Our commitment to the environment extends to our customers, our staff, and the community in which we operate. We are committed to:

- Comply with all applicable environmental regulations;
- Prevent pollution whenever possible;
- Train all of our staff on our environmental program and empower them to contribute and participate;
- Communicate our environmental commitment and efforts to our customers, staff, and our community; and
- Continually improve over time by striving to measure our environmental impacts and by setting goals to reduce these impacts each year.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed/Title: _____

Historical Background

Written policies aimed at environmental protection date back to ancient times. The United Nations founded its Environment Program UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program) in 1972. Since that time, some



environmental agreements (such as Montreal Protocol, the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on Global Climate Change, and the Convention on Biodiversity), have risen under the umbrella of the United Nations. Also since the early 1970s, environmental policies have shifted from end-of-pipe solutions to prevention and control. The first generation of environmental policy was marked by ungainly bureaucracies, high costs, political polarization, and a litigious atmosphere.

Several instruments have been developed to influence the behavior of those who contribute to environmental problems. These include regulation, financial incentives, and environmental reporting and ecolabeling. A guiding principles are the “polluter pays” principle, which makes polluters liable for the costs of environmental damage, and the precautionary principle [8].

Today’s communication networks such as the Internet has also increased the effectiveness of the global environmental community considerably. The Internet helps maintain global networks, sharing information, coordinates international efforts.

Environmental Objectives

An organization may set environmental objectives which are regularly reviewed, to ensure that their actions effectively implement their environmental policy. The following are typical objectives of an organization [9]:

- To take significant environmental aspects and impacts into account throughout our operations, maintaining a functioning environmental management system at each factory.
- To ensure that environmental issues are properly assessed and considered when key decisions are taken about supply chains, processes and new product development.
- To establish and measure the significant environmental impacts of our operations, set targets for performance improvements and monitor progress against those targets in areas including but not limited to energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water usage / quality and waste.
- To use energy and natural resources wisely and efficiently, eliminate and minimize waste, and re-use and recycle where practical.
- To make a real and meaningful contribution to mitigating climate change and global water scarcity, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and water impact across the complete lifecycle of our products and their packaging, reflecting national and international government agendas when setting targets.
- To engage with our suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders on environmental issues, including the sustainability of our raw and packaging material supply chains.
- To ensure that employees have a level of knowledge and understanding appropriate to their environmental responsibilities and are aware of actions they can take to reduce their impacts.
- To conduct an annual review, including progress against targets, and to make that review publicly available in our annual Sustainability Report.

Environmental Policy Professionals

Typically careers in environmental policy require a masters degree. Most careers in environmental policy involves time researching, planning, and collaborating with co-workers, oversee building programs, and spending time outdoors. Environmental policy professionals should be familiar with the following tasks [10]:

- Evaluate land use issues
- Remain compliant with applicable zoning and engineering plans
- Organize correspondence, reports, data and other project information
- Research local, state and federal environmental policies
- Analyze remediation strategies
- Proactively maintain client and stakeholder relationships
- Show innovation in strategy across various projects
- Work well in an interdisciplinary environment with other technicians, scientists, and engineers
- Create and maintain technical documentation
- Collect and analyze data



- Maintain records and databases to support standard project operations
- Provide technical feedback on environmental policy
- Maintain aspects of operating budgets
- Commit to best practices in work and research

International Environmental Policy

Protecting the global environment has emerged as one of the major challenges in the international community. Some developing countries have established laws and policies to address environmental problems. International environmental policy is important in times of increasing globalization. Several environmental issues extend beyond national borders and cannot be resolved by a single nation acting alone [11]. They can only be properly addressed through international cooperation. International environmental policy covers a number of issues: climate change, the need for decarbonization, sustainable energy policy, the loss of biodiversity, desertification, sustainable waste management, protection against hazardous substances, and the conservation of land, forests, and seas. The environment is included in the agenda of the G8, which comprises of Germany, Japan, Great Britain, United States of America, France, Italy, Canada, and Russia.

We now consider how environmental policy is implemented in some countries.

- *United States:* Environmental policy in the United States involves governmental actions at the federal, state, and local level to protect the environment. It has always been characterized by political conflict. The US National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) established the broad national framework for protecting then environment. NEPA' assures that all branches of government give proper consideration to the environment before undertaking any federal action that affects the environment. Its requirements are invoked when airports, buildings, military complexes, highways, parkland purchases, and other federal activities are proposed [12]. Although the US is the world's only remaining economic and political superpower, it is also the largest polluter and the largest consumption of natural resources. The US has always opposed the development of any general environmental covenant, fearing that the resulting principles would be weak.

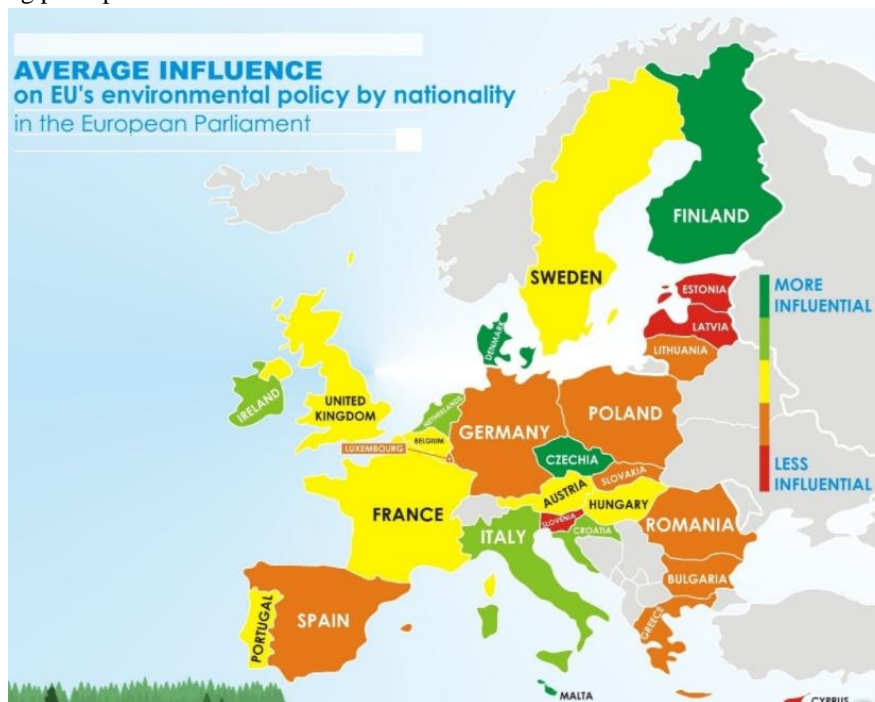


Figure 3: Influence on European Union's environmental policy by nationality [12]

- *Europe Union:* The Union is active and setting the pace in international environment policy. European citizens enjoy some of the world's highest environmental standards. It is a set of strategies, actions, and programs to promote climate resilient society and thriving economy in its natural environment. Some



EU nations have long environmental protection traditions, which are also reflected in their environmental law. The European environmental research and innovation policy aims at implementing a transformative agenda to greening the economy and the society so as to achieve a truly sustainable development. Political support of the principle of environmental policy integration (EPI) is particularly strong in the European Union. Poor Implementation is the fact of life for the European Union environmental policy. Figure 3 depicts the influence on European Union's environmental policy by nationality [13].

- *Russia*: Russia and the other parts of the Soviet Union never really had rule-of-law traditions. The hard realities of environmental compliance were basically unknown to industry in the Soviet bloc nations. Monitoring in the former Soviet bloc usually measured ambient air quality, not what pollutants plants released at the end of their discharge pipes. The former Soviet bloc had considerable economic, cultural, and political baggage that was directly relevant to the introduction of any state-of-the-art environmental tools, including market-based instruments.
- *China*: With its rapid economic growth in recent decades, China is generating growing concern about its environmental record. Serious environmental problems, including deforestation, erosion, and pollution of air, land, and water have prevailed throughout China. These have resulted in changing patterns of resource use. An environmental policy in China introduced stricter regulations on sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions in targeted cities. Although China has strong environmental protection laws and policies, they are not being effectively implemented in some rural areas, where industrialization has resulted in increased financial well-being as well as contributed to decreased environmental quality [14].
- *Sri Lanka*: This island has a population of 19 million, placing it among the most densely populated nation in the world. Sri Lanka's constitution states that: "The duty of every person in Sri Lanka to protect nature and conserve its riches." An appreciation of the role of civil society in maintaining a healthy environment is lacking in Sri Lanka [15].
- *United Kingdom*: Since the early 1990s there has been increased environmental legislative pressure and growing public awareness of environmental issues. Environmental policies have not been successful in encouraging more environmentally proactive behavior within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the UK. The poor environmental performance is due to a lack of institutional enfranchisement for SMEs. Companies in UK endeavor to comply with increasing environmental regulation and have no problem adopting ISO 9000 [16].

Benefits of Environmental Policies

Environmental policy is concerned with how best to govern the relationship between humans and the natural environment. It is probably the only policy domain with the main goal of protecting nonhuman entities. There are some benefits of having an environmental policy. A sound environmental policy can help you manage your resources, achieve cost savings, and promote more environmentally friendly practices. It can provide significant benefits to an organization including [17]:

- helping you to stay within the law
- improving information for employees about their environmental roles and responsibilities
- improving cost control
- reducing incidents that result in liability
- conserving raw materials and energy
- improving your monitoring of environmental impacts
- improving the efficiency of your processes

The benefits are not restricted simply to internal operations. By demonstrating commitment to environmental management, you can develop positive relations with external stakeholders, such as investors, insurers, customers, suppliers, regulators, and the local community.



Challenges of Environmental Policies

There are some challenges or limitations environmental policies have to overcome. We need to address fundamental questions on who should determine our environmental goals or objectives. We also must figure out what the next generation of environmental policy will be. Non-point source pollutants pose an important challenge to the continuing campaign to clean the environment. Traditional command-and-control regulations work poorly against the pollution problems caused by non-point sources, which are virtually universal. Another challenge is the growing recognition of pollution problems such as global warming that know no national boundaries. This requires collective-action and policy strategies that encompass the world. The challenge of the second-generation environmental policy is to do everything that the first generation of environmental policy did and do it better [18].

Increased environmental concern leads to a higher dirt tax, a lower tax on labor, less employment, more public abatement, and a cleaner environment. Some environmentalists are concerned that trade liberalization may damage the environment by giving governments incentives to relax environmental policies so that domestic producers may remain competitive. In spite of the growing international environmental interdependence and the globalized economy, the international community lacks a central authority to foster environmental protection.

Conclusion

The modern fusion of business and environmental qualifications means that there is a growing demand for leaders with advanced degree in environmental science.

Some academic institutions now offer Master's degree on environmental policy.

More information about environmental science can be found in books in [19-40] and related journals:

- Environment Policy
- Environmental Politics
- Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning
- Environmental policy and governance
- Issues in Energy and Environmental Policy
- Review of Environmental Economics and Policy

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