

# Advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through TRUE

A guide to implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals using TRUE Certification for Zero Waste

# Advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through TRUE

## Introduction

Administered by Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI), Total Resource Use and Efficiency (TRUE) is a zero waste certification program that encourages the adoption of sustainable resource management and waste reduction practices that contribute to positive environmental, health and economic outcomes. TRUE promotes strategies that transform how materials flow through society, encouraging processes that consider the entire life cycle of products in order to address climate change and facilitate the shift to a circular economy.

TRUE recognizes the inextricable links between human health, environmental health and economic prosperity. There are many synergies between TRUE and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were created as a global effort to address the social, economic and environmental issues facing society today. This resource highlights these synergies while demonstrating the impact of TRUE in a global context. It is intended to be used as a tool to identify and target strategies to achieve specific U.N. SDGs through TRUE certification. It is also a helpful depiction of how GBCI's TRUE rating system is aligned with global efforts to create a more resilient, equitable and sustainable world for all.

## The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

There are [17 SDGs](#) dictated by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and they form a call to action for countries and institutions to commit and work together toward a more just and flourishing world. The 17 goals are populated by 169 specific targets that cover social, economic and environmental issues, ranging from biodiversity to education access.

# Synergies

2 ZERO HUNGER



## GOAL 2: ZERO HUNGER

**End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.**

TRUE advances Goal 2 by:

- Redesigning systems to eliminate food waste through increasing operations efficiency at all production chain points.
- Implementing agreements and policies to utilize otherwise wasted food.
- Tracking and analyzing data on food waste diversion to better inform and improve upstream food production and distribution systems management.
- Encouraging donation of all food waste safe for human consumption to local organizations such as food banks and shelters.
- Supporting sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices by donating all food waste safe for animal consumption to farms and creating and using compost for food production.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **2.1:** By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.
- **2.4:** By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

## 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



### GOAL 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

TRUE advances Goal 3 by:

- Reducing hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination associated with energy generation, transmission, and distribution through local renewable energies and reduced fossil fuel consumption.
- Designing and building energy infrastructure that minimizes air pollution, which increases the likelihood of respiratory diseases, cancer, and other illnesses.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **3.9:** By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.

## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



### GOAL 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

TRUE advances Goal 4 by:

- Educating employees and communities about zero waste practices and principles through programs that reward participation, increasing accessibility of technical sustainability knowledge and skills.
- Providing free or low-cost educational courses on zero waste topics via the USGBC education portal.
- Offering the TRUE Advisor certificate, which teaches zero waste terminology, tools, technologies and implementation strategies, to sustainability professionals, students and others.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **4.4:** By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- **4.7:** By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

## 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



### GOAL 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

TRUE advances Goal 6 by:

- Reducing pollution that may end up in waterways through the redesign of facility operations, adoption of purchasing agreements and reuse of waste products throughout all points in the production chain.
- Minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and waste into waterways by avoiding their use, eliminating their dumping and encouraging their proper handling, storage, reuse and disposal.
- Reducing contamination of groundwater drinking supplies from [leachate](#) produced by landfills and incineration plants through implementation of zero waste practices and policies.
- Protecting against eutrophication through composting grass clippings, yard trimmings and food waste, and by encouraging the use of compost instead of chemical fertilizers.
- Encouraging the use of native and xeriscape plantings that require little or no irrigation, aiding the sustainable management of potable water.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **6.3:** By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.
- **6.4:** By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
- **6.6:** By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

## 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



## GOAL 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

TRUE advances Goal 7 by:

- Encouraging the implementation of anaerobic digestion to promote the beneficial and nonharmful use of organic materials while generating clean and sustainable energy.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **7.2:** By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



# GOAL 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

**Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.**

TRUE advances Goal 8 by:

- Creating jobs in recycling, reuse and redesign, which account for [10 times](#) more jobs than waste to landfill.
- Supporting the health and safety of workers in waste management industries through job hazard analysis, worker health and safety plans, and responsible management of hazardous waste.
- Fostering a closed-loop system that allows for economic productivity without degrading the planet or its finite resources.
- Promoting the inclusion of all employees in company-wide waste reduction activities by incentivizing participation, incorporating zero waste activities into orientation and training, and communicating openly about program updates, successes and opportunities.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **8.2:** Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labor-intensive sectors.
- **8.3:** Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.
- **8.4:** Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavor to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programs on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead.



- **8.5:** By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities and equal pay for work of equal value.
- **8.8:** Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants and those in precarious employment.

## 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



### GOAL 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.**

TRUE advances Goal 9 by:

- Discovering upstream waste reduction opportunities in daily operations to eliminate waste before it occurs in the supply chain.
- Developing innovative systems that emphasize reuse, reducing the consumption of single-use, disposable materials.
- Restructuring organization-wide policies to promote comprehensive, sustainable manufacturing processes and best practices.
- Committing to continuous improvements that reduce the remaining generated waste disposed of in landfills, incineration and the environment.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **9.4:** By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities.

## 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



# GOAL 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Reduce inequality within and among countries.

TRUE advances Goal 10 by:

- Alleviating the [health crisis](#) caused by the unequal [exposure of underserved neighborhoods to harmful waste processing](#) and disposal facilities via waste diversion and reduction strategies, leading to fewer landfills, incinerators and waste sites.
- Minimizing the [burden](#) of resource overexploitation and extraction, which disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, through the promotion of reuse, recycling and closed-loop systems.
- Lessening global land-use inequalities by reducing single-use consumption and the amount of trash and recyclables exported from certain countries and [disposed of](#) in others.
- Empowering community members to take an active role in zero waste initiatives such as cleanups, fundraisers, public events, educational campaigns and more.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **10.2:** By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
- **10.3:** Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.
  - **10.3.1:** Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law.

## 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



# GOAL 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

**Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.**

TRUE advances Goal 11 by:

- Focusing on sustainable upstream practices such as redesign, reduction and reuse to manage waste by preventing it from being created in the first place.
- Reducing cities' carbon footprints associated with transporting and hauling waste materials to local or international landfills and incinerators through zero waste strategies.
- Supporting healthier communities through a decreased reliance on traditional waste management systems that degrade air quality.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **11.6:** By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.
  - **11.6.1:** Proportion of urban solid waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge out of total urban solid waste generated, by cities.
- **11.c:** Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings using local materials.



## GOAL 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

TRUE advances Goal 12 by:

- Reducing materials and natural resources needed for new products through systems that incentivize upstream management, redesign, reuse, recycling and product circularity.
- Creating a more sustainable supply chain by encouraging organizations to implement comprehensive zero waste policies, practices and reporting, as well as giving preference to vendors who also embrace zero waste goals.
- Implementing the proper handling, storage and disposal of hazardous wastes while reducing their use.
- Designing food waste out of production and supply chains wherever possible.
- Utilizing otherwise wasted food and tracking and analyzing diversion over time.
- Promoting sustainable consumption and zero waste lifestyles through webinars and resources, such as a [zero waste curriculum toolkit](#) and an [at-home waste audit guide](#).

U.N. SDG targets:

- **12.2:** By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources:
  - **12.2.1:** Material footprint, material footprint per capita and material footprint per GDP.
  - **12.2.2:** Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita and domestic material consumption per GDP.
- **12.3:** By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.
- **12.4:** By 2030, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment
- **12.5:** By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

- **12.6:** Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.
- **12.8:** By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

# 13 CLIMATE ACTION



## GOAL 13: CLIMATE ACTION

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

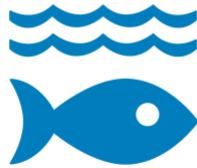
TRUE advances Goal 13 by:

- Preventing greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, a major contributor to climate change, by encouraging effective materials management upstream and promoting alternative methods of disposal, such as reuse, donation, recycling and composting.
- Fortifying supply chain resilience in the face of climate-related disruptions by leveraging overall resource efficiency.
- Reducing waste pollution to ecosystems, thereby improving the environment and society's capacity to recover from natural disasters.
- Raising awareness about the role of materials management in the climate crisis and encouraging cost-effective, innovative solutions that focus on creating closed-loop systems.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **13.1:** Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.
- **13.3:** Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

## 14 LIFE BELOW WATER



### GOAL 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

**Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.**

TRUE advances Goal 14 by:

- Protecting water-related ecosystems from waste and hazardous chemicals through policies and practices that avoid their use, eliminate dumping and promote proper management.
- Mitigating marine pollution through waste reduction strategies, such as restructuring agreements, redesigning products for reuse and recycling, and purchasing environmentally preferred goods, at all points in the production chain.
- Reducing eutrophication that stems from chemical fertilizer use by promoting natural landscape care through composting facility by-products.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions that [cause](#) ocean acidification by minimizing the amount of [waste](#) sent to landfills and burned in incinerators through zero waste policies and strategies.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **14.1:** By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.
- **14.3:** Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels.



## 15 LIFE ON LAND



## GOAL 15: LIFE ON LAND

**Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.**

TRUE advances Goal 15 by:

- Protecting forests and habitats through the purchase of sustainable wood and paper products certified through internationally recognized organizations such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).
- Combating ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss caused by raw material extraction through material reuse, donation, upcycling and recycling.
- Implementing strategies that divert waste from landfills and incineration plants, which disrupt natural environments and cause pollution.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **15.1:** . . . ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.
  - **15.1.1:** Forest area as proportion of total land area.
- **15.2:** . . . promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.
- **15.5:** Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and [. . .] protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



# GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

**Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.**

TRUE advances Goal 16 by:

- Advancing institutional transparency by providing organizations a platform to publicly share waste diversion rates and pursuits.
- Fostering effective and accountable waste management strategies that serve as critical tools in ensuring public and environmental health.
- Including third-party subject matter experts and project teams in decision-making processes to ensure that advancements and updates to the TRUE rating system are equitable and inclusive.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **16.6:** Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
- **16.7:** Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



# GOAL 17: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

**Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.**

TRUE advances Goal 17 by:

- Establishing partnerships with public and private entities to prioritize policies, operations and actions that dramatically reduce waste and limit resource extraction.
- Investing in relationships with community partners, service providers and stakeholders to build a strong collaborative network that implements and promotes zero waste initiatives.
- Providing a comprehensive materials management road map that encompasses all operational standpoints and offers global applicability at the project level and beyond.

U.N. SDG targets:

- **17.14:** Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.
  - **17.14.1:** Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development.
- **17.16:** Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.
- **17.17:** Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.