

1 CLEANER PRODUCTION

1.1 What is Cleaner Production?¹

Over the years, industrialised nations have progressively taken different approaches to dealing with environmental degradation and pollution problems, by:

- ignoring the problem;
- diluting or dispersing the pollution so that its effects are less harmful or apparent;
- controlling pollution using 'end-of-pipe' treatment;
- preventing pollution and waste at the source through a 'Cleaner Production' approach.

The gradual progression from 'ignore' through to 'prevent' has culminated in the realisation that it is possible to achieve economic savings for industry as well as an improved environment for society. This, essentially, is the goal of Cleaner Production.

Definition of Cleaner Production

Cleaner Production is defined as the continuous application of an integrated preventive environmental strategy applied to processes, products and services to increase overall efficiency and reduce risks to humans and the environment.

- For production processes, Cleaner Production involves the conservation of raw materials and energy, the elimination of toxic raw materials, and the reduction in the quantities and toxicity of wastes and emissions.
- For product development and design, Cleaner Production involves the reduction of negative impacts throughout the life cycle of the product: from raw material extraction to ultimate disposal.
- For service industries, Cleaner Production involves the incorporation of environmental considerations into the design and delivery of services.

Difference between Cleaner Production and pollution control

The key difference between pollution control and Cleaner Production is one of timing. Pollution control is an after-the-event, 'react and treat' approach, whereas Cleaner Production reflects a proactive, 'anticipate and prevent' philosophy. Prevention is always better than cure.

This does not mean, however, that 'end-of-pipe' technologies will never be required. By using a Cleaner Production philosophy to tackle pollution and waste problems, the dependence on 'end-of-pipe' solutions may be reduced or in some cases, eliminated altogether.

Cleaner Production can be and has already been applied to raw material extraction, manufacturing, agriculture, fisheries, transportation, tourism, hospitals, energy generation and information systems.

Changing attitudes

It is important to stress that Cleaner Production is about attitudinal as well as technological change. In many cases, the most significant Cleaner Production benefits can be gained through lateral thinking,

¹ This chapter has been adapted from a UNEP publication, *Government Strategies and Policies for Cleaner Production*, 1994.

without adopting technological solutions. A change in attitude on the part of company directors, managers and employees is crucial to gaining the most from Cleaner Production.

Applying know-how

Applying know-how means improving efficiency, adopting better management techniques, improving housekeeping practices, and refining company policies and procedures. Typically, the application of technical know-how results in the optimisation of existing processes.

Improving technology

Technological improvements can occur in a number of ways:

- changing manufacturing processes and technology;
- changing the nature of process inputs (ingredients, energy sources, recycled water etc.);
- changing the final product or developing alternative products;
- on-site reuse of wastes and by-products.

Types of Cleaner Production options

Housekeeping	Improvements to work practices and proper maintenance can produce significant benefits. These options are typically low cost.
Process optimisation	Resource consumption can be reduced by optimising existing processes. These options are typically low to medium cost.
Raw material substitution	Environmental problems can be avoided by replacing hazardous materials with more environmentally benign materials. These options may require changes to process equipment.
New technology	Adopting new technologies can reduce resource consumption and minimise waste generation through improved operating efficiencies. These options are often highly capital intensive, but payback periods can be quite short.
New product design	Changing product design can result in benefits throughout the life cycle of the product, including reduced use of hazardous substances, reduced waste disposal, reduced energy consumption and more efficient production processes. New product design is a long-term strategy and may require new production equipment and marketing efforts, but paybacks can ultimately be very rewarding.

1.2 Why invest in Cleaner Production?

Investing in Cleaner Production, to prevent pollution and reduce resource consumption is more cost effective than continuing to rely on increasingly expensive 'end-of-pipe' solutions.

Cleaner Production versus pollution control

When Cleaner Production and pollution control options are carefully evaluated and compared, the Cleaner Production options are often more cost effective overall. The initial investment for Cleaner Production options and for installing pollution control technologies may be similar, but the ongoing costs of pollution control will generally be greater than for Cleaner Production. Furthermore, the Cleaner Production option will generate savings through reduced costs for raw materials, energy, waste treatment and regulatory compliance.

Greener products

The environmental benefits of Cleaner Production can be translated into market opportunities for 'greener' products. Companies that factor environmental considerations into the design stage of a product will be well placed to benefit from the marketing advantages of any future eco-labelling schemes.

Some reasons to invest in Cleaner Production

- improvements to product and processes;
- savings on raw materials and energy, thus reducing production costs;
- increased competitiveness through the use of new and improved technologies;
- reduced concerns over environmental legislation;
- reduced liability associated with the treatment, storage and disposal of hazardous wastes;
- improved health, safety and morale of employees;
- improved company image;
- reduced costs of end-of-pipe solutions.

1.3 Cleaner Production can be practised now

It is often claimed that Cleaner Production techniques do not yet exist or that, if they do, they are already patented and can be obtained only through expensive licences. Neither statement is true, and this belief wrongly associates Cleaner Production with 'clean technology'.

Cleaner Production also covers changing attitudes and management

Firstly, Cleaner Production depends only partly on new or alternative technologies. It can also be achieved through improved management techniques, different work practices and many other 'soft' approaches. Cleaner Production is as much about attitudes, approaches and management as it is about technology.

Cleaner Production techniques already exist

Secondly, Cleaner Production approaches are widely and readily available, and methodologies exist for its application. While it is true that Cleaner Production technologies do not yet exist for all industrial processes and products, it is estimated that 70% of all current wastes and emissions from industrial processes can be prevented at source by the use of technically sound and economically profitable procedures (Baas et al., 1992).

1.4 Cleaner Production and sustainable development

In the past, companies have often introduced processes without considering their environmental impact. They have argued that a trade-off is required between economic growth and the environment, and that some level of pollution must be accepted if reasonable rates of economic growth are to be achieved. This argument is no longer valid, and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, established new goals for the world community that advocate environmentally sustainable development.

Economy and environment go hand in hand

Cleaner Production can contribute to sustainable development, as endorsed by Agenda 21. Cleaner Production can reduce or eliminate the need to trade off environmental protection against economic growth, occupational safety against productivity, and consumer safety against competition in international markets. Setting goals across a range of sustainability issues leads to 'win-win' situations that benefit everyone. Cleaner Production is such a 'win-win' strategy: it protects the environment, the consumer and the worker while also improving industrial efficiency, profitability and competitiveness.

Cleaner Production can provide advantages for all countries

Cleaner Production can be especially beneficial to developing countries and those undergoing economic transition. It provides industries in these countries with an opportunity to 'leapfrog' those more established industries elsewhere that are saddled with costly pollution control.

1.5 Cleaner Production and quality and safety

Food safety and food quality are very important aspects of the food industry. While food safety has always been an important concern for the industry, it has received even greater attention over the past decade due to larger scales of production, more automated production processes and more stringent consumer expectations. A stronger emphasis is also being placed on quality due to the need for companies to be more efficient in an increasingly competitive industry.

In relation to food safety, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) has become a widely used tool for managing food safety throughout the world. It is an approach based on preventing microbiological, chemical and physical hazards in food production processes by anticipating and preventing problems, rather than relying on inspection of the finished product.

Similarly, quality systems such as Total Quality Management (TQM) are based on a systematic and holistic approach to production processes and aim to improve product quality while lowering costs.

Cleaner Production should operate in partnership with quality and safety systems and should never be allowed to compromise them. As well, quality, safety and Cleaner Production systems can work synergistically to identify areas for improvement in all three areas.

1.6 Cleaner Production and environmental management systems

Environmental issues are complex, numerous and continually evolving, and an *ad hoc* approach to solving environmental problems is no longer appropriate. Companies are therefore adopting a more systematic approach to environmental management, sometimes through a formalised environmental management system (EMS).

An EMS provides a company with a decision-making structure and action programme to bring Cleaner Production into the company's strategy, management and day-to-day operations.

ISO 14001

As EMSs have evolved, a need has arisen to standardise their application. An evolving series of generic standards has been initiated by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), to provide company management with the structure for managing environmental impacts. The UNEP/ICC/FIDIC *Environmental Management System Training Resource Kit*, mentioned above, is compatible with the ISO 14001 standard.

EMS training resources

UNEP DTIE, together with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the International Federation of Engineers (FIDIC), has published an *Environmental Management System Training Resource Kit*, which functions as a training manual to help industry adopt EMSs.

