Webwatch

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WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme)

<http://www.wrap.org.uk/>

The WRAP, Waste and Resources Action Programme, is a British non-profit private organization that supports and helps business and individuals in reducing the waste resulting from their activities. Its main vision is a world without waste where the resources are used in a sustainable way. WRAP was founded in 2000, and is supported mainly with the government funding from the United Kingdom and regional governments of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

WRAP activities are focused essentially in the United Kingdom. It works with a wide range of partners, including national or local authorities, business and non-profit organizations, and even individuals. The activities are mainly focussed in assisting the partners to achieve gains, either financial or an improved quality of life, by reducing the waste associated with their activities, developing sustainable products, and using resources the most efficient way possible. Some key areas were selected by WRAP to focus its activities and to ensure that they have the maximum of return, in particular economic. The main activity areas are: packaging, food waste, waste collection systems, and quality of materials. Based on these areas some qualitative goals were defined, and the progress toward them can be monitored through the website.

The WRAP website was designed with several goals in mind. First, as an organization supported by national and local governments in the United Kingdom, a full description of its activities, internal structure, biographies of staff members, and reports of activities and verification/validation of management actions are available at the site. Besides that, the website's main goal is to present the results of past and ongoing activities of WRAP with its various partners. Thus, it is possible to access directly from the main webpage, or using the main menu presented in the top of most website's pages, sections that are aimed to particular interest groups, such as business, local governments, and individuals, among others. In each section there are sub sections with themes of interest to a particular stakeholder, including publications, training events, guidelines, and so forth. While most of the sections open in the main website, other sections aiming to individuals and dealing with specific problems open as independent sites. Besides the partners sections, from the main webpage one can access directly the publication and news sections, where articles and studies can be obtained for free.

Furthermore, the site gives the opportunity, and even promotes that people or organizations put questions to challenge WRAP in its main areas of activity, either by mail or using a toll free telephone number. Also, accounts and updates of WRAP activities, using RSS feeds or regular e-mail briefings can be freely requested.

The website fulfills all the referred goals in a graphical appealing way and navigation is easy through the menus presented in all webpages, or using the search facility. Although there is a clear focus on the issues affecting the United Kingdom, there is enough information and freely available materials at the site to justify a comprehensive exploration of the site by people from other countries as they may face the same problems.

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E3Network (Economics for Equity and the Environment)

<http://www.e3network.org/index.html>

The E3Network, Economics for Equity and the Environment, is an informal network of economists based in Portland (Oregon, USA). This network has today more than 200 economists as members, mainly in the United States, and focuses their activities on applied research in the environmental protection area and related fields. It is based on three guiding principles: (1) clean and safe environmental that is the natural right of every human being, (2) social and environmental justice that are indivisible and have to consider a fair division of power and safeguarding of the environment, and (3) current and future problems facing mankind that demand new and innovative forms of thinking and problem solving.

In the manifesto available at the website, these principles and the background in which this organization was created are presented and discussed in detail. The main goal of E3Network is the development of applied research on environmental economics, providing solutions to current or expected problems, and promoting the involvement of network members with other stakeholders, such as private or governmental organizations, decision makers, and the media.

The website was designed mainly to assist the network members in their common activities, and to present the world the main results of their research activities. Thus, the site includes a directory of members and other economists whose research interests fall under the E3Network guiding principles, with the possibility of searching it by area. Instructions on how to be included in the listing are given in the site. Other section includes a presentation of E3Network activities and programs to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to further bolster the networking activities. A news section gives an account of E3Network activities and reports in the media. A resources link gives access to a list of publications and testimonies, some of them freely available, and teaching materials from some of the network members. An important part of E3Network is the graduate and internship programs, where students engage and conduct research in specific environmental issues.

Within this network task force is a specialized group that deals with the questions of climate change and its impact in the environmental, economic, and social spheres. It has its own website (<http://realclimateconomics.org/index.html>) where it is possible to find particular information on this area. They include, for example, annotated bibliographies in the field, member publications and briefs on, for example, the economic impacts of climate change, and a commentary section with discussion on the recent advances and news.

Both websites have a simple design and try as much as possible to focus on promoting the development of the network, presenting in particular the advantages of being part of it and the main results of its activities. Navigation is easy and relevant information can be easily found, even though some lists of articles and briefs can be quite long. Although mainly aimed to American practitioners and their reality, the global relevance of the problems dealt by E3Network makes it a worthwhile visit for people from other geographic backgrounds.

RFF (Resources for the Future)

<http://www.rff.org>

Resources for the Future (RFF) is a non-profit and non-partisan organization that focus its activities in performing independent research, mainly in the economic and social sciences, in areas such as the environment, energy, natural resources, and public health. It was founded in 1952, following a recommendation by William Paley and a presidential commission on the US dependence on foreign sources of natural resources, and became one of the first think-tank dedicated to the environmental questions. It is mainly funded with private donations from American foundations and funding agencies that also promote research in the main RFF areas of activity, such as USEPA.

Although based on Washington DC, USA, RFF works in a large number and wide variety of projects and common activities with partners from around the world. They include, but are not limited to: pollution control, energy, land and water use, climate change, public health, the specific challenges of developing nations regarding environmental problems, among others. In many areas, RFF was a pioneer in the application of economic tools in the development of policies and instruments to better use and convert natural resources. At present, RFF has about 70 researcher working in fields directly related to the key areas that correspond to its main divisions: energy and climate, regulating risks, human health, natural world, transportation, and urban land. Besides these key areas, RFF also develops research activities with more specific subjects, either through collaborative projects or participating in other centers and think tanks, and in educational actions for a wide variety of stakeholders.

RFF website has the main purposes of introducing the organization to people unaware of its existence or willing to know more about it. It gives an account of past and ongoing projects, research work and other activities, and informs people or other organizations how they can contribute either financially or through participating in joint projects. Therefore, in a special section of the website it is possible to found a presentation of RFF, its internal structure and a list of current residing researchers, which

one with his own personal webpage (with CV and contacts), directly accessible through the staff link in the main menu. Also, the site publicizes job openings, fellowships, and internships. In one section, there is a detailed account of research activities in particular areas, each one containing its main results, area of events, and publications, most of them freely available. Specific sections gather news related to RFF activities and events organized or sponsored by RFF, most of them with free attendance. A publications link gives access to a searchable database, containing all the publications that resulted from RFF activities. Although some of the books have to be bought, there are a large number of reports, discussion papers, and articles that can be accessed freely. RFF magazine can be subscribed for free either in digital or paper format from the website.

The site does a good job in presenting all the RFF current activities, as well as the main results of past projects. To help people keep updated, a periodic e-mail alert of RFF activities can be requested from the site. Navigation is easy and the search facility is very helpful in assisting people find what they are looking for, particularly in this site where many pages have long texts or extensive lists of articles. Yet, the materials and information available at the site make it an essential stop for people interested in the environment and directly related areas, either practitioners or laymen.

IGES (The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies)

<http://www.iges.or.jp/en/index.html>

The Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) was created by the Japanese government in 1998. It is a research institute aiming to conduct practical and innovative research on the sustainable development area, especially in the field of policy development and implementation of policies in the Asia-Pacific Region, that due to the economic growth of the past decades is facing though environmental and social challenges. Currently based in Kanagawa (Japan), IGES has branches in other Asian countries, in particular in China and Thailand.

Most of the IGES activities are focused in the creation, development, and enhancement of collaborative work with a wide range of stakeholders, including but not limited to national governments, local authorities, private and NGOs, citizens either expert or not. Some examples of intergovernmental networks can be found at the website. The dissemination of research results is also central to the institute activities, as a good way of promoting policy development and implementation by governments and/or organizations not linked with IGES. The research activities are divided by area, including for example climate change, biofuels, sustainable consumption and production, among others. IGES

defines strategic research plans together with the relevant stakeholders to address specific problems relevant to them.

The website was developed to present and describe the main activities of IGES. Directly from the main page, links take people to sections where the institute mission, goals, and structure are described in detail. The main research areas are thoroughly described in independent parts of the site. In each one, the main news, events, and research projects are presented in detail. A particular section deals with the clean development mechanisms (CDM) of the Kyoto protocol, where the references about past and ongoing projects for training, development and practical implementation are given. The research results are presented in three different sections. One of the sections lists the publications, articles, policy briefs, and other information originating from IGES and its collaborative projects. The second section, designated Database & Resources, provides a list of websites with data and information about specific subjects. For example, following the link <http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/EFDB/main.php> it is possible to found a database of IPCC-based emission factors, relevant to greenhouse gas emissions quantification and management. Most of the information and publications are freely available and can be directly downloaded from the site, in some cases in more than one language. In another section that connects to an associated site (<http://enviroscope.iges.or.jp/index.php>), IGES collects and presents updated and detailed information on current environmental and sustainability issues, with a focus in the Asia-Pacific region.

The site has a nice presentation and layout, with an easy navigation between its large number of section. The small font size used and the cluttered aspect of some pages may difficult the identification of the relevant information in some pages, situation aggravated by the non-existence of site search facility. Albeit being a Japanese site, there is a huge amount of stuff in English available at the site. A news e-mail alert that can be subscribed at the site is useful for people who want to keep updated on IGES activities. Owing to the wide variety of themes touched by IGES, and the quantity and diversity of information available, this site is a mandatory stop for all people with an interest in sustainable development and related issues.

Final words

We will return on the next issue with a fresh selection of sites. If you know of sites that are worthy of being presented, send us all relevant information to the following E-Mail address: amartins@fe.up.pt. Any suggestions will be considered with great attention for possible publication. In that case, the contributors names will be acknowledged in this column. Surf well.