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Recent History of the Concept of Sustainability

1972: The UN held the first conference on Human Development in Stockholm. The concept of sustainable development emerged from concerns of developing countries about the overconsumption and waste in developed countries.

1987: The UN convened the World Commission on Environment and Development which wrote the report, "Our Common Future" (also referred to as the Brundtland Report). This report emphasizes the links between growth, economics, technology, and the environment. Sustainable development is recommended as a solution to worldwide resource degradation and the resulting threat of economic collapse. The Brundtland Report was the first to define sustainable development.

1992: The UN Conference on Environmental Development met and addressed the gross inequities that still existed between developed and developing nations and declared that the capacity of the Earth's ability to provide resources and handle wastes was fast approaching its limits. The Earth Summit created "Action 21," a plan for the 90's and beyond which included strategies to halt environmental degradation and to promote sustainable development in all countries.

1995: The U.S. President's Council on Sustainable Development made policy recommendations that included the education of citizens about consumer practices that lead to more sustainable lifestyles.

The President's Council on Sustainable Development identified goals or "shared aspirations" necessary for achieving sustainability and organized them into ten categories:

- Health and the Environment
- Economic Prosperity
- Equity
- Conservation of Nature
- Stewardship
- Sustainable Communities
- Civic Engagement
- Population
- International Responsibility
- Education

The Council warned that these categories "are truly interdependent and flow from the Council's understanding that *it is essential to seek economic prosperity, environmental protection, and social equity together. The achievement of any one goal is not enough to ensure that future generations will have at least the same opportunities to live and prosper that this generation enjoys: all are needed.*"