

Wuppertal Institute
for Climate, Environment
and Energy

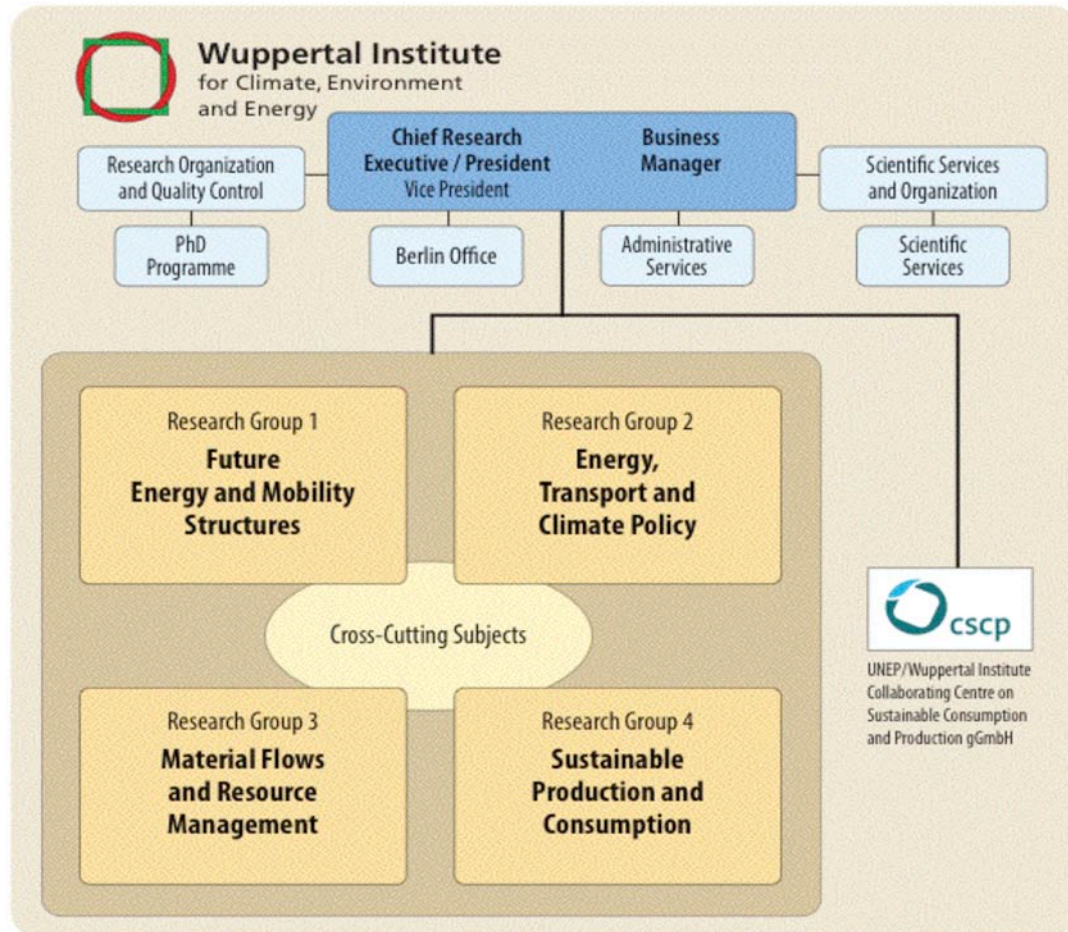
What kind of life cycle information is
interesting and useful for consumers?
**Experiences from the FIN-MIPS
Household study**

**37th LCA Discussion Forum
19 March 2009**

Carbon footprint and LCA: identify the most
effective way to reduce the environmental
footprint of consumer's goods

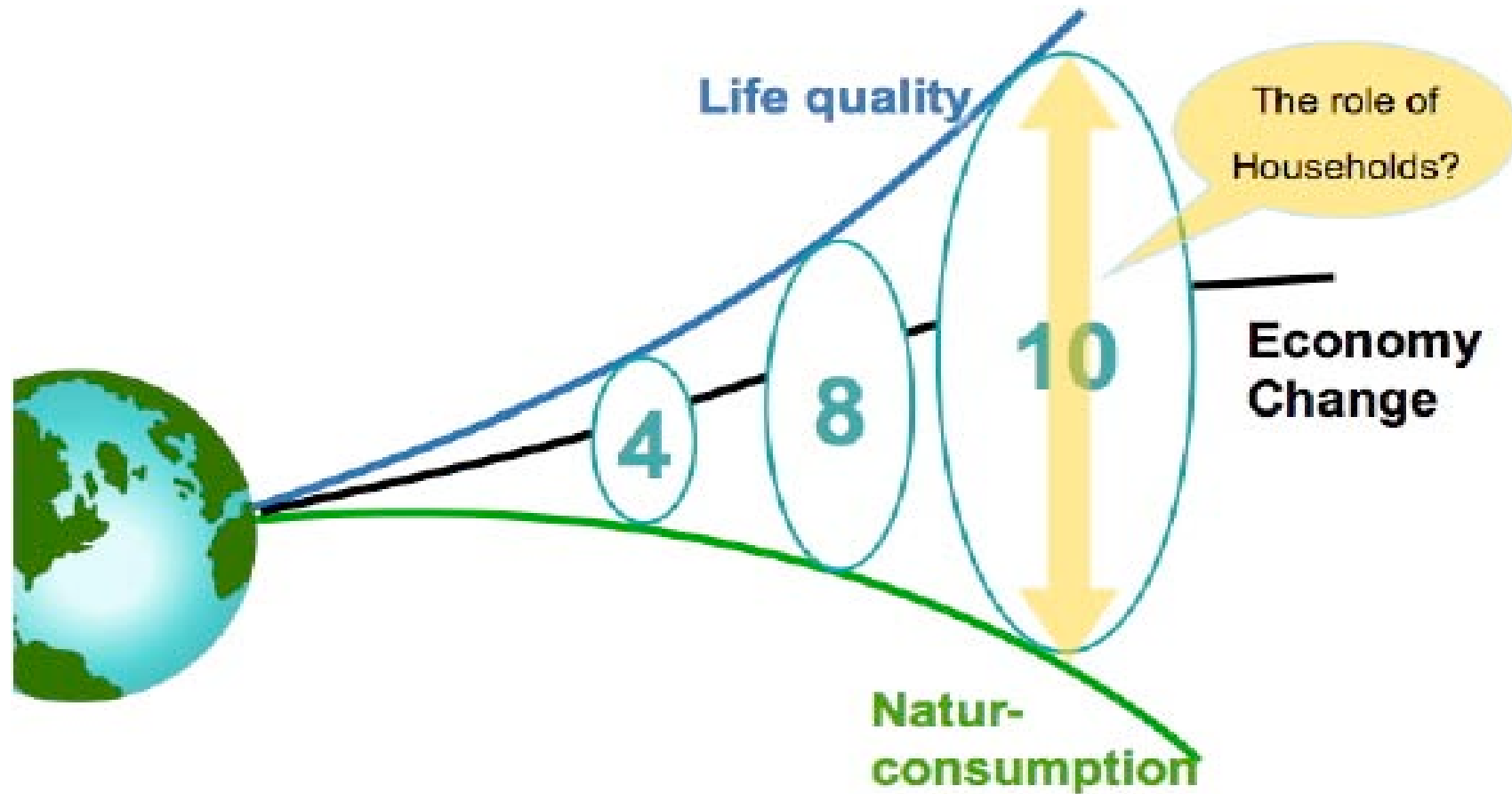
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Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy



The WI searches for and develops **environmental policy guidelines, strategies, and instruments** in order to promote **sustainability** at the household, company, local, regional, national and international level.

Background



The FIN-MIPS Household Project

Research agenda

MIPS-studies 2006-2007

- Pre-study on data basis
- 6 master's theses for new MIPS data in different consumption areas



Household study 2007-2008

- 27 voluntary, different households documenting their consumption
- Results: ecological backpack of household in kg p.cap. p.a.
- Focus groups after showing backpacks to households: how to decrease resource consumption?
- 4 master's theses, 3 bachelor's theses



The FIN-MIPS Household Project

Organizations involved

Funding:

1 retail corporation, 2 ministries: environment (60%) and economy,
4 municipal institutions, SC network of Finnish NGOs (dissemination)

Project team:

Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, Wuppertal Institute,
13 students from 9 departments at 5 universities,
Helsinki Metropolitan, Area Reuse Centre



The indicator: MIPS



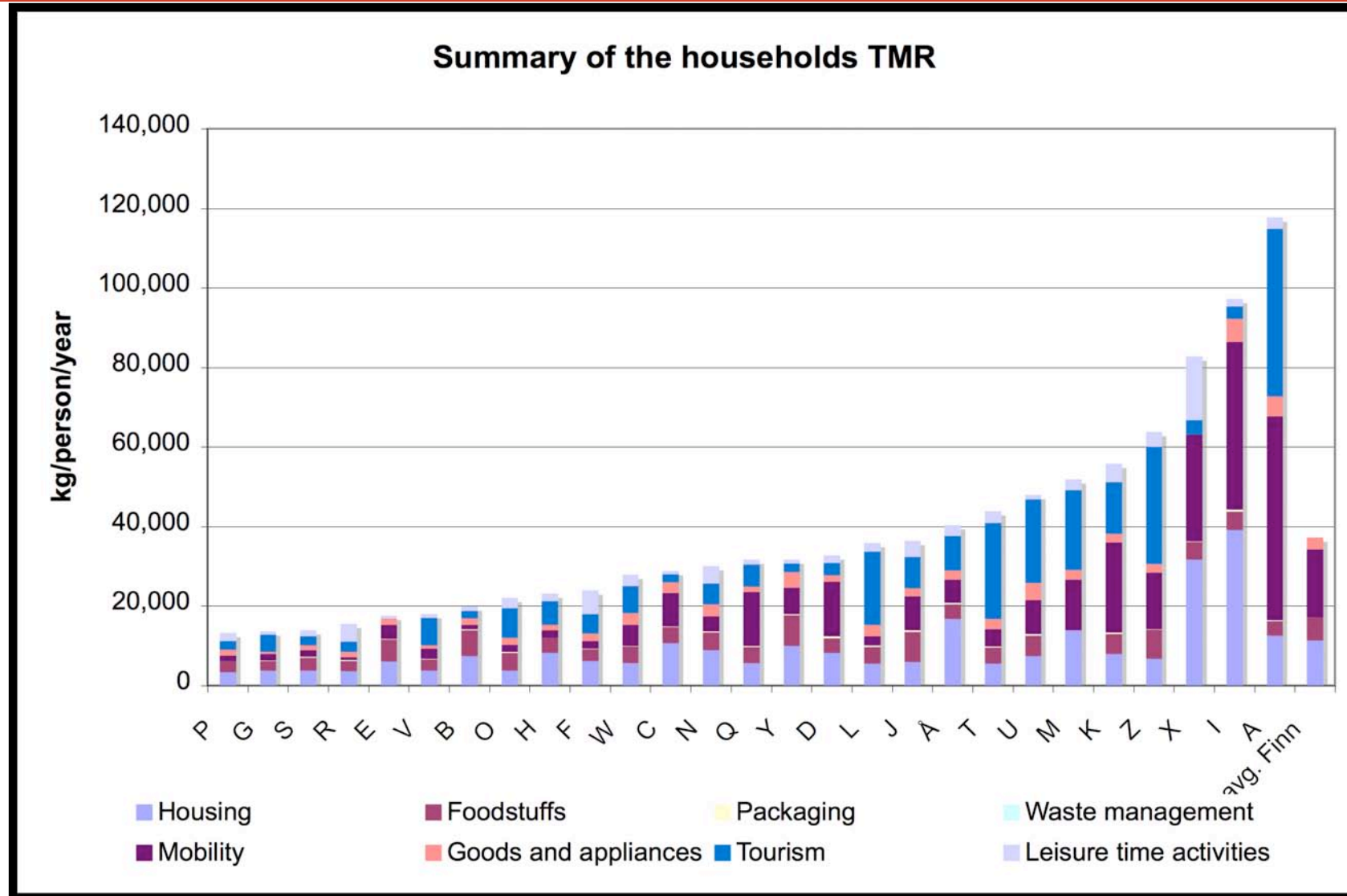
material input

= mips

service unit

- refers to a relevant issue
- holistic indicator
- understandable (ecological backpack)
- good for comparing different products and activities

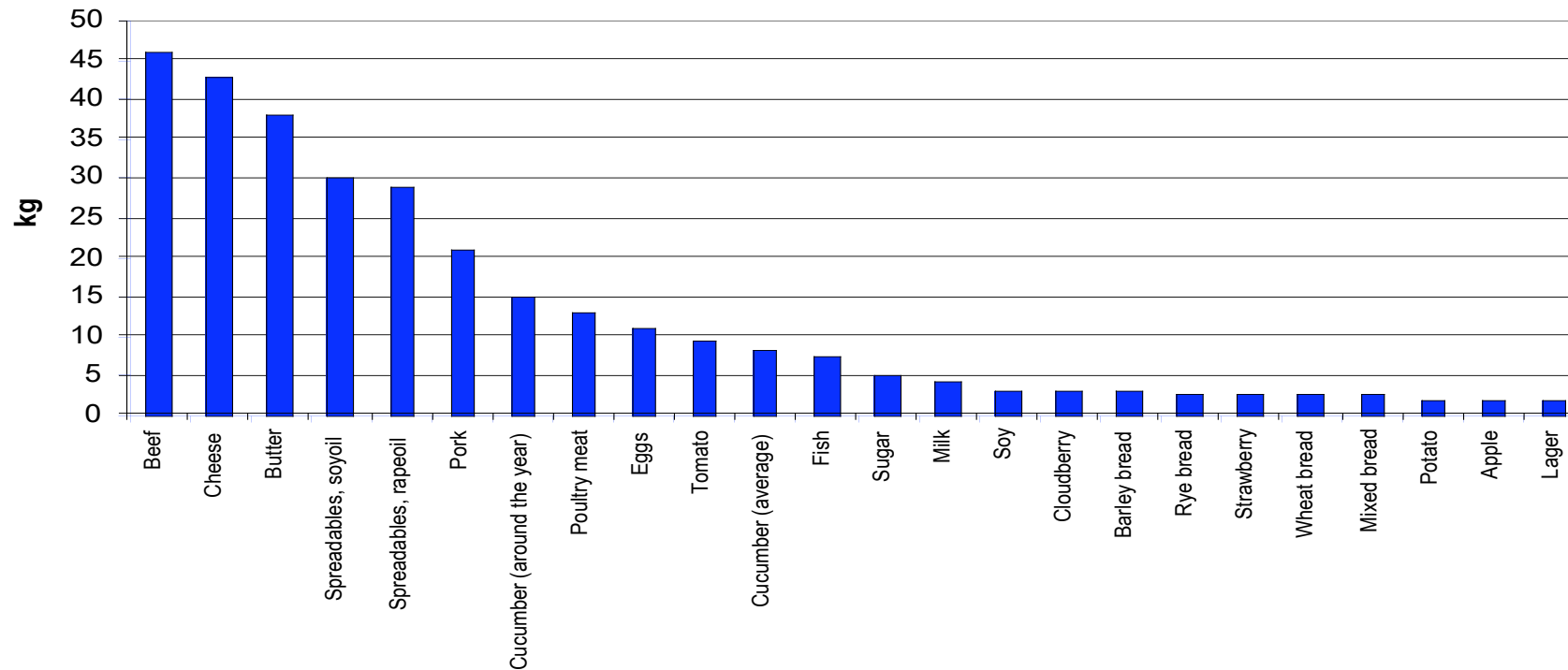
FIN-MIPS Household Overall results



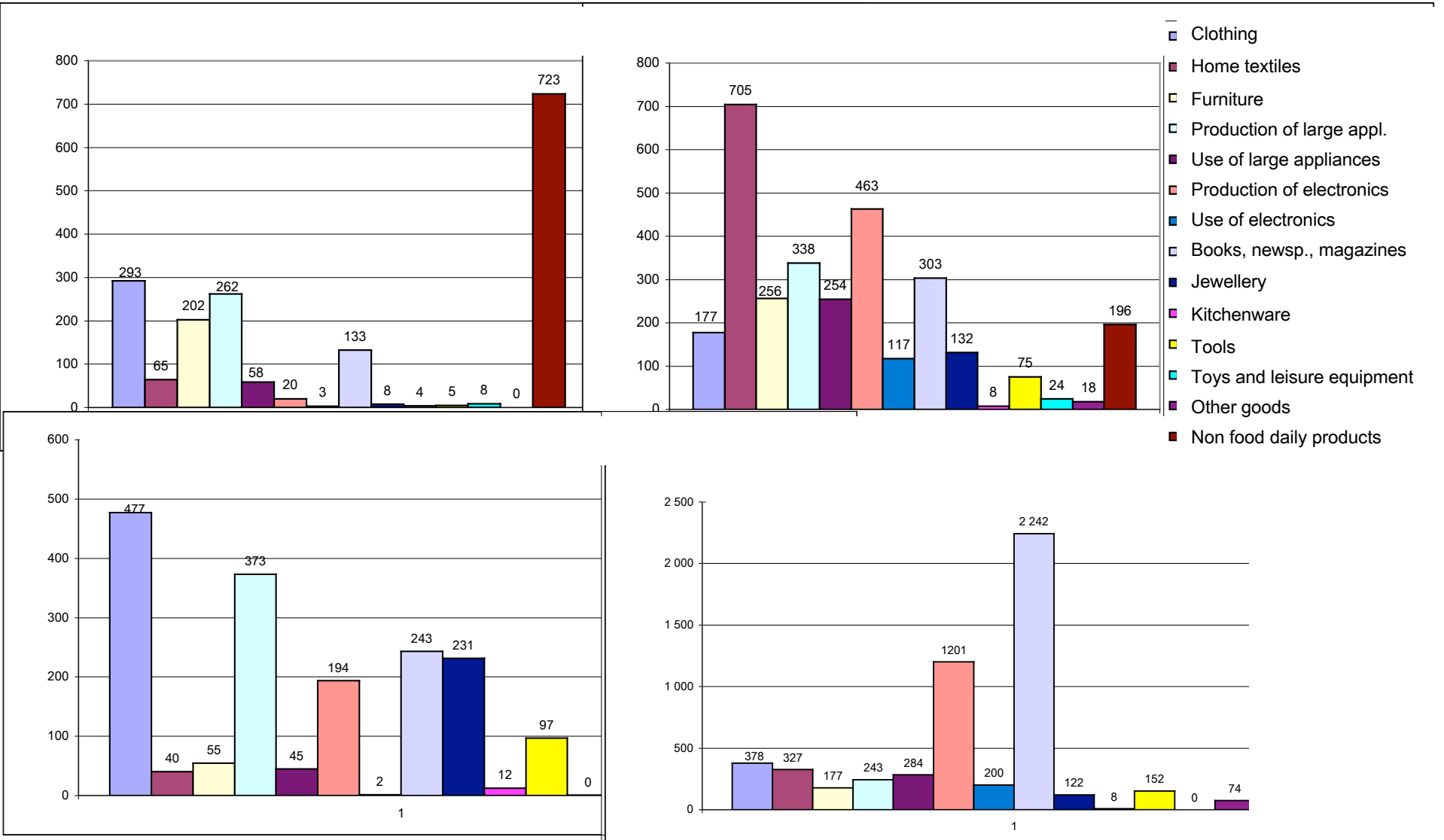
FIN-MIPS Household

Natural resource consumption of foodstuffs

TMR of foodstuffs (kg)



FIN-MIPS Household TMR for Goods and Appliances



The FIN-MIPS Household Project

Conclusions

Huge differences ⇒ huge potential for resource-efficiency

- Need for new technologies, new lifestyles and new policies
- Triangle of change: not only consumers but also business and politics

Need for creating general resource-efficiency awareness...

- ...with producers, retailers, consumers, politics, media

Growing importance of education and communication

- Tremendous public interest in Finland (1 media contact per day)
- Internet gains importance (onedidit.com, Finnish “Product Wiki“)
- Public discussion ⇒ households, companies, governments, media

⇒ Need for education and awareness-rising for all actors and on all levels

What information the consumer needs?

What's small, what's big, what's better? => Need for comparison ...

- Consumers want information on quantities (e.g. Food MIPS report very popular)
- Put things into relation
- Make results of action visible

... but comparison of what?

- Comparison between similar products (e.g. beef A vrs. beef B)
 - => Clear differences if only criteria-based (e.g. food miles, organic)
 - => Small differences if expressed in numbers (e.g. transport relevance small in total)
- Comparison between product groups (e.g. beef vrs. fish vrs. soy)
 - => Difficult on a criteria basis (e.g. green-labelled beef vrs. red-labelled soy?)
- Comparison of lifestyles
 - => How to break down to the level of action?
 - => Internet gains importance (e.g. onedidit.com, Finnish "Product Wiki")
 - => Is there a role for retailers?

Proposal: quantitative information on resource use

Quantitative information on backpacks and footprints

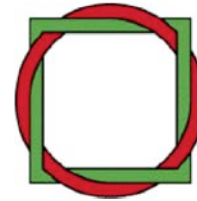
- Ecological backpack => material, energy, water, soil, CO₂
- Ecological footprint => land area, energy
- "Water footprint" => water
- "Carbon footprint" => CO₂ and other greenhouse gases, energy

How to present the information to the consumer

- Amounts should be visible
- Is there one best indicator or should it be a combined index?
- Absolute or relative figures (e.g. kg, m² or % of daily input or impact)
- Comparison within and between different levels:
production processes, products, product groups, lifestyles

Which information is sufficient?

- Carbon footprint << resource use, resource use << sustainability
- Resource use plus certain sustainability labels (organic, fair trade, ...)



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Thank you for your attention!



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