

What is the impact of human activities on the environment?

Ecological Footprint

The ecological footprint is used to assess the level of the consumption of available resources by human activities. Associated to bio-capacity, this indicator offers the possibility to calculate the ecological deficit or surplus in a region.

All the Mediterranean countries had an ecological deficit in 2005. This means that the environmental capacity of the region is used up more quickly than it is renewed.

The ecological footprint per capita decreased since 1996 in all of the Mediterranean countries except Greece, Spain, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In 2005, the overall ecological footprint in the Mediterranean countries reached 1.5 billion hectares, i.e. almost 8.6% of the worldwide one, while the Mediterranean population is around 7% of the world population.

The Mediterranean ecological footprint (3.3 hectares per inhabitant) is thus higher than the planet's ecological footprint (2.7 hectares per inhabitant).

The Mediterranean's ecological deficit (1.9 ha/inhab) is more than three times greater than the world's ecological deficit (0.6ha/inhab).

The ecological footprint of the northern Mediterranean countries (4.9 ha/inhab) is almost 2.5 times higher than that of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. Their ecological deficit (2.9 ha/inhab.) is very high (60% of their footprint, more than 3 times the deficit of the SEMC).

The gaps between the countries in terms of ecological footprint per unit of GDP are therefore reversed.

For example, France consumes 160 ha per million dollars; Italy consumes 170, while Albania consumes 405. Algeria consumes 274 ha per million of dollars and Syria consumes more than 500 ha per million of dollars

Definition

The ecological footprint refers to the pressure of human demand on the Earth's natural resources. This indicator assesses the surface area of land or sea that is biologically productive (in hectares per capita) necessary for a population to meet its consumption of resources and its needs in terms of waste absorption.

A country's footprint includes all the cultivated land, pasturage, forests and fishing areas that give the possibility to produce foodstuffs, fibres and wood necessary for human activity, to supply land for the construction of facilities and to absorb the waste emitted to produce energy.

The bio-capacity of a country depends on the number and type of biologically productive hectares located within its borders and on their average yield.

It should be noted that the ecological deficit corresponds to the amount by which the ecological footprint of a population goes beyond the bio-capacity of its territory.

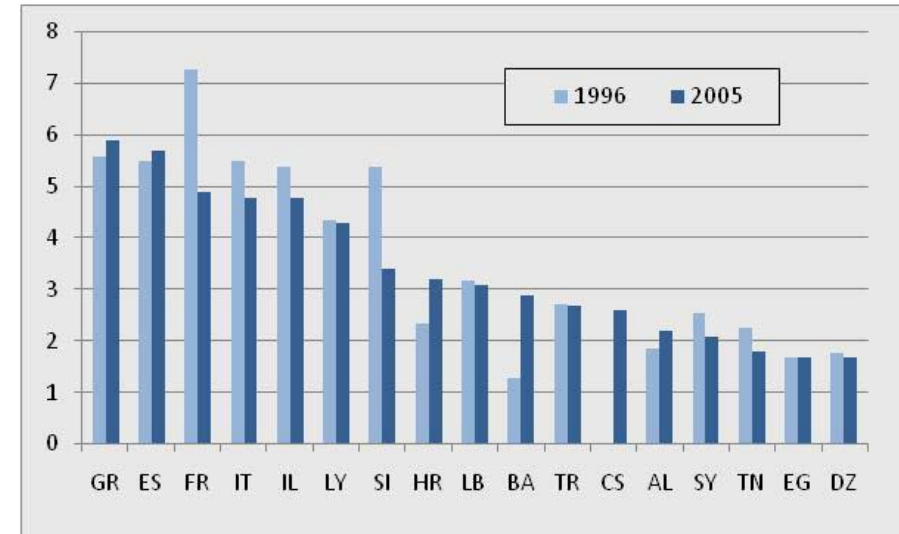
Precautions / Note

These calculations should be looked at with precaution because the methodology is still an object of debate, especially concerning bio-capacity calculations that depend on reliable data about the environment, information that is not yet fully available.

Sources / References

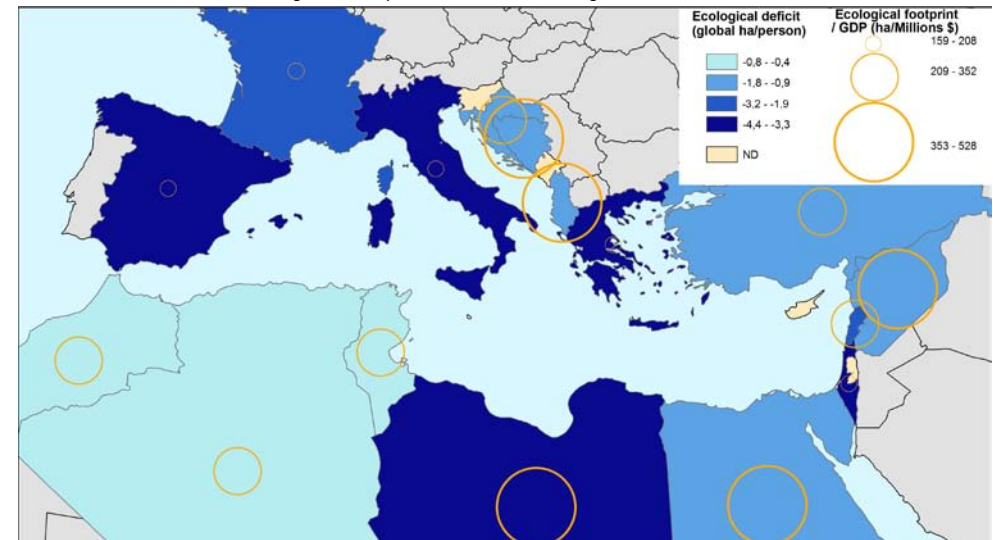
WWF, Zoological Society of London, Global Footprint Network, « Living Planet Report ».

Ecological Footprint 1996 - 2005 (ha/inhab)



Source : WWF, Zoological Society of London, Global Foot print Network

Ecological Footprint /GDP and ecological deficit (2005)



Source : WWF, Zoological Society of London, Global Foot print Network