

Press Release
24 November 2015

Sweden's "Minister for the Future" believes in a fossil-free future with economic growth

By 2030, Sweden plans to become a fossil-free country and will be one of the world's first fossil-free welfare nations. The benefits are clear in terms of creating a better environment, more attractive cities and new opportunities for jobs. One of the major questions being discussed at the upcoming COP21, the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, is whether it is possible for nations to grow their economies whilst at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions, known as "decoupling". Kristina Persson, Minister for Strategic Development and Nordic Co-operation, also known as Sweden's "Minister for the Future", believes decoupling is not only possible, but a must for all countries to achieve.

Since the mid-1990s, Sweden is one of few industrialised countries that has managed a decoupling of economic growth and GHG emissions: a rising economy paired with falling emission levels. Sweden's GHG emissions are among the lowest in the EU and OECD. Notably though, Sweden's GHG emissions totalled 55.8 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalents, compared with 71.8 million tons in 1990 – a 22 per cent reduction. Meanwhile, Sweden's GDP grew 58 per cent during this time period.

Persson wants to push Sweden forward, as well as encourage other countries. "We need to do much more than what we are doing presently... and many more countries must try to achieve what we are trying to achieve, to become a fossil-free country. It will be difficult, but possible".

There are many strategies in continuing this journey towards a fossil-free future without putting more pressure on the Earth's resources. For industry, one example is a major shift in response to the rising cost and limited availability of the Earth's finite raw materials, known as the "circular economy". The circular economy includes rethinking the industrial system's approach to recycling, reuse, and remanufacture of raw materials, with the goal of maximising efficiency of the earth's finite raw material resources whilst minimising energy use.

"Nine out of ten consumers don't know the term circular economy, but the big companies in the world definitely do", states Stina Behrens, Service Designer at Transformator Design in Stockholm, which support companies in developing new business models.

"There are quite a few companies that see new business opportunities growing within the circular economy. Major Swedish global players such as H&M and IKEA are looking into this, as a way of keeping their raw materials in the loop. I believe Sweden could really be in the forefront of this new business development".

See the Video News Release and Broll, to share and download, on <http://mediaroom.sweden.se>

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Other links:

Sweden and a fossil-free future

<http://www.government.se/government-policy/fossil-free-sweden>

Sweden will be one of the world's first fossil-free welfare countries. Not only because it is morally right with respect to future generations, but because it makes economic sense. To achieve this, all actors in society must work actively to reduce emissions. The Government has, therefore, launched Fossil-free Sweden – an initiative that will highlight actors who, in their activities, help solve the climate issue and achieve the goal of a fossil-free society.

The New Climate Economy

<http://newclimateeconomy.net>

<http://newclimateeconomy.report>

The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, and its flagship project The New Climate Economy, were set up to help governments, businesses and society make better-informed decisions on how to achieve economic prosperity and development while also addressing climate change.

The New Climate Economy was commissioned in 2013 by the governments of seven countries: Colombia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Norway, South Korea, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Circular Economy

<http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/interactive-diagram>