



Product stewardship in the United States: the changing policy landscape and the role of business

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As an engineer and scientist trained in cleaner production, I have always believed in the unlimited potential of humankind to find solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems. But we need to have the right incentives. This does not mean people and organizations should not change their consumption patterns, but rather that we can build the economy from a systems perspective, considering the entire lifecycle of products and services and the social, economic, and environmental impacts of our actions today and in the decades to come. The current global recession makes it even clearer that a systems approach is critical going forward to ensure stable and sustainable development in an increasingly interconnected world. Business, government, and civil society organizations all need to work together to design the rules of the new economic system where products last longer, have no toxic chemicals, and are reused and recycled; society as a whole consumes less; and people spend more time with family and friends and less time working to maintain their "standard of living."

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