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# Foreword

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This handbook could not have come at a more appropriate time. Late in 2013 the European Union (EU) published its 7th Environmental Action Programme (7th EAP), which sets out a long-term vision promoting the goal of ‘Living well, within the limits of our planet’. Concretely, the 7th EAP foresees a Europe in 2050 where: (1) low-carbon growth has been decoupled from resource use; (2) prosperity stems from an innovative, circular economy where nothing is wasted and resources are protected sustainably; and (3) biodiversity is protected, valued and restored in ways that enhance our society’s resilience.

Such ambitions mean going far beyond existing policy targets, so the 7th EAP promotes new ways of thinking and innovation. Indeed, to meet these challenges we will have to fundamentally change the systems which underpin human well-being, including our food systems, energy systems, housing systems and mobility systems. Several decades of policy interventions have largely focused on improving the efficiency of these systems in order to reduce their environmental impacts. But it is becoming increasingly clear that incremental improvements are not enough. We need instead to completely rethink our systems and the business models that support them, and make a transition to new systems that continue to fulfil societal needs but do so in an essentially sustainable way.

Changing consumption behaviour is a crucial element in this journey. To properly target policy, we still need a great deal of information, including sound information on what drives consumption behaviour and how to influence different consumer segments. We will need better understanding of these things, and more, if we are to move towards truly sustainable consumption and production systems.

This handbook provides a much-needed overview of the latest research findings on sustainable consumption. This is a very relevant, even necessary publication, important for anyone trying to understand consumption behaviour and how to move it in a sustainable direction. Hence, I warmly welcome this book and I look forward to using it as a reference in my daily work at the European Environment Agency, and hope others do the same.

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