

Sustainable Careers

In an environmental sense, the 'Concise Oxford English Dictionary' defines 'sustainable' as 'conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources'.

Recognition of global warming has led many organisations and individuals to assess and reduce their own impact on the planet, often called their 'carbon footprint'. Every year, increasing opportunities arise to engage in work promoting or affecting this.

Media depictions of such occupations often make them sound generally science-based and exclusively at the professional level. Sustainable opportunities are in fact increasing not only in non-science areas, but at technician and support levels, too, and often requiring practical skills.

The locking-up process known as 'carbon capture' through extensive tree planting is being actively pursued in Britain and worldwide. This has increased jobs in tree science (arboriculture), and additional specialisms (like soil science and entomology) pertaining to the immediate environment. Ongoing monitoring also embraces fields such as meteorology, oceanography, and marine- and freshwater biology.

Between the years 2025 and 2050, specific targets must be hit to achieve stated environmental goals. A sustainable occupation should therefore be a 'safe' career option well into the future, and only extended by COVID-induced postponements. However, individual countries' very differing climatic, political and social conditions are likely to make timetabling specific tasks far from easy. Keeping track of this, and prompting action, will require numerous administrative jobs.

Most people recognise the importance of wind power, solar energy, and preserving peatlands. A few less obvious activities, however, may play a comparable role in 'saving the planet'. A cluster of related ones are: logging so as to minimise damage to forests, planting fast-growing bamboo, and building with wood rather than bricks and mortar,

Rice is the staple food of three billion people but grown traditionally gives off excessive 'greenhouse' gas. Rice grown in soil (instead of paddy fields) may be the answer - to date, over 600 varieties have been laboratory-tested, those with a good root system seeming the most promising.

Imaginative, fresh approaches to other established practices are leading to such as new ways of keeping food cool, and enabling ships to slip more easily through water, thereby needing less fuel. Studying how nature achieves comparable effects can often provide valuable inspiration.

While commercial organisations increasingly value sustainable methods, not all do. Formulating and enforcing regulations are therefore essential, opening legal careers within companies, and government agencies at local, national, and international levels.

Many charities earnestly promote sustainable practices, especially in developing countries. Often, this involves training local populations in better use of existing resources, or how to operate new equipment. Other charity employees may be involved in such as marketing and fund-raising, where financial and business skills are at a premium.

A healthy range of first degree or apprentice qualifications will keep open many sustainable options. However, a very specialised first degree or a higher degree is better chosen only

when founded on a sincere and deep interest, and/or where related work seems certain be available in the future.

Here are 10 well-established occupational areas offering sustainable careers:

- Agriculture
- Botany (Plant Science)
- Business
- Chemistry
- Engineering
- Forestry
- Freshwater/Marine Biology
- IT
- Meteorology
- Statistics

and 10 increasingly relevant ones:

- Construction
- Ecology
- Education
- Fire Engineering
- Food Science
- Genetics
- Law
- Materials Science
- Urban Planning
- Waste Management

Greta Thunberg has shown how young people particularly can be galvanised to large-scale action on climate change. Awareness-raising on a small scale can be effective, too, and a good place to begin. Increasingly, schools or colleges are forging links with universities for this purpose, and your child would do well to investigate any already established connections where they study, or even to initiate these.

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