

Faith Economy and Ecology

Draft principles to guide economic and environmental policy initiatives

We believe that humanity is being called to radically change its interactions with each other and Earth, and work together for changes at all levels of society to help build a new creation that is inclusive of all and that fits within the physical capacities of Earth. This will entail change from a focus on material goods to holistic well-being; from excess to sufficiency; from exclusion to inclusion; from competition to cooperation; from pursuing privilege to serving the common good; from the pre-eminence of humanity to the reverence for all life. Since specific economic and environmental policy initiatives are unlikely to address such broad goals, the following principles can help guide our response to such initiatives:

1. Global commons.

For the preservation of our future, the global commons must be protected. This includes not only our common air, oceans, fresh water, and biota, but our cultural heritage and accumulated information. In a system where material resources become more limited, this common wealth becomes increasingly precious and needs to be preserved for the common good and not subject to rules of private ownership.

Policy guidance:

- Does it move toward the idea that basic resources are finite and a public good?
- Does it tend toward a shift in the tax base, toward higher taxing of depletion and pollution?
- Does it support the concept of putting the remaining commons into public trust?
- Does it support the concept of the airwaves as a commons, with public regulation of media and advertising?
- Does it support freeing knowledge from private ownership?

2. Wealth distribution and livelihood.

The goal of an economy is to ensure livelihood, not to make a profit. Resources and wealth should be distributed such that everyone can have a livelihood. Extreme wealth disparities damage both the wealthy and the poor.

Policy guidance:

- Does it tend toward limiting the range of inequality and income distribution?
- Does it tend toward a progressive consumption tax?
- Does it strengthen a safety net to support subsistence for all?
- Does it tend toward a living wage?
- Does it tend toward flexibility in the length of working day/weeks/years?
- Does it allow for greater regulation of capital mobility between countries, to better allow nations to prioritize meeting social needs?
- Does it move away from “free trade”, and encourage protection from standards-lowering competition from abroad?

3. Production.

Systems of production should be organized in a way that minimizes extraction, waste, and transport costs, and maximizes food access and durability of necessary goods.

Systems of finance should be organized to support such production.

Policy guidance:

- Does it encourage socially beneficial corporations?
- Does it tax/regulate/subsidize in a way that minimizes extraction and waste?
- Does it support alternative community-based financial institutions?

4. Governance.

Democracy requires that governments freely elected by the people, have the power to establish measures of common well-being, and restrain institutions that are no longer serving the common good or are threatening the future viability of life on earth.

Policy guidance:

- Does it support alternate ways of measuring societal well-being?
- Does it limit fractional reserve banking?
- Does it tend to limit control of the money supply by profit-making institutions?
- Does it tend to limit the power of corporations?
- Does it promote the concept of subsidiarity?