

Clean growth

Growth is the magic word in economics. Growth provides for stability, a strong position against competition, coverage of the ever-exploding costs of wages, buildings and investments. Growth is one of the major demands for keeping shareholders satisfied. Growth puts into motion the flywheel of more growth, and every entrepreneur from small to the biggest in the world wants that flywheel to spin.

But growth has its drawbacks. In Western Europe this summer we had an extremely warm July and a very wet August. Autumn started out with a warm September and we're heading for a record-breaking three-month period: the warmest autumn in three hundred years. Australia is suffering the worst drought in a thousand years and suicide amongst desperate farmers there is reaching epidemic proportions. Rivers in parts of China have also dried out. The polar ice keeps creeping back. And predictions for the already heavily stricken African continent do not offer much hope for the future. Facts and fearsome forecasts about climate change are on the news every day.

Largely contributing to these changes has been the unbridled economic growth of the last fifty, to a hundred years. I think it's fair to say, though, that the geomatics business has a totally different role in this global game of economics. We are often to be found on the green side. The standard geomatics office is clean, pleasant and often surprisingly small, with pride of place given to server rooms full of environmentally conscious people working on GIS or providing data to monitor and provide protection from all the aforementioned hazards. That's quite a congenial picture. Not least because it flies in the face of the economic principle of a flywheel that spins only when there's growth to spin it. The same goes for companies in the geomatics business as for the most polluting concerns in the world: growth is necessary to guarantee their stable future.

Uncertain times lie ahead for us all, stretching into coming decades. And whilst prophets like Al Gore may tour the world raising awareness of the dangers, the negative sides of economic growth will not be turned around so easily. It will take years, even given the best intentions. This means that opportunities for the geo-business will keep on growing over coming years. For the next, 2007, my wish would be that you too use your economic growth for the best, to help decrease the drawbacks caused by others.

Happy, healthy, clean and booming 2007!