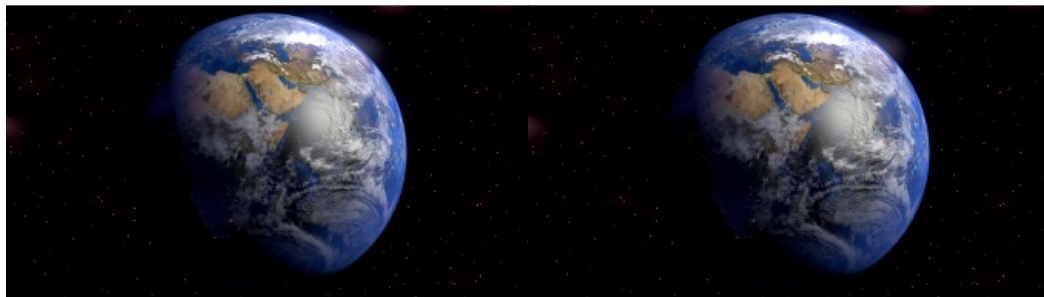


Earth Overshoot Day



“If everybody lived like people in the Netherlands, we would need 3.6 Earths. It would take 7.3 Netherlands to regenerate everything the country’s residents demand from nature,” according to the Earth Overshoot Day website. Earth Overshoot Day is the date when humanity’s demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. In other words,

from that day onwards we are living in debt to our planet.

The [Global Footprint Network](#) organization calculates the Earth Overshoot Day not only for the whole world, but also at country level – and there are overwhelming differences between the various nations. The Global Footprint Network’s list of countries reveals that my home country – the Netherlands – reached its overshoot day on 12 April, which is slightly behind Canada, the USA, Australia and South Korea. In contrast, Indonesia, Ecuador and Jamaica will not reach their Earth Overshoot Day until December. In 2021, the global Earth Overshoot Day was on 26 July.

If you’re curious about your own influence on the climate and the environment, you can pause to critically reflect on how sustainable your lifestyle is. How do you live, what do you eat and how do you travel? The answers to these questions provide information about your personal ecological footprint and inspiration for how you could reduce it. But you can also consider this from two angles as a geospatial professional. Firstly, how can you make your business operations more sustainable? And secondly, how can the our industry contribute to a smaller ecological footprint?

Thanks to the arrival and ever-increasing availability of so much relevant technology, reducing greenhouse gas emissions is no longer rocket science. For companies in the land surveying sector, the first step is to improve the sustainability of their own business operations. Dutch land surveying company [Geomaat](#) is one example of what can be done; it has completely disconnected its offices from the gas supply and is well on the way to transitioning its entire fleet to electrically powered vehicles.

At the same time, there is growing demand for sustainable geospatial business solutions. FIG President Rudolf Staiger [recently](#) told *GIM International* that the majority of the global players in the surveying and geospatial industry are high-tech companies with powerful R&D departments. They can play a key role in contributing to a safer and more sustainable world by developing innovative products. He is right, of course. For example, climate change can be tackled by helping people to lead a smarter lifestyle, not only in smart cities but also by developing solutions for rural areas. Spatial information, big data, surveying, BIM, land administration and other areas of geomatics expertise are all essential factors in this context.

The exact point in the calendar year that Earth Overshoot Day occurs depends on how quickly humanity depletes the planet’s resources, including by engaging in deforestation, emitting greenhouse gases by burning fossil fuels and also overfarming/overfishing. We have now reached the decisive years; will we manage to push the ‘Stop’ button on climate change in time? When I was a youngster, the Dutch government ran a public information campaign based around the following slogan: “A better environment starts with you”. With this in mind, I think we can all do something to make our own personal – and professional – lives greener.



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