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The article represents consideration of the possibility of using ecological footprint as an indicator of the level of ecological culture of first-year students.

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Currently, human consumption of natural resources far exceeds the planet's ability to restore and produce these resources. Numerous researchers are convinced that humankind should be responsible for their past actions and for the well-being of future generations [1]. The concept of "ecological footprint" is actively used in order to illustrate the ideas of sustainable development. It characterizes the measure of human impact on the environment and allows us to calculate the optimal size of the territory for the production of environmental resources we consume and the absorption of waste.

A special questionnaire has been developed in order to be able to determine the quantity of their impact on the environment individually. It includes a number of questions about the size of the living space, the type of energy used for heating, transport, food habits, the use of water and paper, and the treatment of household waste [2]. The questionnaire allows you to assess the impact of various types of activities on the size of the ecological footprint and to plan activities for the conservation and restoration of natural resources. The result allows seeing how many hectares of the earth's surface are needed to respond your needs and how many planets will be needed if all of the people will live the same way you do. According to the report of the World Wildlife Fund "Living Planet 2018", the ecological footprint of the average consumer from the developed countries of the world is several times higher than the corresponding indicator of the consumer from countries with underdeveloped economies. These results are associated with differences in lifestyle and consumption patterns, including the amount of food, goods and services consumed by residents, the use of natural resources, and the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from the production of these goods and services.

We conducted a survey among first-year students of the specialty "Environmental Ecology" EI "International Sakharov Environmental Institute of Belarusian State University" to determine their ecological footprint. During the study, 71 students were interviewed. As a result, it was revealed that in order to fulfill the needs of respondents, 3 hectares of productive land per person in average is required. In order for one planet to be enough for all of us, there should be no more than 1.8 hectares of productive land per person, which means 1.2 hectares are used on credit. Only 20% of students leave an ecological footprint that not exceeds 1.8 hectares. The majority of the points were scored according to the indicators "transport" (1990) and "household waste" (1551). We all produce a lot of waste, but by sorting garbage and reusing packaging you can significantly reduce your environmental footprint.

Analysis of questionnaires showed how students lead an ecological lifestyle:

- 57,8 % of respondents always turn off the light when leaving the room;
- 35,2 % always turn off household devices without leaving them on standby mode;
- 46,5 % try to buy bulk products, rather than packaged ones, the packaging received at the store is used repeatedly, and they also throw waste paper in a separate container;
- 42,3 % throw plastic packaging in a separate container;
- 16,9 % use the household waste compost to fertilize their land.

A simple technique for calculating the ecological footprint index makes it possible to use it widely for informational and educational purposes. Using the ecological footprint as an indicator of sustainability allows us to recognize individual habits and value orientations of humanity and evaluate the results of the impact of economic activity on the environment.

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