

UNILEVER AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Unilever makes many of the world's favourite brands, such as Lipton, Dove, Knorr, Magnum, Axe, Surf and many others. Our products meet people's everyday social needs such as washing, cooking and cleaning and, because they are used two billion times a day in over half the households on the planet, they make small but important differences to the quality of people's lives.

Our heritage and purpose

Our 19th century founders were businessmen with a social conscience who believed it was possible to do well by doing good. Our Dutch founders built the world's first factories to make margarine, a cheaper alternative to butter, enabling ordinary people to afford essential daily fats.

Our British founder, William Lever, produced Sunlight and Lifebuoy soap, bringing hygiene to millions at a time when cholera and dysentery were widespread in Victorian slums. He did it by setting his company an inspiring and audacious purpose – to make cleanliness commonplace – and by using advertising and marketing to create a culture where being clean was desirable. Over time this became the new social norm.

At Unilever, we have set ourselves a new purpose which draws on our founders' vision and pioneering purpose: to make sustainable living commonplace. We want to create a culture where living sustainably is desirable and achievable, where sustainable lifestyles are the new social norm.

Because our products help improve the quality of people's lives, we believe that the most scalable and sustainable way we can make a difference to society is through our brands and how we do business. It means the more we grow, the bigger the difference we can make. But we cannot do this without regard for the environmental impacts of our products. That's why in 2010 we set ourselves the ambitious goal of doubling the size of our business, whilst reducing our environmental footprint and increasing our positive social impacts.

By putting sustainability at the heart of our business model, we aim to demonstrate how our approach contributes to a virtuous circle of growth: the more our products meet social needs and help people live sustainably, the more popular our brands become and the more we grow. And the more efficient we are at managing resources, such as energy and raw materials, the more we lower our costs, reduce risks to our business and can invest in sustainable innovation and brands.

UNILEVER SUSTAINABLE LIVING PLAN

2010 was also the year we announced our blueprint for reducing our environmental footprint and increasing our positive social impacts - the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan. This has three ambitious goals, all to be achieved by 2020:

- To help more than a billion people take action to improve their health and wellbeing
- To halve the environmental footprint of our products across the value chain, not just those relating to manufacturing or that are within our direct control
- To source 100% of our agricultural raw materials sustainably

By the end of 2012, two years in to our 10 year plan, we had:

- Reached 224 million people with safe drinking water and behaviour change programmes. These are helping to reduce diarrhoeal and respiratory disease through handwashing with soap, improving oral health, and improving self-esteem among young people
- Reduced greenhouse gases by 6% across the value chain
- Sourced 36% of our agricultural raw materials sustainably, training around 450,000 smallholder farmers in the process

Our approach to helping consumers improve their health and well-being and reduce their environmental footprint involves a combination of product innovation and behaviour change.

Examples of product innovation include developing foods that contain less salt and saturated fat, but taste just as good if not better; concentrated and compacted detergents which reduce greenhouse gases by up to half but clean laundry just as well; a fabric conditioner that enables clothes washed by hand to be rinsed in one bucket of water instead of three; and dry shampoos which reduce greenhouse gases by around 90% compared to washing hair with heated water.

However, technology alone will not be enough to help us reach our target of halving our environmental footprint. This can only be achieved through a combination of structural change leading to less carbon intensive energy provision, in-home changes such as installing low-flow showerheads and eco-efficient boilers, and changes in consumers' household habits .

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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