

Unilever to halve CO2 impact

Unilever has announced plans to halve the environmental footprint of its products by 2020, to help 1 billion people improve their health and well-being and to source all of its agricultural raw materials sustainably.



At the launch of Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan, announced simultaneously in London, Rotterdam, Delhi and New York, CEO Paul Polman explained: "Continuing to increase our environmental impact as we grow our business is not viable."

He also announced ambitious plans to help over 1 billion people take action to improve their health and well-being, mostly in developing countries, over the next 10 years.

SA needs

In South Africa, Unilever South Africa identifies the local needs and aspirations of the country as its own. Its programmes reflect its commitment to meeting the special challenges posed by South Africa's growing and emerging economy. Unilever South Africa is committed to increasing awareness and improving overall health and hygiene conditions among the urban and rural poor. The company has put into place various initiatives throughout its supply chain to minimise its environmental impact. Ever mindful of South Africa's fight against HIV/AIDs, the company's HIV Roadmap is designed to support the government's strategic framework as well as address the needs of the individuals within the organisation and, through them, the community. Through its efforts across the board, Unilever SA aims to deliver long-term sustainable growth, by helping to create a South African community that is healthy, empowered and poised for further growth.

Halve emissions

Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan sets out over 50 social, economic and environmental targets. It will have Unilever, whose global brands include Dove, Omo, Knorr and Lipton, halve the greenhouse gas emissions, water and waste used not just by the company in its direct operations, but also by its suppliers and consumers.

Over two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions and half the water used in Unilever products' lifecycle come from consumer

use, so this is a major commitment on an unprecedented scale.

"People tell us they want to reduce their environmental impact, but find it hard to change their behaviour and don't know how they can make a difference," explained Paul Polman.

"By halving the total carbon, water and waste impact of our products, primarily through innovation in the way we source, make and package them, we can help people make a small difference every time they use them. As our products are used 2 billion times a day in nearly every country in the world, our consumers' small actions add up to make a big difference."

Other key goals

Unilever plans to achieve by or before 2020 include:

- Sourcing 100% of its agricultural raw materials sustainably, including, by 2015, 100% sustainable palm oil;
- Changing the hygiene habits of 1 billion people in Asia, Africa and Latin America so that they wash their hands with Lifebuoy soap at key times during the day, helping to reduce diarrhoeal disease, the world's second biggest cause of infant mortality;
- Making safe drinking water available to half a billion people by extending sales of its low-cost in-home water purifier, Pureit, from India to other countries;
- Improving livelihoods in developing countries by working with Oxfam, Rainforest Alliance and others to link over 500 000 smallholder farmers and small-scale distributors into its supply chain.

Commenting that Unilever wants to be sustainable "in every sense of the word", Polman said: "There are billions of people who want the improvements to their health and well-being that everyday products like ours provide and who want to live sustainably. Our aim is to help people in developing countries improve their quality of life without a big increase in their environmental impacts, and to help those in developed markets maintain a good standard of living while reducing theirs."

No conflict between goals and growth

Polman saw no conflict between Unilever achieving its sustainability goals and growing its business. "We have ambitious plans for our business, but we can only achieve them if we de-couple growth from environmental impacts and find new ways of doing things. We are already finding that tackling sustainability challenges provides new opportunities for sustainable growth: it creates preference for our brands, builds business with our retail customers, drives our innovation, grows our markets and, in many cases, generates cost savings."

Download the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan and view the global launch webcast at: www.sustainable-living.unilever.com

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