

The business case for change

The consumer goods industry is leading the charge towards sustainable development through positive, collective actions and cross-sectoral collaborations



■ Kevin Hyland, UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner, speaking at the CGF's 2016 Sustainable Retail Summit

It is without question that the private sector has a central role to play in achieving a more sustainable world. Although forward-thinking governments are necessary to push societies towards more sustainable practices, industry influence is equally imperative.

The collective impact companies have on the wellbeing of people and the planet is extensive, and it is therefore essential that collaboration and partnerships be built into the fabric of the private sector if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), as the only global industry network bringing together consumer goods retailers and manufacturers, is a strong proponent of this essential collaborative approach. More than 400 companies comprise the membership base of the CGF, including Nestlé, Unilever and Walmart. The CEO-led organisation supports its members in the implementation of public commitments to drive positive change in the industry and throughout the wider global community.

The SDGs serve as a framework for all work done at the CGF. Currently, its work directly addresses 10 out of the 17 goals – from taking action on climate change (Goal 13) through its zero-net deforestation commitment, to ensuring sustainable consumption (Goal 12) through its halving food

waste resolution, to promoting decent work for all (Goal 8.7) with the first-ever industry commitment on eradicating forced labour, to name a few.

Collaboration is key

The thread that connects all the goals together, however, is SDG 17: partnerships. Partnerships and collaboration are at the core of all CGF commitments in order to find collective solutions to the world's largest sustainability challenges.

In 2012 for example, the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 (TFA2020) was founded via a partnership between the CGF and the US government with the mission of mobilising all actors to collaborate in reducing commodity-driven tropical deforestation. Other cross-sectoral initiatives are the Food Loss and Waste Protocol, Champions 12.3 and the Banking Environment Initiative, all of which include CGF participation.

Additionally, as part of our member-driven efforts to eradicate forced labour, the CGF has engaged with a variety of prominent stakeholders including the International Labour Organization and the UK's first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. These cross-sectoral initiatives are a testament to the consumer goods industry commitment to SDG 17 while addressing other SDGs in the process.

Incremental progress has been made through these collaborations, including the establishment of the FLW Standard (the first-ever global standard to measure food loss and waste), the recent inclusion of HFCs in the Montreal Protocol and the announcement of three Priority Industry Principles to help stop forced labour in global supply chains.

The challenges ahead are numerous and complex, but these positive steps forward being taken in the private sector coupled with the strong stance taken by governments in the ratification of the Paris Agreement are clear signs we are heading in the right direction to meet the SDGs.

We, as a global community, must keep the momentum going and continue partnerships and ongoing collaboration if we truly wish to create a better world for this generation and those to come. ■

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