

# Sustainable Development Goals in Practice

Sustainability is rapidly becoming a mega-trend in the food and beverage industry, and many global companies are incorporating United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals into their corporate strategies. However, only few businesses have the tools to successfully incorporate these goals in their daily operation.



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## NIRAS SDG TOOLS AND METHODS

In NIRAS we have chosen to work with the SDGs in the services we offer. Two tools are typically used to support projects and customers in the work with SDG programs:

**NIRAS Capture** – is a tool, which is used to follow the development of a project to ensure that the objectives are met. This is a tool, which has been used within the international development segment for many projects.

**NIRAS SDG Audit** – is a methodology and a tool set with which improvement initiatives are identified and assessed in a customised manner from an economic, resource efficiency and sustainability perspective. All improvements are ranked in terms of their financial impact as well as their SDG impact.

Not so many years ago sustainability in the Food & Beverage industry was a topic that mainly concerned the CSR departments. Now this has changed. From being a fringe phenomenon, sustainability has grown into a global mega-trend.

Many companies have incorporated selected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their corporate strategy and communicate their intend to become more sustainable. But most of these companies face difficulties when it comes to implementing their SDG strategy in their processes. Apart from

a small percentage, most businesses have not identified the necessary tools to assess their impact against the SDGs and to incorporate the SDG strategies in daily operation.

## Why the Sustainable Development Goals?

In 2015 all 193 member states of the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals to strive for 'peace and prosperity for people and the planet'. The goals are 'an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership'.

SDGs in a triple bottom line perspective.





energy and water were reduced. In addition, the productivity of the plant was increased with reduced complexity.

Another company was concerned with the discharge of wastewater to a large recipient and the potential impact of updating their wastewater handling. At the same time, a low cost for water and wastewater treatment had meant that the focus on resource optimisation had been neglected. With a short-time survey it was possible to identify a number of internal initiatives, which will result in savings on product loss, energy and water, but also opportunities to turn considered loss into product. This will reduce the discharge significantly, and thereby also reduce the need for an investment in wastewater handling.

In order to substantiate the assessment of SDGs for projects, NIRAS has developed a tool that will allow for specific identification of sub-goal and the impact generated by a specific project. The tool is freely available through NIRAS. Other advanced project tools and methods that are introduced by NIRAS to address the challenges that most companies confront in relation to implementing SDGs are shown in the textbox.

There seems to be little doubt that increased consumer awareness and political change towards sustainability will increasingly influence all industries, including food and beverage. Therefore, implementing SDG strategies can prove crucial to securing the future prosperity of the companies in this sector.

They are aimed at ending poverty, improving health and education, reducing inequality, and spurring economic growth, while tackling climate change and environmental destruction.

The SDGs are strongly linked to the “Triple bottom Line” concept of balancing interests in 3 dimensions: Economy, Social and Environment.

The balance means that all dimensions need to be sustainable. So changes relate to social and environmental dimensions and not the economic will not be sustainable.

### What does it mean for the Food & Beverage industry?

The SDG work in a company would normally begin by identifying which goals the organization want to improve and have an impact on. While each company has its individual reason for selecting a focus, a clear pattern emerges regarding the SDG focus areas that have been selected by some of the global dairy brands.

The majority of the surveyed dairy companies identified SDGs 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15 and 17 as most relevant for their business. However, there is still a difference from having selected corporate goals to having them integrated on an operational level.

### How to make the goals operational?

When a company decides to make the SDGs operational, it will have to align development projects and daily operation with the SDGs.

NIRAS has recently been assisting two clients in precisely this sort of SDG transition process:

A company evaluated impact by producing with late customisation of products and a more flexible warehouse set-up. By assessing the production set-up, the company was capable of reducing the number of change-overs through the different departments. By having longer product series the loss of product, consumption of detergents,

Selected global dairy brands’ SDG focus. Source: Brand websites.

