

## Unilever battles to convince customers to go green

Unilever has seen the total environmental impact of its products rise five per cent during the past four years, as it acquired a new shampoo business and struggled to convince consumers to use less energy for hot showers.

The consumer products giant today released an update on its ambitious Sustainability Living Plan, through which it aims to halve the greenhouse gas impact of its deodorants, food, detergents, and other products between 2010 and 2020, confirming it is on track to meet the overarching goal for its full value chain despite challenges in some areas of the business.

The report revealed the company has made good progress on a number of fronts, including slashing the carbon emissions impact of its manufacturing processes by 32 per cent compared to 2008, primarily through the installation of advanced clean technologies and encouraging more efficient behaviour by employees.

The company confirmed it has also made strides in reducing emissions from its transport fleet and refrigeration technologies, and has slashed energy use from its offices.

However, Unilever revealed its overall emissions per consumer rose by five per cent since 2010, mainly because it acquired Alberto Culver, which produces a number of major brands including TRESemme, Alberto VO5 and St. Ives.

As such, the company admitted it was likely to miss a target to get 200 million consumers to buy products and tools that will help them to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions while washing and showering by 2015.

"Two thirds of our value chain GHG impacts are in consumer use, primarily heated water for showering and bathing, which is more difficult for us to influence," the report stated. "External factors such as decarbonising energy grids and effective carbon pricing will play a critical role in reducing GHG emissions, as well as product innovation and consumer behaviour change."

Paul Polman, chief executive of Unilever, said it had been easier to achieve environmental targets directly within the company's control, but it was now looking to develop more innovative solutions to reduce consumer energy use.

"We're making good progress in reshaping our business for sustainable, equitable growth," he said. "But we need to do more."

Unilever also today added three new targets to its Sustainable Living Plan, aiming to boost fairness in the workplace, improve gender equality, and develop an "inclusive business".

"We have always recognised the bigger role that businesses need to play, and now is the moment for Unilever to step up and expand efforts in key areas, driving transformational change where we know we can make the biggest impact," added Polman. "In this way we will leverage our scale and work collaboratively in partnership with others to reach a tipping point in areas that will make a significant difference."

Despite the difficulty of convincing consumers to cut their environmental impact, Unilever has been broadly applauded by green groups for taking leadership in the battle to reduce carbon emissions.

"It is really exciting to see a huge multi-national business take such a bold and progressive approach to how it recognises and leverages its size, scale and influence," said Ben Kellard, head of sustainable business at Forum for the Future, in response to the latest report. "Learning and adapting is important in any business strategy, but it's even more impressive when companies, like Unilever, revise an already innovative plan with the intention of bringing about broader change on a global scale. We hope this new plan - which includes stepping up plans to tackle several major global sustainability challenges - helps Unilever to achieve the scaling up of the delivery of sustainability across its business and brands that we believe it is capable of."

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