

General Mills Addressing Climate Change Globally

The countdown to the COP21 UN negotiations on climate in December is on and all eyes will soon be on Paris as government leaders from around the world define a new global deal to address climate change.

Climate change has been top of mind for many individuals, businesses and government leaders for decades, but the COP21 represents the first time the world firmly positions climate change as a critical global issue that is best addressed at scale.

It's exciting to see growing global coalitions come together to promote practical, innovative solutions to protect the long term health of our shared planet. From the historic U.S.-China climate agreement last fall; to the Pope's encyclical and unprecedented call for action on climate change; to the joint commitments from Brazil, U.S. and China in July to curtail climate change, it's clear that the world is getting serious about climate.

I am also especially proud to be a part of a leading global food company that is committed to being a part of the solution on climate change – General Mills.

As part of our company's continued efforts to conserve and protect natural resources, we announced last month a commitment to reduce absolute greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 28 percent across our full value chain – from farm to fork to landfill – over the next 10 years (versus our 2010 baseline).

As Ken Powell, chairman and CEO of General Mills, noted in a recent CSRwire blog, our approach to reduce absolute emissions by 28 percent over the next 10 years will not revolutionize our business. Rather, it will be an extension of efforts to reduce our environmental footprint through continuous improvement and sustainable sourcing.

Similar to my counterparts in the U.S. and around the world, those of us who work in Europe and Australasia have long been committed to serving the world by making food people love and doing so with the environment in mind. For more than a decade, we have worked to mitigate the impacts of climate change by investing in energy efficiency and clean energy innovation within our production facilities and by working closely with our suppliers to promote sustainable agriculture practices.

Following are just a few examples of this work.

Converting Waste into Energy

We seek innovations that enable our facilities to create value for the environment and General Mills. For example, at our Häagen-Dazs plant in Northern France, we convert liquid waste into energy. Since 2008, the system has contributed to reducing natural gas use by more than 15 percent. This level of reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is the equivalent to taking nearly 275 cars off the road.

In addition to reducing emissions, the methane generated is used to power a turbine that produces electricity for the national grid. It's a virtuous cycle.

Sourcing Locally

Whenever possible, we seek opportunities to source raw materials from local growers and suppliers. This approach reduces transportation needs as well as supports our local economy.

In our San Adrian, Spain facility, where we produce Old El Paso Mexican-inspired recipes, we source vegetables like tomatoes, onions and peppers for the products from local farmers. Similarly, in Arras, France, we source milk directly from local dairy farmers to make our premium Häagen-Dazs ice cream.

We also work closely with dairy growers and suppliers across the EUAU to promote sustainable agriculture practices. General Mills Europe is an active member of the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform, which facilitates sharing of knowledge and initiatives to support the development and implementation of sustainable agriculture practices worldwide involving stakeholders from across the food chain.

Reducing Impact through Logistics

We also work with our logistics service providers and retail customers to reduce the environmental impact of storing and shipping our products.

In the U.K., for example, our warehouse and shipping provider installed solar panels in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its facilities. In addition, our Häagen-Dazs ice cream and Jus Rol frozen products in the U.K. are stored and distributed along with products from other food suppliers to our major customers. These consolidated deliveries ensure that vehicles are full each time they leave a warehouse or delivery center, further reducing mileage and CO2e emissions.

Looking beyond 2025, General Mills' long term aspiration is to achieve sustainable emission levels by 2050, which by today's scientific consensus would require a reduction of 50-70% absolute emissions.

I am proud of the progress we've made and our long-term commitment to curb the future environmental footprint of our value chain. Much work remains and we will not get there on our own. Each of us – individuals, companies and governments – will play an important part in protecting our planet for future generations.

We hope you'll join us.