
1. The Food Industry's role in Sustainable Development

Context:

- The world is moving towards sustainable development with focus on attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. In this context the role of food industry is extremely important to attain the sustainability.

Why focus on sustainable Development?

- **"Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".**
- The focus of sustainable development is far broader than just the environment. It's also about ensuring a strong, healthy and just society.
- This means meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion, and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity.
- The rampant growth of industry had adversely affected the environment and is also against the ethos of sustainable development.

Why Food Industry Matters?

- Feeding a planet of 7.7 billion people is no easy matter. Every person on the planet needs, expects, and has the right to a healthy diet.
- Every farmer needs, expects, and has the right to a decent livelihood. The roughly ten million other species on the planet need a habitat in which they can survive. And every business that produces, processes and transports food needs and expects to earn a profit.
- Over 820 million people are chronically hungry. Another two billion or so suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, such as a lack of vitamins or proteins. Around 650 million adults are obese, an epidemic caused in part by ultra-processed foods that are stuffed with sugar, saturated fats and other chemical additives.

Problems go far beyond Hunger and Diet:

- Today's agro-industrial practices are the main cause of deforestation, freshwater depletion and pollution, soil erosion, and the collapse of biodiversity.
- To top it off, human-induced climate change, partly caused by the food sector, is wreaking havoc on crop production. With more warming and population growth ahead, the crisis will worsen unless decisive changes are made.

Food production vs. Sustainability:

- A food system involves the infrastructure and processes that go into feeding the population, such as growing, harvesting and transportation.
- Despite the increase in food production, the Food Sustainability Index ranks India 33rd among 67 countries in 2018.
- Major concerns regarding the sustainability are in the area of food loss and wastage, sustainable agriculture, dietary patterns, land-use patterns, etc.

Steps needed to align the food sector with Sustainable Development:

- In 2015, all 193 members of the United Nations agreed unanimously to two vital agreements. The first, called Agenda 2030 adopts 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a roadmap to human well-being and planetary safety.
- The second, **the Paris climate agreement**, commits the world's governments to taking decisive action to keep **global warming to less than 1.5° Celsius**. Both the SDGs and the Paris agreement require decisive changes in practices by the food industry.
- To align with global goals each company must address four critical questions. First, do [their] products and strategies contribute to healthy and sustainable diets? We know that the fast-food culture is literally killing us. The industry has to change to promote healthy diets.
- Second, are the **company's production practices sustainable**? Too many companies are engaged in chemical pollution, massive waste from packaging, deforestation, excessive and poorly targeted fertilizer use, and other environmental ills.
- Third, are the company's upstream suppliers sustainable? No consumer food company should use products from farms that contribute to deforestation. The destruction of forests in the Amazon and Indonesia—literally a scorched-earth process—underscore the need to barcode all food products to ensure that they are sourced from sustainable farms.
- Lastly, is the company a good corporate citizen? For example, aggressive tax practices that exploit legal loopholes should be avoided, as they deprive governments of the revenues needed to promote public services and thereby achieve the SDGs.

Conclusion:

- Around the world, young people are demanding a sustainable and safe way of living and doing business. The food sector is a key part of a larger picture. So the business sector must urgently recognize, acknowledge and act upon its global responsibilities.