

Managing sustainable sourcing in the retail sector (M&S)

Marks & Spencer's (M&S) Plan A (a 5 year corporate responsibility programme) is unique in its design amongst all sectors reviewed by the NVI. In developing it, M&S evaluated its activities in respect to customer concern, scale of the issue and ability to influence it. This resulted in Plan A, a clearly documented plan of action fully integrated into M&S' key business objectives.

Plan A proposes to substantially increase M&S' sourcing of sustainable raw materials, with a particular focus on agriculture, marine and freshwater issues. The Plan specifically highlights the need to manage environmental impact and dependence on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Important elements of the plan include:

- Identification of its carbon 'hotspots' with the Carbon Trust, including those from agricultural production, and setting targets to reduce emissions in the food supply chain.
- Working with WWF and suppliers to determine its water impact in key parts of the supply chain. The results will be used to formulate a plan of action and targets.
- Conducting detailed risk assessments for fish, palm oil, timber, cotton and water.
- Implementation of the Field to Fork standards with sections on biodiversity management and action plans; water management; integrated pest management with responsible pesticide use; non-GM and; organic produce.
- Partnering with a number of leading farming and environmental organisations to develop a set of simple measurements to help farmers make their businesses environmentally sustainable whilst improving their business performance.
- Engagement with sustainable sourcing partners such as the Marine Stewardship Council and Forest Stewardship Council as well as roundtables such as RSPO. M&S consult periodically on their progress with Plan A.

Plan A sets a key framework for action which is well resourced and contains quantitative, time bound commitments of clear relevance to biodiversity and ecosystem services. A partnership with WWF acts as a sounding board on the Plan's progress.

Source: <http://www.marksandspencer.com> (March 2009)