

A satellite view of Earth from space, showing the curvature of the planet and the blue oceans. The landmasses are visible in shades of green and brown, with white clouds scattered across the surface. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

THE MEANING OF SUSTAINABILITY

FOR A WORLD UNDER THREAT



Initiatives of Change
Business & Economy

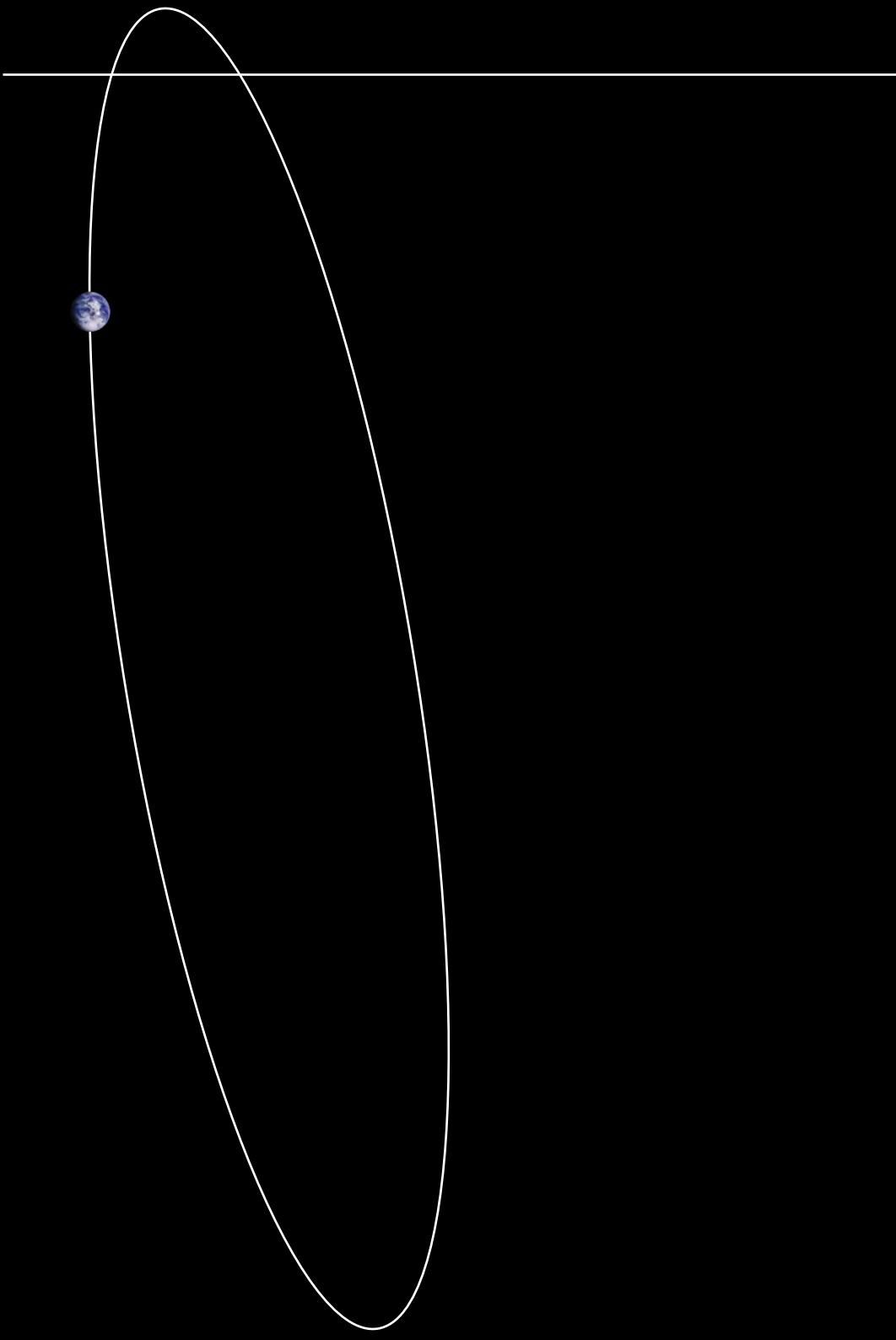
THE MEANING OF SUSTAINABILITY

FOR A WORLD UNDER THREAT

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At the beginning of 2021, the Business and Economy program of Initiatives of Change International (ICBE) launched a series of monthly online forums on 'The meaning of sustainability'. They have been hosted by ICBE's chairman, Antoine Jaulmes, a former senior executive in the car industry from Paris.

The context is a world devastated by the Coronavirus pandemic, impacting on jobs and the global economy, and the threat posed by global warming which is accelerating climate change. Values in business and the economy towards a sustainable world remained imperative.

The following pages give an account of the business leaders who have addressed the online forums and what they said.

**Reports by
Michael Smith**



Sustainability is an imperative that leaves no part of our lives untouched. It is a global challenge, as our soon-to-be 11- or 12-billion strong humanity races towards a global breakdown, triggered by the self-inflicted climate crisis, global environment degradation, wildlife loss and raw material shortages. Sustainability is a personal challenge as many issues, if unchecked, can make our lives unsustainable, from health to moral and relational issues. It is also a challenge for our businesses as companies are often exposed, betraying their own chosen values and codes of conduct and found wanting in many areas, harming their stakeholders.

But honestly facing these challenges, and trying to find the best way to respond, is also an opportunity. Companies have the capacity to harness almost limitless energies and direct them towards sustainability. Environmental sustainability first, as it is now a matter of survival, but also economic and social sustainability, which includes fairness towards all stakeholders but also a firm commitment towards human rights, justice and peace, as laid out by the UN in their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In a word, we believe in the balanced sustainability approach, also called the triple bottom line.

Why we believe in this approach is made clear by the texts which follow this introduction, all summarizing the experience and ideas of the 20 speakers who took part in the 2021 series of dialogues held by Initiatives of Change Business & Economy Program (ICBE), on the theme of The Meaning of Sustainability. They include the vision and initiatives put forward by experienced business leaders as well as recognized experts and young entrepreneurs who make a difference. Together they cover every aspect of sustainability.

Our best reward was that participants received a shot of hope and inspiration from each of these webinars, and often said so. There is hope, definitely, that human resourcefulness will overcome the daunting challenges we face, if only it is driven by a sense of responsibility and moral accountability.

The next step is to learn to work together, support each other, find new solutions together. Let's keep in touch!

Antoine Jaulmes



INITIATIVES OF CHANGE BUSINESS AND ECONOMY PROGRAM

A DIALOGUE ON THE MEANING OF SUSTAINABILITY

Summary of progress so far. Peter Brew writes:

In January 2021 the ICBE program embarked on an experimental initiative to explore what sustainability means in practice and the role and responsibility of business in contributing to a more equitable and stable economic, environmental and social world. In the event, some 400 participants had the opportunity to consider and discuss a wide range of relevant topics by means of 11 online monthly seminars. It is now suggested that we should create new dialogue opportunities in 2022 (and probably beyond), and encourage local groups to conduct similar events that are particularly relevant in the local context.

The basic proposition behind the program

The starting point for the program was the proposition that for business to make its full contribution to a sustainable world, it needs to be sustainable itself. To be fully sustainable, business needs to give equal attention to being economically viable, environmentally responsible, respecting and protecting human rights and being ethically sound. To begin this journey of exploration, each of these aspects of business life was touched on in turn, with expert speakers leading the discussion and providing examples of innovative practices that are delivering outstanding results. The importance and value of business working effectively with other sectors of society was also addressed.

The initial conclusions from the program

- There is clearly an appetite for this type of dialogue across lofC's network as evidenced by the 400 who have participated in the dialogues so far;
- Business is a key sector of society that needs support to thoughtfully assess how best to play its part in building a sustainable world. Sharing real world examples from leaders who have been on this journey is a way to build confidence that the proposition is achievable;

'Business needs to be economically viable, environmentally responsible, protect human rights and be ethically sound'

- Other sectors of society need to understand better how to engage with business as partners in sustainability;
- lofC is well placed to be a credible intermediary, providing a safe haven for business to engage with each other and with other sectors of society in addressing the wide range of economic, social and environmental challenges of the modern world;
- The program provides a platform for lofC to build its reputation within the business community as a neutral and objective facilitator of dialogue;
- The ICBE committee is of the view that during 2022 the program should be a combination of local in-country initiatives on topics of particular relevance there and bi-monthly online international dialogues of the nature already held.

Topics already addressed

- Balanced Sustainability – an essential framework for business
- Environmental Responsibility
- Fighting Corruption
- Human Rights and the Supply Chain
- Business Social and Local Responsibilities
- Building effective cross-sector partnerships
- A Business Leaders' Forum on Corporate Governance
- How are workplaces going to change in the new environment?
- Collective action by small businesses to achieve sustainability
- Supporting small farmers in India
- Creating a regenerative, conscious and harmonious way of life in Mexico

In the short time available it was only possible to begin to explore each of these issues. The opportunity now is to begin to study them in more depth, widen the audience and reinforce lofC's action and contribution to a sustainable future locally and internationally. □

'lofC is well placed to be a credible intermediary'



FIVE AREAS OF SUSTAINABILITY NEEDED FOR A WORLD IN TURMOIL

Northern Irish businessman Peter Brew outlined five areas needed to achieve business and economic sustainability when he addressed an online forum of Initiatives of Change in Business and the Economy on 12 January 2021.





Peter Brew:
Northern Ireland
businessman

**'Financial,
environmental,
human rights,
strong ethics
and good
citizenship'**

They were financial, environmental, human rights, strong ethics (including rejecting corruption) and good citizenship in the community.

Businesses needed to be profitable to be sustainable, he emphasized, but they needed to look beyond maximizing profit.

Collectively, these five components demonstrated the ethos of a company, he said. Corporate philosophy was important, he added, but was not a substitute for good practice.

Businesses needed to reach out to other sectors, including government, civil society, multilateral agencies, academia and the media.

He also emphasized the need for intermediaries, such as Initiatives of Change, to 'provide safe-havens for discussion'.

Peter Brew ran a multinational business in the home care sector and worked for the International Business Leaders Forum for 15 years from the late 1990s. This took him to Hong Kong for four years, from where he reached out to Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines.

Businesses faced the reality of a world in 'total turmoil', he said. Traditional democracies have been at risk and businesses faced 'a tidal wave of economic, environmental and social challenges', including the coronavirus pandemic.

The second speaker was the Mumbai businessman Vivek Asrani, who runs Kaymo, a family business providing industrial staplers. It is India's market leader in this niche market. The company's products had changed over the years and the business had been sustainable, he said.

Kaymo had been founded by his grandfather shortly after the Partition of the subcontinent following independence in 1947. India has suffered three recent shocks, Asrani said: demonetization when the Narendra Modi government removed high denomination notes from circulation overnight, changes in tax law, and the coronavirus pandemic.

Despite these shocks, Asrani's company had seen year-on-year growth in the last year. He attributed this to the company being 'principled-centred' rather than just profit motivated. The company had rejected corruption and Asrani insisted that 'there is a loss to the organization if we allow this cancer to take hold'. The company had

turned down a corrupt business contract which would have doubled its turnover but would have allowed the cancer to set in.

Asrani had asked his senior staff what it would take to achieve such business growth without corruption. The answer lay in care for customers, employees and suppliers, who then stick with the company, allowing the business to survive and grow.

In the height of the pandemic, he had phoned a business friend in Pune to seek his advice. The business leader had told him that it was important to collect payments in the normal way.

'Perseverance is critical to sustainability when under pressure for survival,' he concluded. It gave emotional and spiritual strength. 'Trust is the most essential ingredient in the business world.' It was the most valuable currency.

The issue of character in business leadership, as an ingredient of sustainability, was also flagged up. The issue had been highlighted by Fred Kiel's book *Return on Character*.

People from 11 countries took part in the forum, which was hosted by Antoine Jaulmes, a consultant in ethical business practices from Paris. In the light of climate change 'business will not be business as usual', he said. 'Inclusive dialogue is the key, bringing together opposites.' This was the first in a series of monthly forums on sustainability, held on the 12th of each month. □



Vivek Asrani:
Mumbai
businessman



'The company turned down a corrupt business contract which would have doubled its turnover'

INDIAN COMPANY PIONEERS RECYCLING BUT MASSIVE INVESTMENT NEEDED TO TACKLE GLOBAL WARMING

Rajendra Gandhi, founder of India's largest rubber recycling company, told how he founded [GRP \(Gujarat Rubber Products\)](#), following a profound change of heart.

He was addressing an online forum, on 12 February, on sustainability which emphasized environmental responsibility in the light of global warming. It was the second in a series of monthly forums on sustainability in business and the economy, under the auspices of Initiatives of Change in Business and Economy.

He was accompanied by his son, Harsh, Joint Managing Director of GRP, and Tom Marshall, a British graduate of Rotterdam School of Management and climate activist, who warned that the world was not doing nearly enough to tackle a 'catastrophic rise' in global warming.

Rajendra Gandhi said he had undergone a turning point in his life when studying Metallurgical Engineering in Mumbai over 50 years ago. His encounter with Initiatives of Change, then known as MRA, had challenged him 'to experiment with the simple but powerful idea that, if you want to see the world change, the best place to start is with yourself.' He had learnt about 'the power of inner listening' and the courage of ones convictions.

He had had the 'compelling thought' to leave his father's textile business and start his own company, after reading a World Bank report that, for developing economies like India, recycling had a bright future. This was long before 'sustainability' and 'the circular economy' became common concepts.

Recycling, Gandhi said, offered four opportunities: employment; reduced dependency on virgin resources; converting a potential hazardous waste into a useful raw material; and earning foreign exchange.

On this last point, GRP now sold recycled rubber to tyre and other manufacturers in 52 countries, said Gandhi's son Harsh. Among GRP's customers are Continental, Michelin and Pirelli tyre companies, who have pledged to increase their use of recycled materials. Rajendra Gandhi explained that, early on, he had 'a crazy idea' in a time of quiet, to build his own processing technology in India rather than import the machinery. Getting a government permit for imports involved 'unethical practice' in India, which he wanted to avoid. GRP commissioned its first processing technology in 1978. 'One of the key decisions I took then was to keep the process labour intensive, so that I could offer jobs to the needy.'

The company started making a profit in 1982.



Rajendra Gandhi:
founder of India's
largest rubber
recycling company

'He had the compelling thought to leave his father's textile business and start his own company'



Harsh Gandhi:
Joint Managing
Director, GRP

'What started as a recycling company with a single product has completed a circular economy journey'

While this brought relief to the family, bankers and shareholders, 'my own joy came from having succeeded in starting a business based on right motives.'

The company ploughed back profits to expand its manufacturing capacity to eight locations across India.

The company also wanted to develop a 'trustworthy relationship with our vendors' across India, Gandhi said. Their task was to collect and bring waste rubber to GRP's plants. 'We decided to help our vendors, who were mostly illiterate, to follow proper business practices.'

'By choosing to start a business in recycling end-of-life tyres, I and my company became part of the solution to the sustainability of the environment,' Gandhi concluded. 'By choosing the right practices and building trust with various stakeholders, I created a sustainable business model.'

Harsh Gandhi added that the company had benefitted from the 'tailwinds for growth', including global awareness of the use of Green materials to lower dependency on fossil fuels. The financial crisis of 2008-09 had 'brought increased focus on the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations'.

GRP has since diversified into other businesses, he said. These included a tyre re-treading business as well as separating Nylon from the tyres to provide raw material for the manufacture of plastic components for automotive and electrical applications. 'So what started as a recycling company with a single product has completed a circular economy journey to become a sustainable materials company with a global footprint.'

The neoliberal economic model was failing to address the climate crisis, said [Tom Marshall](#), an international career coach and a climate activist with [Extinction Rebellion](#). Global CO₂ emissions were still rising despite climate agreements. Even if the targets of the Paris climate treaty are met, 'we are still on course for a catastrophic 3.2 degrees of warming.'

He acknowledged that the market was 'a powerful river that has flowed riches to us over the years. It's lifted hundreds of millions of people out of absolute poverty. It can be a force for good.' But he called for far greater intervention from the public sector. It was already happening in governments' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. The UK and the USA, the 'palaces of capitalism', are pouring public money into

supporting businesses rather than letting them fail. 'State intervention,' on a scale not seen since the Second World War, 'is on the way back.'

He called for a mixed economy, 'where business and citizens live in harmony, without rampant capitalism distorting markets and exploiting citizens, but without an overbearing state that removes the necessary private reward to effort and innovation.' A stakeholder view of business was needed, 'recognizing the other parties involved beyond the shareholder perspective'.

In the online discussion which followed, [Geoffrey Lean](#), doyen of British environmental journalists, said that the business community was often leading the way in green innovation, in the light of the climate crisis.

The event was hosted by Antoine Jaulmes, chairman of ICBE from Paris, who commended 'the experience of concrete actions which inspire others'. □




Tom Marshall:
Extinction Rebellion



LEADERSHIP AND TRANSPARENCY SEEN AS ESSENTIAL IN TACKLING CORRUPTION

Grand scale corruption needs to be tackled by those in leadership positions, in corporations and governments. This is especially so at a time when the Coronavirus pandemic has increased opportunities for corruption.

A woman with a determined expression stands in a dusty outdoor setting, holding a white sign. She is wearing a white lace top and a patterned skirt. The background shows a blurred street scene with buildings and utility poles under a clear sky.

Let's fight
Corruption

together



Jean-Pierre Mean:
Corporate lawyer
and former head
of Transparency
International in
Switzerland

So said two anti-corruption campaigners, addressing an online forum hosted by Initiatives of Change in Business and the Economy, on 12 March.

Jean-Pierre Mean, corporate lawyer and former head of [Transparency International](#) in Switzerland, said that 'the abuse of power for private gain' included 'the potentate who cashes in on infrastructure projects and transfers millions or billions abroad; the policemen who accept cash to overlook violations of the driving code; the customs officer who takes a bribe to clear goods through customs.'

Dr Mean, who chairs the ISO committee working on the Anti-Bribery Management Systems Standard, ISO 37001, cited examples in healthcare including:

- Nurses in Bangalore who were extorting bribes from young mothers in order to bring them their newly born babies;
- A man in Uttar Pradesh who wanted to acquire his nephew's field and so bribed a public official to declare that his nephew was dead, a case that would take up to 20 years to reverse the decision.
- Doctors in Serbia who had an arrangement with a funeral director not to prolong the life of patients.

He further warned that the pandemic health crisis had allowed corrupt actors to use bribes to avoid quarantine, and that ventilators or other oxygen-related medical equipment may be 'the objects of bribes and kickbacks'.

'The most important factor in designing anti-bribery measures is leadership,' Mean asserted. 'Combating bribery is about creating or reinforcing an integrity culture. This requires an inner conviction that must exist at the highest level in the organization. If it is not there, it can be developed but cannot be decreed.' But he also stressed that 'implementing the anti-bribery policy is the responsibility of everyone in the organization.'

Jonas Moberg, Executive Director of the [Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative](#) from 2007 to 2018, said that five per cent of global GDP was lost to corruption. The EITI aims to bring transparency into the oil, gas and mining industries, including the public declaration of sums paid by companies to governments. 'If we know how much is going into countries we can determine if things are going awry,' Moberg said. Transparency was

'The most important factor in designing anti-bribery measures is leadership'

like the sun acting as 'the best disinfectant. It is hard to argue against.'

The EITI had grown out of the perception that there was a 'resources curse—a paradox of plenty'. Countries rich in natural resources had become the focus for grand-scale corruption. A 'jet stream of cash' had gone into systems that couldn't handle it adequately. Academia had started to focus on this in the 1990s. It led to discussions between Lord Browne, the former chief executive of BP, and Prime Minister Tony Blair. The UK had taken the initiative on a global approach which had led to the birth of the EITI.

Mean said that 'there is no doubt that progress has been made and attitudes have changed' in combating corruption. 'Corruption has ceased to be viewed as a necessary evil as it was some decades ago. Corruption cases now occupy space in the media on a daily basis. This should not be taken to mean that there is more corruption but is, rather, evidence that corruption is no longer tolerated.'

In his concluding remarks, Jonas Moberg, the Swedish co-author of *Beyond Governments – making collective governance work*, said the 'enormous need is to find collaborative solutions.' The exchange around the table between business and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was essential. 'We have to approach corruption from a whole range of sectors.'

This was the third in a series of monthly business forums on 'The meaning of sustainability', organized by Initiatives of Change in Business and the Economy. Hosting the event, Antoine Jaulmes, chair of ICBE, said: 'Corruption hampers economic development of the poorer section of the population, which develops political instability and migrations; corruption makes most environmental regulations toothless and corruption ruins trust and any form of transparent reporting and communication. So there is no question that corruption is a major threat to green policies and CO₂ reduction objectives.' □



Jonas Moberg:
Executive Director
of the Extractive
Industries
Transparency
Initiative from
2007 to 2018

**'Transparency
is like the sun
acting as
the best
disinfectant'**

VACCINE NEEDED AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES: A MATTER OF WILL

Suppose a vaccine could be developed to guard against human rights abuses in businesses worldwide. Such a vaccine is what Brian Iselin, founder of the [Slavefreetrade](#) campaign, would like us to imagine if we are to rid the world of exploitation in the supply chain.

The issues are all pervasive, he says, and the purchasing public are, often unwittingly, complicit.

'You touch modern slavery every day more often than you touch your face,' Iselin says. He cites supply chains where modern-day slavery exists, such as:

- your morning cup of tea or coffee
- the canned tomatoes in your pasta sauce
- your laptop and the car you drive
- your child's t-shirt
- the gold in your watch

'We are talking about hundreds of millions of men, women and children being exploited and abused every day in workplaces across the world,' Iselin says. Human exploitation ranges from gender pay gaps and exploitation wages to human trafficking and slavery.

Iselin compares the situation to an attacker coming at you with a knife. The problem is not the knife but the guy wielding it. Equally, 'The problem is someone who makes the moral and economic choice to exploit somebody else.' They can get away with it because 'they calculate that it doesn't hurt their business to do so, and maybe it's even a profit-making advantage.'

The issue hasn't even featured, until recently, in MBA courses around the world. 'I got told by wealth management firms in Geneva, 'Human rights are not on our agenda',' Iselin says. 'I am happy to say that things are changing. I am now getting invited to speak to MBA programs about modern slavery that would not have happened five or 10 years ago.' Human Rights are the new HR.

Iselin warns, pragmatically, that 'white knighting in the world is futile'. It is not enough to appeal to business leaders' moral sensibilities. 'We are not making a dent in the problem by supply side interventions. We need to work on the demand side of it.' We must build 'a new economic model that advantages your business if you respect human rights, to an economic model which says that your human rights performance is part and parcel of your bottom line. If we don't do that, we are not addressing the man with the knife.'

Hence the need for public awareness to 'provoke micro-behaviours at the demand side and multiply those a million times,' Iselin says. Branding helps in this.



Brian Iselin:
Founder of the
Slavefreetrade
campaign

**'You touch
modern slavery
every day more
than you touch
your face'**



Antoine Jaulmes:
Chair of ICBE

'Changing things was a matter of having the will to do so'

'A person in a supermarket looking at prawns in the freezer sees that one of the bags is slave-free. They immediately mistrust all the others. In consumer testing, it is almost 100 per cent conversion to the slave-free one.'

Slavefreetrade, based in Geneva, is helping to create the necessary 'vaccine'. Companies that affiliate to Slavefreetrade are human rights compliant. Slavefreetrade carries out workforce assessments. It poses 100 questions to every employee each year. The questions are indexed to 10 principles of international human rights laws, relating to workplace conditions, such as child rights and forced labour conventions. The questions to employees are spread out each month over the year, giving 'a 360-degree view of the workplace'.

Iselin, a former soldier and Australian Intelligence officer, founded Slavefreetrade three years ago, with a volunteer staff from 20 nations. He first encountered human trafficking during his time as a federal agent combatting narco-trafficking. Searching for narcotics, he found two baby girls in a sports bag who were meant to be sold for adoption in Vietnam. Profoundly appalled by this he shifted his priority to tackling modern slavery. He admits the task is an uphill one, and modern-day slavery is on the increase. Iselin addressed an online dialogue on 'The meaning of sustainability in the supply chain', organised by IofC in Business and the Economy, on 12 April 2021.

Speaking with him, Antoine Jaulmes, chair of ICBE, emphasized how complex supply chains are. Following the Kobe earthquake of 1995 in Japan, car production worldwide came to a halt. There was only one screen display supplier for car radios, but it was destroyed in the earthquake.

'In terms of human rights, the greatest and most critical risks lie the deeper you go into the supply chain,' Jaulmes says, 'so that legislation in countries around the world is now compelling companies to overcome supply chain complexity and guarantee human rights'—from Californian laws in 2010 to the UN's guiding principles of 2011 and, most recently, the 2020 US law on business supply chain transparency, and a 2021 European Parliament resolution with recommendations to the EU Commission to draft a law on corporate due diligence and

corporate accountability. The EP resolution underlined that 'voluntary due diligence standards have not achieved significant progress in preventing human rights and environmental harm.' Indeed three of the world's major chocolate companies had pledged 20 years ago to the US congress to eradicate the worst forms of child labour amongst their West African cocoa suppliers within four years! This year, the companies have been sued for breaching the US child slavery law. 'This is not good enough,' commented Jaulmes. 'Large companies with access to big data have all it takes to comply.'

Jaulmes told how the Caux Round Table group of business leaders in Japan had been more successful. They worked with the four main importers of palm oil on their supply chain. Together they import 95 per cent of all palm oil. They investigated growers, often small holders, in Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma and Thailand. Each facility is identified with a Bluenumber system, introduced by the UN. For agricultural products, Bluenumber identifies the location of every farmer and facility, to confirm that there is no deforestation or planting in protected areas, nor slave or child labour. 'They were able to develop awareness and produce an exhaustive mapping of all flows,' Jaulmes said, and any small farmer or supplier with a Bluenumber can be engaged directly, asked for self-declaration of practices or audited.

A similar result has been produced by the Tokyo Rice Corporation in achieving its UN Sustainable Development Goals, involving 205 farmers in its supply chain.

Mapping the supply chain 'has positive effects on traditional purchasing performances,' Jaulmes commented. It provides 'traceability, digital proof of delivery and financing, certification and analytics.' It also brings benefits such as reducing supply chain risks and enabling responsible procurement. 'That, I think, puts the poor performance of the chocolate industry under a crude light,' he commented. Changing things was a matter of having the will to do so, he said. □



SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE START-UPS THAT HELP SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PLANET

When Nazez Ben Ammar went to the beach in his native Tunisia, he found the sea unnaturally blue. Indigo dye, used in the colouring of denim jeans, had been discharged into the sea by a manufacturer. Tunisia is a leading supplier of jeans to the European market. But what Ben Ammar found upset him. The company was damaging the environment and failing in its Corporate Social Responsibility.





Nazez Ben Ammar:
President of
Excellencia

CSR became a buzz word in Tunisian business circles following the Arab Spring, sparked by the Tunisian revolution 10 years ago.

'Now we are failing in our responsibilities,' says Ben Ammar, who describes himself as a 'serial entrepreneur' and 'start-up enabler'. He himself cut short his career in the oil industry because fossil fuels contribute to global warming.

As an alternative to oil, Tunisia and other north African countries have become renowned for the image of hectares of solar panels in the desert, erected by solar farms. But the historically powerful national trade union body resisted and slowed down the sale of solar power to the national grid because of the need to protect the jobs of their members at the traditional power stations.

Ben Ammar, who has a master's degree in Engineering, has founded and then sold seven start-up companies. He now talks about SSR—Start-ups Social Responsibility. His family business, Excellencia, where he is President, is a building technology company for big office blocks, founded in 1993. Excellencia provides products ranging from air conditioning to intruder alarms and security cameras.

Ben Ammar says that SSR needs to be much more than just a PR tactic but rather the core philosophy of start-up companies. SSR benefits not just the company but also the customers, employees and the wider community.

SSRs, he says, are committed to improving quality of life, and the security of the workforce and their families, the local community and society at large. They respect the environment and the fragility of nature, by aiming to reduce pollution (solid, liquid and gas) and their carbon footprint.

He quotes that 87 per cent of millennials say they believe their company's success should be measured by more than just financial performance.

He himself has pledged to 'practise integrity and fair dealing, tolerance and respect', as he told an online dialogue on Business Social and Local Responsibility, hosted by Antoine Jaulmes from Paris on 12 May, on behalf of the Initiatives of Change Business and Economy program.

Nicolas Soubelet from Paris told the forum how he and his wife Elizabeth, a former midwife, founded Squiz

Squiz: reusable food pouches
for children's school meals



as a start-up. It provides reusable food pouches for children's school meals. With five children of their own, they realized that traditional single-use plastic and aluminium pouches represented 'a lot of trash'—some 900 million pouches thrown away in France alone every year, which Soubelet says is an 'environmental disaster'.

Squiz pouches, decorated with colourful animal motifs for children, can be used a minimum of 50 times. Soubelet measures the company's success by the number of single-use pouches eliminated: 70 million so far, they calculate. They sell 400,000 Squiz pouches a year and have sold 1.5 million so far.

This, says Soubelet, is in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal number 12: responsible consumption and production. Squiz employs 16 people and has an annual turnover of one million euros. It is registered as a B Corp—a benefit corporation, which Soubelet says is not just a label but a community of companies that share best practices. B Corps are mandated to look after the interests of all stakeholders including employees, suppliers and the wider community. They have a triple bottom line approach: financial, environmental and social.

Soubelet says the need is to work towards a responsible economy. The company's mission, he says, is 'raising awareness and guiding consumers toward a future without waste. Through our brands, we create simple, fun containers that help smooth the transition to a more responsible lifestyle.' In other words, a circular economy, which aims to 'reduce, reuse and recycle'. □



Nicolas and Elizabeth Soubelet: founders of food pouch start-up Squiz



'SSRs respect the environment and the fragility of nature by aiming to reduce pollution'

PARTNERING WITH NGO SAVES AFRICAN COMPANY FROM CLOSURE

A battery production business in a sub-Saharan African country was saved from closure, thanks to the intervention of a well-established NGO (Non-Governmental Organization). The battery company was owned by a multinational, which was keen to offload it. The batteries were for agricultural and industrial use but, with economic decline in the country, the company was not doing well.

Its CEO had the funds to propose a buy-out to the multinational. His problem was that the funds were in the local currency, but the multinational would only accept payment in a hard currency—US dollars. It was an impasse.

At this point, he met the NGO Director by chance at a social gathering. He told her his story and invited her to the battery factory. What she found was a run-down plant, a demoralized workforce, a disenchanted and anxious local community, and an out-of-date product.

They discussed the possibility of a new product range that would serve the rural poor. They visited other villages where the NGO had worked successfully. They came up with the idea of developing a new line in solar-powered single cell batteries which would, for example, power light bulbs. The NGO could guarantee a large market, so long as the batteries were reasonably priced.

Some of the NGO's international funding was used to train people in the villages in the upkeep of the solar panels. They agreed that the batteries would be used for community benefit, such as a central community building enabling gatherings to take place after dark.

This delighted the NGO because it made a real difference to the community; the company CEO was delighted because it demonstrated its R&D capability and showed the way to greater diversification.

However, the core problem of how to buy the company from the multinational owners still needed to be resolved.

By now the CEO and the NGO director had built a strong working relationship of trust, and the NGO director came up with a plan. She proposed to the NGO's external funders that they pay the next tranche of funding in US dollars, which would then be used to pay the multinational company. In return, the company CEO would pay the whole amount, plus a negotiating fee, into the NGO's account in the local currency. The NGO director was given a seat on the company board and the NGO became a shareholder with a 25 per cent stake—thereby also giving the NGO an annual dividend towards financing local work.

With the NGO director now on the board, they were able to develop an HR program to uplift the working conditions of the 250 employees, including training, work-wear and occupational health guarantees. They also developed a program of community engagement,



Ros Tennyson: of
Partnership Brokers

**'The CEO
and the NGO
director built a
strong working
relationship
of trust'**



Antonio Hautle:
Director of the UN's
Global Compact for
Switzerland and
Liechtenstein

**'A story to
inspire and
encourage
others to
break through
conventions
and constraints'**

whereby the company played a major part in building community activities around the location of the factory.

Within three years, the battery company had significantly increased its annual profits and the NGO was able to benefit from an income stream that was independent of external donors.

Ros Tennyson of Partnership Brokers told this story to an international online forum on the Meaning of Sustainability, hosted by Initiatives of Change in Business in the Economy (ICBE) on 10 June. The theme of this forum was on businesses partnering to be 'a transformative force in society'. Tennyson insists that this story is not a case study designed to be adopted elsewhere, so much as a story 'to inspire and encourage others to break through conventions and constraints... to be bold and innovative in overcoming seemingly insurmountable problems.'

www.rostennyson.info; www.partnershipbrokers.org

Speaking at the same forum, Antonio Hautle, Director of the UN's Global Compact for Switzerland and Liechtenstein, told how the UN agency encourages a 'triple bottom line' approach of companies with an emphasis on 'profit, people, planet'. The UN Global Compact local networks involve 16,000 members of which 14,000 are companies. The 10 principles of the Global Compact—a Kofi Annan initiative—encourage companies to act responsibly in four fields: human rights, employee rights (including working conditions and tackling child labour), the environment and anti-corruption. The aim is also to adhere to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Companies, Hautle said, are assessed every year and can be expelled for non-compliance. VW, for instance, had to leave after its emissions corruption scandal and has never applied to re-join. The Swiss food giant Nestlé, on the other hand, has been shaking off a negative public perception to become 'one of the most advanced members in our network'. Hautle claimed that the company, for instance, had 'a very strong child labour process which they share with other companies.' But, he acknowledged, 'they have not succeeded, so far, to create trust among civil society and NGOs which would allow much more collaboration and more efficiency in partnerships.'

Companies joining the Global Compact, he said,

'make the pledge to reduce their CO₂ emissions to zero or even to be negative by 2050.' But what they were missing towards this target was the sector of medium and small sized businesses. 'We have never had as many companies joining as in this Covid time,' he concluded. 'The membership is really growing strongly.' □



SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES NEED PURPOSE BEYOND PROFIT

Corporations and industries need a purpose beyond profit, says Sunil Mathur, the Managing Director and Chief Executive of Siemens in India and South Asia. 'Companies' purposes are critical,' he says. They should include a commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); meeting environmental challenges; diversity in the workforce; and ethical values.

Mathur was the opening speaker on a panel at the first conference of the Caux Forum Online marking the 75th anniversary of the Initiatives of Change centre in Switzerland. The two-day business forum, from 12 to 13 July, focused on 'Corporate governance in the 21st century, responding to systemic crisis'. It was organized by the Initiatives of Change Business & Economy Program, which also convenes monthly meetings on the implications of sustainability for business.

Mathur heads a £1.2 billion engineering and infrastructure company with a workforce of nearly 10,000 employees. He acknowledged that 'shareholder expectations are increasingly challenging', when they clash with the long-term goals of boards of directors. 'The stock exchange is ruthless,' he said.

'Growth is only sustainable if it is valid for all stakeholders,' Mathur continued. 'Growth with higher purpose is becoming critical. Companies can only be sustainable if there is a commitment to a higher purpose.'

He called for a 'walk the talk environment'. 'Does the company live by a moral compass? Does it articulate this to all the employees?'

Siemens now operates, he said, under the acronym DEGREE:

- De-carbonization;
- Ethics - a culture of integrity;
- Governance;
- Resources - reducing waste;
- Equity - inclusivity;
- Employability - for all employees.

Siemens, which is based in Germany, weathered a bribery storm in 2006, when a secret fund of \$40 to \$50 million used to win contracts in African countries was exposed. The board resigned and a new board and CEO were put in place who vowed that 'only clean business is Siemens business.' The company was so transformed that the Dow Jones ranked Siemens as the world's most ethically compliant company.

Mathur admitted there were ethical dilemmas, such as the employment of a child as a tea boy. The child had a right to an education but might be the only breadwinner in his family.

Dr Isabella Bunn, a professor of business ethics at



Sunil Mathur:
Managing Director
and Chief Executive
of Siemens India
and South Asia

'Companies can only be sustainable if there is a commitment to a higher purpose'



Dr Isabella Bunn:
A professor of
business ethics at
Regents Park
College, Oxford
University, and
member of the
governing body of
Oxford Analytica

**'The need was
to walk the talk
in engaging with
all stakeholders
on human
rights'**

Regents Park College, University of Oxford, and member of the governing body of Oxford Analytica, also focused on values and purpose. Companies should have 'a multi-stakeholder approach', encompassing environmental and social responsibility, corporate governance and the SDGs. The benefits companies brought to society gave them a 'social license to operate', she said. 'Boards need to establish the company's values culture' and 'designate culture as a corporate asset'.

Bunn, who specializes in ethical aspects of economic law, cited organizations that were advocating purpose beyond profit. They included the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism; Oxford Analytica; British Academy Future of the Corporation Program; and the UN Global Compact.

She said that companies should think of purpose in terms of strategy—an ongoing principle for the entire organization. The emphasis on purpose meant considering 'how to put humanity at the centre of corporate practice'.

Human rights lawyer and mediator Elise Groulx Diggs, who is affiliated to Georgetown University, Washington DC, advises corporations on human rights risks in their strategic priorities and supply chains. The need, she said, was to 'walk the talk in engaging with all stakeholders on human rights'. This included addressing 'violations of human rights and climate harm'.

Groulx made the distinction between 'the art of doing good' promoted by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and 'the art of doing no harm' promoted by 'Business and Human Rights', a new field of legal practice.

She included awareness of 'the upstream supply chain' in her stakeholder engagement approach, giving the example of the Rana Plaza tragedy in Dacca, Bangladesh. Over 1,100 garment workers were killed when the building collapsed in April 2013. They had been making clothing for Western fashion houses in a building that had been deemed unsafe after cracks appeared in concrete pillars. Bangladeshi law, Groulx said, had forbidden trade unions which would have protected workers' rights.

She also pointed to failures in social investment by mining companies, from Peru to Australia and Papua New Guinea where decisions were imposed from 5,000 miles away with neither proper consultation nor engagement

at the local level. Yet, she said, 'you have to be optimistic' that things can change. The UN's Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) involves 800 business and management schools in teaching corporate values and sustainability.

Groulx briefly presented her 'galaxy of norms' model for understanding the new legal universe developing globally. In this, hard law meets soft law through five rings of liability: reporting (including the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit); the legal duty of care for employees, suppliers and other stakeholders; voluntary principles and industry standards; contracts and codes of conduct; and soft law (such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD guidelines, the ILO core conventions, the SDGs and the UN Global Compact).

During the online discussion, participants emphasized that potential employees wanted to work for companies that were seen to be ethical, including addressing issues such as climate change. Mathur appealed for 'links of trust' between industry, governments and civil society. He was supported by Northern Irish businessman Peter Brew in appealing for IoFC to act 'as a fulcrum to build trust' between the business world, governments and civil society. The need was for a 'safe space' for dialogue, Bunn said, or as Groulx put it, a 'community of trust'. □



Elise Groulx Diggs:
affiliated to
Georgetown
University,
Washington DC



STAFF'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING IS A PREREQUISITE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable health and wellbeing of people in the workforce, in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, was the focus of a webinar hosted by Initiatives of Change's business and economy program on 14 September.

The series of monthly business webinars addressed the sustainability of organizations and the factors which make that possible.





Sunita Raut:
a Human Resources
specialist from
Stockholm

**'The people
worst hit by the
pandemic have
been those
who have to
be physically
present at
their jobs'**

Keynote presenter Sunita Raut, a Human Resources specialist from Stockholm with over 20 years of experience, said that 'an HR manager is someone who cares for people. At the bottom is my concern for human beings.' Sustainability was something that everyone had to be engaged in. The sustainability of businesses depended on the sustainability of health, both physical and psychological, she said, especially as sustainable businesses are essentially 'a congress of human beings'.

The Covid-19 pandemic had highlighted 'how unprepared we have been,' she said. 'So many businesses have closed down. Yet the psychological wellbeing of people is not being talked about. It is an issue that has been kept at arm's length. The next pandemic could be of mental health issues.'

She emphasized that 'happy people love to work together. Sick leave and absenteeism go down and retention of the workforce is promoted. You can picture people give each other high fives.'

Now, however, 'The new workplace is behind computer screens', due to the pandemic. She quoted figures from the Harvard Business Review which showed that, by May 2020, four out of five workers in the USA had been impacted by stay-at-home restrictions. A [Mercer, US](#), study of 800 companies showed that 90 per cent of employees reported their productivity had stayed the same or increased.

Yet, according to a survey of 3,500 participants by the [American Psychological Association](#), 78 per cent reported 'stress from work and home collapse, increased workloads, and worries about job security.' Raut did not give comparative figures for other countries. But, she said, according to PWC, 22 per cent of employees are considering living more than 50 miles from their places of work, and a third of those who worked from home said they would quit their jobs if they had to return to their offices full-time.

'Workplaces have fundamentally changed,' she commented. 'We will never go back to pre-pandemic.'

She gave the advantages of remote working including productivity increases; work-life balance; a lower cost of living; reduction in commute time; and no need to relocate. On the other hand, the challenges of remote working included increased anxiety and burnout; blurred work-life boundaries; infrequent and

vague communications; challenges to teamwork and collaboration; remote vision and policies missing.

She posed two questions to the online audience for group discussion: 'Why are employees demanding a different workplace routine and work style, even after Covid restrictions are lifted?' And 'What is the future of leadership' and what needs to change?

In response to the first question, feedback included the fact that the people worst hit by the pandemic have been those who have to be physically present at their jobs, including hospital staff, often under enormous strain, restaurant staff and delivery truck drivers, of which there has been a severe shortage. The pandemic had hit different sectors in different ways. White collar staff could often work from home, while blue collar workers often had to be at their place of work.

Dr Isabella Bunn from Oxford University pointed out that online lectures could be global via Zoom, and tutoring could continue online. Museums could also go online. But computer hacking had also increased at a time of increased research into tackling viruses.

In response to the second question, participants said that a leadership of trust was essential between employers and employees. This meant trusting people to deliver on their work remotely.

Raut emphasized the need for leading with empathy. Future safe leadership included 'clear and frequent communication; a clear post-Covid vision; keeping wellbeing and mental health in focus; and tech-powered workspaces.' Or, as one participant put it: 'leadership as a way of being'.

The webinar was hosted by Antoine Jaulmes, a consultant in business ethics from Paris who is chair of Initiatives of Change in Business and the Economy.

Two days after the webinar, a BBC survey reported: 'Most people do not believe that workers will return to the office full-time after the coronavirus pandemic.' The survey found that 70 per cent of those polled predicted that workers would 'never return to offices at the same rate', and that 'The majority of workers said that they would prefer to work from home either full-time or at least some of the time.' □

'The sustainability of businesses depends on the sustainability of health, both physical and psychological'

FARMERS WHO TACKLE CARBON FOOTPRINT HELP SAVE THE PLANET

The purpose of [Earthbanc](#) is to 'enable the transition to a net zero [carbon emissions] world', says its founding CEO Tom Duncan from Australia.

The impact fintech company audits the world's carbon offset market and checks the claims of carbon project developers to ensure the claims are true. These tackle 'greenwash' and bring much needed transparency to carbon offsets, at a time when carbon dioxide and methane are the main greenhouse gases which accumulate in the atmosphere, leading to dangerous levels of global warming.

The need, Duncan says, 'is to use science to solve the problems of carbon offset claims with very accurate measurements using satellite imagery and remote sensing data. The sequestering of carbon in soil, trees, mangroves and sea grasses needs to make up 40 to 50 per cent of all carbon reduction and removal activity, to meet the Paris climate agreements. Farmers and foresters, he says, are the key to drawing carbon out of the atmosphere, and stopping land-based emissions of methane, by adopting regenerative and biological farming methods.

Duncan has been greatly helped in this by the European Space Agency which he approached to help develop carbon monitoring through satellite tracking. This, he says, is 96 to 99 per cent accurate in measuring carbon in soil and trees, on farmers' land plots as small as 200 square metres, whereas the industry average for carbon projects previously required 600 hectares or more, for carbon offset projects to be economic. This Earthbanc technology breakthrough has increased project sizing efficiency 18,000-fold and opens up carbon incentive payments to the 500 million smallholders globally, who previously could not access them. This is important to make carbon markets fairer, not just more transparent. It means, for instance, that farmers can assess their carbon impact on a quarterly or annual basis rather than every five years under the older voluntary carbon verification systems of assessment.

Duncan was the guest speaker to a business webinar, in a series on The Meaning of Sustainability, organized by the business and economy program of Initiatives of Change (ICBE), on 12 October. It was hosted by business consultant Antoine Jaulmes, a former automotive industry executive who is now chairman of ICBE.

Duncan told how he came to his convictions through 'the trials and tribulations' of his family



Tom Duncan:
CEO of impact
fintech company
Earthbanc

'Sequestering of carbon in soil, trees, mangroves and sea grasses needs to make up 40 to 50 per cent of all carbon reduction and removal'



Charlotte Piccoli:
Environmental
engineer from Paris

'If 2.5 billion hectares could be regenerated then this land area could sequester all of humanity's emissions every year'

background in farming in the 1980s. The family grew avocados, grapevines, kiwifruit and other produce, 'in close to a desert situation', facing the extremes of floods and wildfires. They were 'farming on the margins'. Then in the 1980s interest rates soared to over 20 per cent. 'How were farmers meant to survive?' he said. It would impact food security locally and globally.

He joined AusAid (Australian Agency for International Development) and went to China in 2004. The aim there was to help modernize sustainable land and water management of the large regions that were running out of water and in need of 'integrated water management', to hold water in the soil rather than using synthetic fertilizers which had depleted soil organic carbon. Later that year he joined the Melbourne Water Corporation who manage the water supply for a city of five million people, as well as thousands of waterways, rivers and floodplains. All this gave him a deeper understanding of ecosystems, including paying farmers through government grants, funded by 'Nitrogen Offsets', to preserve their water resources and the water quality.

For 10 years he attended conferences at the IofC centre in Caux, Switzerland and has been on the steering committee for the Initiatives of Land, Lives and Peace (ILLP) which organizes the Caux Dialogue on Environment and Security. A pivotal moment, he said, was meeting the soil scientist Professor Rattan Lal in Caux in 2013. He was also working on the science of how to regenerate the soils of 2.5 billion hectares of land, including the water- and carbon-holding capacity of soil. This, for instance, could be applied across the Sahel desert region of Africa, Duncan commented. If 2.5 billion hectares could be regenerated then this land area could sequester all of humanity's emissions every year—thus providing a much-needed solution to prevent runaway climate change—as well as ensuring local and global food security and stopping the march of desertification and land degradation.

A big challenge for small farmers is the cost of assessing and measuring their carbon sequestration, as he and Charlotte Piccoli, an environmental engineer from Paris, emphasized. Microfinance was supporting farmers in places around the world such as the Sundarbans of West Bengal, where farmers breed honeybees and where Earthbank can provide finance to expand bee-

keeping and mangrove restoration of blue carbon (carbon capture by the world's oceans and coastal ecosystems). 'Regenerative farmers need to access funds at much cheaper rates of interest,' Duncan said, and carbon payments can subsidize the transition to sustainable farming.

In Guatemala, Earthbanc assessed small scale farmers with an average of two hectares, covering a total area of 100,000 hectares. Their average income is \$350 annually. Yet they could receive 'life changing' income through receiving \$200 in carbon payments annually. And 'more water-holding capacity leads to greater productivity and profitability. We are talking about a real revolution to democratize access to carbon markets and access to supply chain finances.'

Duncan said the need was to 'collaborate in partnering projects, including with NGOs [Non-Governmental Organizations]' to address the 'upfront costs of transferring to organic farming'. The target, he said, should be 2.5 billion hectares to sequester all of humanity's emissions annually.

He concluded that Earthbanc's call to action is to 'people who want to align their own wealth with planetary health.' And farmers were the best partners to help corporations and individuals offset their carbon emissions, with precisely measured carbon in trees and soil. In the group discussions that followed Duncan's talk, Maria del Corral, a small-scale farmer from Colombia, said she had planted 1,160 trees of 25 species.

The British doyen of environmental journalists Geoffrey Lean pointed out that methane is responsible for 40 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases, and drops out of the atmosphere within eight years, compared with the centuries that carbon dioxide remains. Tackling methane emissions, from cattle to rice paddy fields, through sustainable and regenerative feeding and planting methods, was 'low hanging fruit' that the world was only now beginning to wake up to. Tackling methane emissions 'could have bought us decades', he commented.

This was subsequently on the agenda of COP 26 in Glasgow, where world leaders gathered at the end of October to address ways to mitigate global warming. 105 countries pledged to cut methane gas emissions by 30 per cent, compared with 2020 levels, by 2030. □



Maria del Corral:
Small-scale farmer
from Colombia



EMPOWERING INDIA'S SMALL-SCALE FARMERS DURING COVID AND CLIMATE CRISES

A multi-award-winning grassroots movement in India has empowered 10,000 small-scale farmers. [Taru Naturals](#) has helped farmers to connect their traditional, organic products to their markets, including leading restaurants, at a time when the Covid pandemic has disrupted supply chains, and when climate change has caused havoc to traditional crops and ways of working.





Ruchi Jain:
CEO Taru Naturals

'In 2021 she was among the 50 UN Best Good Food award winners at the UN Food Summit'

'We envision to safeguard sustainable rural livelihoods and double small-scale farmer incomes,' said Taru's CEO and co-founder Ruchi Jain.

She was speaking to an online webinar, entitled Entrepreneurship for Healthy Food and Regenerative Agriculture, organized by Initiatives of Change in Business and the Economy on 12 November.

Jain was among the award winners of the GQ50 Most Influential Young Indians in 2019. She also received the Conde Nast 'Homegrown brand of the year' award that year. In 2021 she was among the 50 UN Best Good Food award winners at the UN Food Summit.

Jain has connected the farmers in Business2Business and Business2Customer links, including 70 of India's leading restaurants, such as Kitchen Garden, Bombay Canteen and the Taj Palace Hotel in Mumbai.

Taru—the word means tree in Sanskrit—operates in six Indian states: Assam, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Karnataka and Uttarakhand. Taru's vision statement is to encourage 'sustainable livelihoods for tribal communities and small farmers'. It works with farming communities 'to provide holistic natural farming training, post-harvest technology and quality control.'

In Assam, farmer Upendra Rabha has seen his black rice cultivation grow by 108 per cent in the last 10 years. In Karnataka, Suresh Desai, a jaggery powder farmer, is a founder member of an organic farmers' club of 400 members who have seen their crop output grow by 174 per cent. Some farmers have been able to grow five crops instead of one per year. Others have grown mango trees in an agro-forestry experiment.

Taru-packaged products include pancake, red rice dosa, idli and buckwheat pancake mixes, premium flours, jaggery powder as a sugar substitute, and a range of teas.

[A Farm-to-Table Relief Fund](#) purchases food kits directly from small farmers and distributes them to at-risk communities, such as migrant labourers and slum dwellers in Mumbai. A single kit costing Rupees 650 (€7.8 - £6.5 - \$8.7) can feed a family of four for two weeks. The relief fund has procured 126 tons of products.

But with over a billion Indians dependent on the country's agricultural economy, the big challenge is how to scale up Taru to have a national impact. Ruchi Jain said that farmers impacted by Taru have since become

ambassadors for Taru, as trainers for other farmers. She saw the Gujarat-based Amul Dairy Cooperative, jointly owned by 3.6 million milk producers, as an example to follow. Along with the UN recognition came the fact that the government was starting to pay attention to the experience.

Another challenge, she said, was how to encourage young Indians, who lose interest in agriculture and want to migrate to the big cities, to 'give them the experience of village farming' and to help them to see its relevance. □



FEEDING THE WORLD WILL NEED LIFESTYLE CHANGES SAYS MEXICAN ENTREPRENEUR

How is the world going to feed 10 billion people? That was the question posed by Mexican impact investment professional and former Wall Street banker Rocio Cavazos when she addressed an online sustainability forum on 10 December.





Rocio Cavazos:
Mexican impact
investment
professional and
former Wall Street
banker

**'Switching to
plant-based
burgers
would reduce
greenhouse gas
emissions by 30
to 90 per cent'**

Her theme, speaking to the forum of Initiatives of Change in Business and the Economy, was 'creating a regenerative, conscious and harmonious way of life'. The webinar was hosted by Antoine Jaulmes, a consultant in business ethics based in Paris.

Cavazos, who is the founder and president of the [Association of Vegan Entrepreneurs of Mexico \(EVM\)](#), quoted the [World Resources Institute](#) as saying that 'to adequately feed more than 9 billion people by 2050, the world must close a nearly 70 per cent gap between the amount of food produced in 2006 and that needed by mid-century.'

She declared that 'animals are inefficient processors of plant feed crops.' Chicken, for instance, consume nine energy calories in order to produce one food calorie, an 11 per cent conversion rate; cattle consume 25 to 30 energy calories to produce one food calorie, a three to four per cent conversion rate.

Plants, she pointed out, are 'protein producers while animals are protein concentrators.' Many more people, therefore, need to become vegetarian, at a time when 77 per cent of the world's agricultural land is devoted to livestock and only 23 per cent to crops.

Switching to plant-based burgers would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 to 90 per cent, she said, quoting figures from the Good Food Institute. It would reduce water use by 72 to 98 per cent and land use by 47 to 99 per cent.

Moreover, animal agriculture is the primary driver of loss of biodiversity. Therefore, 'global dietary patterns need to move towards more plant-heavy diets.' This would benefit the health of populations around the world and help to reduce the risk of pandemics, according to a Chatham House report of February 2021.

She attacked the conditions of farmed animals as fundamentally cruel: they are mostly confined for life, many in cages; they lack access to sun or fresh air and live in overcrowded settings; many are subject to mutilations; and hygiene challenges require massive amounts of antibiotics.

Yet the good news is of 'growing awareness among consumers of the impact of our food and lifestyle choices,' particularly among the Millennial generation. There is 'increasing interest in being part of the solution, through exercising our purchasing power'. And 'a young

and booming business sector is empowering consumers to adopt healthy, regenerative and conscious lifestyles.'

In Mexico, she said, the EVM aimed to 'boost the growth and impact of vegan businesses', maximizing access to their products and services by the general public.

Worldwide, big food chains were also moving towards plant-based foods. In the UK, McDonald's plans to become a vegan food and drinks leader; KFC have developed a green-bucket plant-based option; and Burger King's CEO has said that meat items will be dropped in favour of a 50 per cent plant-based menu within nine years. Unilever's CEO says that the rise of plant-based foods is 'inexorable' and its Vegetarian Butcher grew by 70 per cent in 2020.

In the last three years, investment in alternative protein companies in the private sector has soared, with a capital investment of \$3.4 billion in the year 2021 to date, and a total investment of \$9.4 billion.

Cavazos concluded by quoting the [Good Food InSTITUTE](#): 'A new space race for the future of food is underway.' This will benefit humanity, the animals and the Earth. □





