

Putting the metrics behind sustainability at UNEP.



UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) Mapping Retailer Sustainability Activities

The Challenge

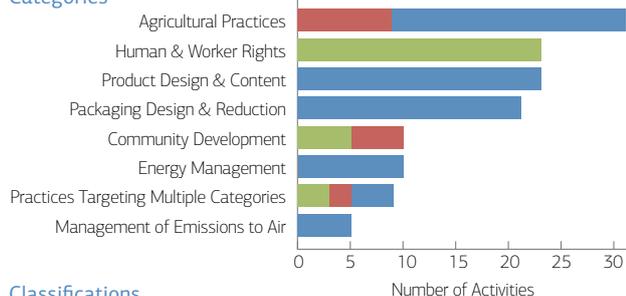
UNEP (www.unep.org), the voice of the environment in the United Nations system, wanted to map retailer sustainability activities that influence supply chains and consumers. The lack of a comprehensive mapping of retailer sustainability activities was preventing UNEP from optimally utilizing its resources to assist retailers in advancing their global efforts toward increased sustainable consumption and production (SCP).

PRé Solution

PRé conducted a study that included a comprehensive literature review and a survey of thirty-six retailers from thirteen countries. The surveys were performed locally by PRé's global partners in their respective countries. The results of the study were presented in a multi-stakeholder retailer workshop and the feedback served to validate the results and improve the quality of the study.

In general, retailer actions that influence supply chains were found to vary based on category (energy, packaging, human and worker rights – see image below), retailer engagement strategy (active/passive), and economic status of the country (developed/emerging) in which the retailer is located. The image below visualizes the categorization and classification of retailer activities, thereby indicating that the most common retailer sustainability activity of those surveyed is agricultural practices and that environmental activities outnumber social activities when summed.

Categories



Classifications

■ Environmental ■ Environmental & Social ■ Social

Somewhat surprisingly, most retailers were found not to utilize life cycle thinking when addressing sustainability issues. Retailers in the

consumer goods industry often misinterpreted life cycle management to be value chain management. The primary difference between life cycle management and value chain management lies in the scope of the product life cycle being considered. Life cycle management considers the entire life cycle (cradle-to-grave, including use-phase and end-of-life) whereas value chain management considers only the partial life cycle (cradle-to-gate, limited to production chain phases and excluding use-phase and end-of-life). When evaluating the drivers for retailers to take action, survey responses indicate that retailers are prioritizing the triple bottom line in their strategies, thereby validating a generally discussed assumption of sustainability in business. Some gaps in sustainability-based retailer activities were found to be shared by retailers in emerging and developed economies, whereas others were unique. Lack or limited use of environmental declarations and the limited use of LCA for decision making due to inaccurate LCA data and inappropriate LCIA methodology are two examples of shared gaps across developed and emerging economies. Gaps in developed economies were focused primarily on the insufficiency of LCA methods, data, and tools, whereas gaps in emerging economies were spread across consumer education and engagement, regulations, strategy, and life cycle thinking. The difference in reported gaps between retailer activities in emerging and developed economies reflects the maturity of retailer activities in developed countries. The most frequently cited barrier to retailer sustainability activities was the added expenses. Multi-stakeholder organizations share the financial burden among their members to understand sustainability impacts of products over their life cycle, but since they are membership based, it is an entry barrier to interested retailers.

Business Value

Working with PRé, UNEP discovered the following value-driven benefits:

- The need to promote the use of life cycle thinking as a strategy to advance sustainable development among retailers.
- The importance of evaluating the local context for retailer activities and assessing the effectiveness of prominent retailer activities.
- The immediate need to create a freely accessible collaboration and knowledge communication platform. This recommendation has now been implemented in the form of the Global SCP Clearinghouse (www.scpclearinghouse.org).
- The necessity for an international-policy framework for product sustainability information.



Creating Business Value Through Sustainability Metrics

Sustainability Metrics Consulting

Sustainability in business has become a core business concern and a driving factor in creating business value. PRé offers a range of consulting services, provided by a team of experts who will work with you to choose, create and deliver the right metrics for your sustainability goals.

PIONEERING Developing Innovative New Metrics For New Challenges

Societal and stakeholder expectations for implementing sustainability in business are becoming more demanding. Sometimes, off-the-shelf metrics cannot help you answer their questions. PRé has extensive experience in life-cycle-based metrics pioneering: implementing cutting-edge new product metrics and developing completely new, scientifically sound and robust metrics. PRé has been the driving force behind many ground-breaking initiatives like ReCiPe or the Handbook for Product Social Impact Assessment.

INTEGRATION Integrating Sustainability Metrics In Your Business

To create business value from sustainability, your business needs to integrate sustainability metrics across its business functions. You can't improve what you can't measure. PRé has the expertise required to help you choose the right metrics and to integrate sustainability into your day-to-day operations. PRé also supports you in increasing the efficiency of your LCA work and in empowering your LCA practitioners.

DELIVERY Expert LCA Knowledge To Measure Sustainability Performance

LCA has proven to be a robust and science-based way to measure and communicate your sustainability performance. PRé can review your LCA studies, deliver EPDs, footprints and other metrics, and provide you with completely new LCA studies to measure your impact. Our consultants are renowned for their expertise in specific topics, such as impact assessment, uncertainty, normalisation, toxicity, social sustainability and databases. PRé offers training courses and in-house training that build a solid knowledge base to help you conduct LCA studies yourself.

Get In Touch With PRé
We're always happy to discuss your sustainability challenges with you. If you have any questions, feel free to contact our offices in the Netherlands and the US.

The Netherlands
PRé Consultants bv
Stationsplein 121
3818 LE Amersfoort

Phone: +31 33 450 4010
consultancy@pre-sustainability.com

United States
PRé North America Inc.
2100 M St NW
Suite 170-352
Washington, DC 20037
USA

Phone: +1 202 728 5087
PRENA@pre-sustainability.com

We look forward to being your partner in putting the metrics behind sustainability.

pre-sustainability.com

Those Who Have Gone Before – Market-leading Businesses That Are Creating Value From Sustainability Metrics

PRé has built a worldwide reputation as a leader on environmental and social impact assessment. We work with organisations and institutes such as the European Commission, European Space Agency, Heineken, BASF, Philips, L'Oréal and DSM.



L'ORÉAL



About PRé

PRé has been a leading voice in sustainability metrics and life cycle thinking, since 1990, pioneering the field of product and supply chain sustainability metrics. We've developed some of the world's most widely recognised and applied environmental impact assessment methods, as well as the world's leading LCA software, SimaPro. From the very first, we have not only focused on developing the science of LCA, but also its application – helping companies create value by using state-of-the-art measuring, monitoring and analysis methodologies to improve their sustainability performance.

Find out more about what we can do for your organisation at www.pre-sustainability.com

