

Sustainable Living

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“Our global industrial food system generates one-third of greenhouse gases and is the principal driver of biodiversity loss.”

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“The challenges facing our planet cannot wait, and businesses must act urgently to become a force for good.”

Chris Turner, Executive Director, B Lab UK

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Redesigning our food system can **allow nature to thrive**

A circular economy for food could safeguard production without degrading our natural resources.



WRITTEN BY
Reniera O'Donnell
Lead, Food Initiative,
Ellen MacArthur
Foundation

Within the hills of South Devon countryside, volunteers at Riverford's Wash Farm have been planting 600 metres of new hedges. Once fully grown, these lines of native hawthorn, blackthorn and dog rose will act as a windbreak to protect new walnut trees and the soil.

Hedgerows help to mitigate the changing climate by capturing and storing carbon — and provide a habitat for bats, birds and insects.

Within the hedges, Riverford has been rethinking the way fruit and vegetables are grown. Herbicides and pesticides have disappeared in favour of boosting habitats for the small predators that will eat the insects that would eat the crops.

It's one example of a growing hunger to redesign our food system to boost yields while allowing nature to thrive.

Lower impact, diverse, upcycled, regeneratively produced

Plentiful diversity of animals and plants sustains our human species. Yet, our global industrial food system generates one-third of greenhouse gases and is the principal driver of biodiversity loss.

However, there is a better way. The top ten food manufacturers and retailers alone influence the use of 40% of all agricultural land in the EU and UK. They can adopt a circular economy approach to the design of food.

This is an actionable framework, making use of four design principles: use lower impact, diverse, and upcycled ingredients and crops, all produced in a way that regenerates the environment.

By 2030, this system could reduce farm-level greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70% and increase biodiversity on farms by around 50%.

Carefully selecting and upcycling ingredients

Ingredient selection choices made by product development teams (and buying decisions by retailers) can actively enable farmers to regenerate nature.

They can redesign and sell food products that include more diverse ingredients — choosing those that help build soil health, such as peas and beans that can fix nitrogen in the earth — and make exciting new

ingredients from by-products that are often wasted. At the same time, they can ensure these ingredients have been grown in ways that support biodiversity and keep our air and waterways clean.

One-third of food produced globally ends up being wasted. Manufacturers can help by opting for upcycled ingredients often consigned to the bin.

For example, Rubies in the Rubble uses ingredients to make condiments that have been rejected by other manufacturers as oddly-shaped or coloured.

Food producers can make food that can help nature thrive. Action at the manufacturer level means farmers can adopt an approach to managing natural systems that keep the aims of food production and the protection of nature in harmony.

One-third of food produced globally ends up being wasted.

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Contact information: uk.info@mediaplanet.com or +44 (0) 203 642 0737

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Project Manager: **Matilda Dodwell** matilda.dodwell@mediaplanet.com Senior Business Development Manager: **Josie Mason** Managing Director: **Alex Williams** Head of Business Development: **Ellie McGregor** | Head of Print & Design: **Thomas Kent** Designer: **Aimee Rayment** Content Editor: **Angelica Hackett O'Toole** | Head of Digital Operations: **Harvey O'Donnell** Paid Media Strategist: **Jonni Asfaha** Social & Web Editor: **Henry Phillips** Digital Assistant: **Carolina Galbraith Duarte** | All images supplied by Gettyimages, unless otherwise specified

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How **single-use packaging** will actually unlock the circular economy

Science has spoken. There is no 'one size fits all' for all packaging requirements. Reuse is not always better just because it 'feels' better.



WRITTEN BY
Winfried Muehling
Marketing &
Communications
Director, Pro Carton

Paid for by
Pro Carton and BPIF



In January 2021, the European Paper Packaging Alliance (EPPA) appointed Ramboll to conduct a comparative Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) study between a paperboard single-use dishes system and equivalent multiple-use dishes in Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs). The study's overarching conclusion was that, contrary to common perceptions, single-use packaging and tableware have lower environmental impacts than reusable packaging.

Single-use versus reusable packaging

The following year, another Ramboll-conducted LCAs study, commissioned by FEFCO, found that the single-use corrugated board system, compared with reusable plastic packaging, is more beneficial in 10 out of 15 environmental impact categories, further dispelling the myths of the reuse vs single-use debate.

We must enforce objectivity for example with independent LCA studies to realistically simulate the end-of-life impact of different packaging solutions in different usage occasions. Not to forget consistent reality checks including consumer experience and preference.

Sustainability of fibre-based packaging

On 2nd March, Pro Carton revealed authoritative, new research proving that the European carton and cartonboard industry has succeeded in reducing

its carbon footprint by 24% since 2018. The newly measured European industry average for the carbon footprint of cartons measured 249 kgCO₂e cradle-to-grave and 148 kgCO₂e cradle-to-gate per tonne of carton.

The staggering double-digit reduction in CO₂ was achieved by improving resource efficiency during the production process. It has also been bolstered by significant investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources at European cartonboard mills and converting operations since 2018.

What's more, the raw materials that arrive at the mills derive from sustainably managed forests. More than 90% of the wood fibres used in the European paper and board industry originate from EU woodland, of which more than 78% are sourced from sustainably managed and certified forests. Europe's forests are growing by an area equivalent to 1,500 football pitches every day, which is attributed to sustainable forest management.

Fibre-based packaging — a single-use packaging medium — is leading the way when it comes to closing the loop on the packaging circular economy. We are confident that key stakeholders, from consumers and brand owners to industry bodies and legislators, will continue to acknowledge fibre-based packaging as the present and future of sustainable packaging. We are proud to be circularity leaders, and we are proud to be single-use.



WRITTEN BY
Jon Clark
General Manager,
BPIF Cartons

i Find out more at
procarton.com

Sustainability certification is the first step on a business's path to net zero

Businesses increasingly understand that sustainability certification can drive brand value and put them on the path to net zero.



INTERVIEW WITH
Jonathan Withey
Director of
Transformation and
ESG, Planet Mark

WRITTEN BY
Tony Greenway

Paid for by
Planet Mark



Some companies may have thought of third-party sustainability certification as a tick box exercise: something they needed to pay lip service to society. Those days are long gone, says Jonathan Withey, Director of ESG and Transformation at Planet Mark, an organisation that quantifies and independently verifies a firm's carbon and social value.

Domino effect of sustainability

Now, every forward-thinking company understands the moral and commercial imperative of sustainability certification because it demonstrates a commitment to driving change, supports bids and tenders and communicates a culture of sustainable practice to internal and external stakeholders.

"The business case for sustainability certification has never been greater," explains Withey. "First, companies want to do it because they know it's the right thing to do. Second, there's pressure coming from bigger players. Smaller companies that work with large corporates are being told: 'You need to measure and reduce your carbon footprint so that we can hit our carbon reduction targets.' Third, where there's carbon, there's cost — so if a business is measuring and reducing its carbon

footprint, it's also saving itself money."

Insights and solutions for decarbonisation

There's a fourth driver that is hugely important: legislation. By 2050, every UK business must be net zero by law, so companies must actively work to reduce their carbon footprint. Certification is the first step on that path.

Businesses should find a certification organisation best fit for their needs and can provide insights and solutions for decarbonisation. They should be prepared to identify and gather data and evidence (found in invoices, fleet monitoring systems, travel expense reports, etc.) so that the certification organisation can discover where

environmental impacts are occurring and how they can be reduced.

"It can be a daunting task for any company that is being certified for the first time," admits Withey. "But a good certification firm will be able to guide them through the process and, when they are out the other side, present them with a comprehensive, engaging and valuable report that gives them a holistic view of their social and environmental impact."

Businesses should find a certification organisation best fit for their needs.

i To find out more about how Planet Mark can help your business on its decarbonisation journey, get in touch. Find out more planetmark.com

How can digital tech enable a **circular economy**?

Plastics, carbon, recycling; thanks to the shift in behaviour, these days, everyone has an environmental cause that they are passionate about.



WRITTEN BY
Julian David
CEO, techUK

While there has always been an eco-conscious segment of the population, growing environmental awareness and rising costs are increasing demand for products that have been used, last longer and have been made from recycled materials — a concept called ‘the circular economy.’

Maximising product use

Products with a longer life, lower environmental footprint and lower costs are in demand, and digital tech is going to be a huge part of the transition.

One key role of tech is connecting buyers and sellers. They may not be described as ‘circular,’ but platforms like Gumtree, eBay, Facebook Marketplace and other websites are an important first step in extending product lifetimes and increasing access for people on lower incomes.

This is further demonstrated by platforms such as Vinted, MusicMagpie, Nextdoor and Freecycle. There’s a huge market out there. However, quantifying it in terms of money saved compared to new items sold is difficult at present. We believe that there are many digital tools which could make this easier.

Lowering product costs

Tech is helping manufacturers and retailers make

products more recyclable, durable and repairable to begin with.

A big barrier has been getting a reliable source of recycled materials to make new products with — which is why we’re excited to see all the innovations in electronic waste tracking, so buyers and environmental law enforcers know exactly what is where, which will unearth thousands of tonnes of material for recycling and lower the price, too.

Product life span

Keeping things working for longer is a key part of the circular economy. If an item can be diagnosed with a fault and rectified, repair is cheaper and more likely to succeed.

Vodafone developed a chip that is inserted into an appliance and can identify and notify a customer that something isn’t quite right with their appliance and suggest potential causes — and can even turn a device off if there’s a safety critical fault or if the manufacturer issues a product recall.

Tech has a role in delivering the circular economy. Much of it is happening in response to consumer and cost pressure, which is a welcome change in the way we live and operate — but there needs to be a more concerted look at how tech can make a real difference.

How UK savers can reassess their investments to **better align with their values**

Consumers in the UK have begun to look more closely at where their investments are going and what impact their money is having.



WRITTEN BY
James Alexander
Chief Executive,
UKSIF

In August last year, Ipsos MORI asked voters to identify the most important issue facing Britain, and 23% of respondents said pollution and the environment. UK consumers have begun to look more closely at where their investments are going and what impact their money is having. We believe sustainability allows for long-term investment which can achieve strong financial returns while promoting long-term environmental and social value.

‘Greenwashing’ risks in investing

The finance sector has long been engaged in sustainable and responsible investing; in particular, the integration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors in investment processes. These factors cover the natural environment and climate but also consider wider social issues, such as human rights and working conditions.

When investing sustainably, consider the potential risks of ‘greenwashing’ in the investment market. This is when an investment firm — or its products — makes environmentally or socially sustainable claims, without necessarily implementing the sustainability strategies and actions that can meet these claims. Even good intentions can sometimes fail to meet consumers’ or their funds’ objectives.

Even good intentions can sometimes fail to meet consumers’ or their funds’ objectives.

Navigating through the sustainable investing market

Important things to look for when choosing a sustainable investment product include a company or funds’ claims and delving into their explanations of how they intend to achieve these.

Consumers can also look at how their funds are investing in climate solutions and the evidence of their positive impacts on society and the environment — beyond just mitigating risks alone.

Upcoming sustainable investment requirements

The UK’s financial regulator — the Financial Conduct Authority — is in the process of helping give consumers greater confidence in the sustainable investing market by creating new ‘Sustainability Disclosure Requirements’ and investment labels.

It recognises different approaches to sustainable investing and positively covers both environmental and social issues. These requirements could allow consumers to make better-informed decisions and reduce the risks of ‘greenwashing’ and are a key development to look out for in the coming months.

Why impact investing can be a financial win — and the right thing to do

Impact investing is a way to flow capital towards underserved environmental and social issues, says Ben Constable-Maxwell, Head of Impact Investing, M&G.



INTERVIEW WITH
Ben Constable-Maxwell,
Head of Impact
Investing, M&G

WRITTEN BY
Tony Greenway

How is impact investing different from other types of sustainable and responsible investing?

Sustainable and responsible investors primarily seek good financial returns, but they also avoid ‘bad actors’ or invest in companies that successfully manage their social and environmental responsibilities. Impact investors, meanwhile, take a different approach by intentionally targeting specific environmental and social challenges and invest in companies or solutions that are trying to actively drive positive change in those areas.

These types of investors want solid financial returns too; but crucially, they also want their investment to do good, not just avoid harm. Evaluating and measuring the positive impacts is a necessary part of the process — and helps to avoid ‘impact washing.’ Importantly, impact investing has a role to play in orienting capital towards issues and communities that are currently being underserved by traditional finance.

What are the biggest challenges facing sustainable and impact investors?

The Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) reports that the worldwide impact investing market is now worth \$1.16 trillion. That’s encouraging but, clearly, growing that market further could be a challenge in the short-term in an environment where certain high-emitting sectors are on a resurgent path.

There’s also the challenge of greenwashing and impact washing; i.e., investors must make sure that the businesses they invest in aren’t making false, misleading or overstated claims about their environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategies or the sustainable impacts of their products or services.

UK and European regulation in this area is welcome because it pushes businesses to be transparent about their operations and solutions. However, the right balance needs to be struck. If regulators set excessively narrow parameters about what is a sustainable or impact investment and what isn’t, it could put off potential investors and slow the market’s momentum.

Is the world on track to meet the SDGs by the target date of 2030 and what can investors do to support the UN’s agenda?

In 2015, the UN unveiled 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a better and more sustainable future for all. Analyses suggest that the world is not on track to meet those 17 SDGs.

In 2022, we highlighted that only two SDGs have progressed (SDG 3: good health and wellbeing, and SDG 9: industry, innovation and infrastructure); and two others (SDG 7: affordable and clean energy, and SDG 10: reduced inequalities) have gone backwards since the Covid-19 pandemic.

To be fair, there’s a lot of investment going into affordable and clean energy at the moment; but much more is needed. To properly tackle the challenges we face to ensure a sustainable and equitable future, the world needs to reorient towards the SDGs and use them as a ‘north star.’

As for investors, they have a huge societal responsibility — but also a huge investment opportunity — to invest their capital in companies and solutions that will solve the world’s problems.

What are the most interesting opportunities ahead for impact-oriented investors?

The circular economy is an area that can support solutions to some of the world’s most intractable problems. That is, investing in innovative companies that can slash the use of virgin raw materials by helping to extend the life of a product for as long as possible; or that extract products of value from waste streams before returning them as a recycled input into the industrial process.

In sustainable investing, there is — naturally — a lot of focus on the climate crisis. But nature is in crisis too, and some investors are moving towards addressing this critical issue. An impact-oriented approach could include financing sustainable forestry and natural flood defences or investing in agri-tech to promote more resilient and efficient agricultural practices.

All of the above can help the world achieve its sustainability goals while aiming at generating a return for investors.



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Embrace reuse consumption for modern times and **reduce plastic pollution**

The proliferation of plastic pollution is harming our planet, people and economies. Half of global plastic production is for single-use; and in a business-as-usual scenario, there will be more plastic than fish in the world's oceans by 2050.



WRITTEN BY

Sheila

Aggarwal-Khan

Director, Industry and Economy Division, UNEP

WRITTEN BY

Zara Ingilizian

Head of Consumer Industries and the Future of Consumption Platform, World Economic Forum

Currently, 14% of plastics globally are collected for recycling, with only 2% considered closed-loop recycling. According to a survey from Ipsos, three-quarters of people worldwide believe that single-use plastic products should be banned.

How to reduce plastic waste

Recycling alone will not solve the plastic pollution crisis. Reuse systems, in which consumer packaged goods are designed to be used multiple times before eventually exiting the stream of commerce, need to be adapted to modern ways of life.

Reuse needs to become the more desirable, convenient and affordable

option for consumers. And these reusables must also be designed to be recyclable. By shifting 10% of plastic products to reusable systems, the equivalent of half of annual plastic ocean waste can be prevented.

Companies setting an example

Algramo, a Chilean reuse startup, already operates in over 2,000 family-owned stores. Its refill-on-the-go system in Santiago has proven successful even during the Covid-19 lockdown: sales increased by 356% between April and June 2020.

Unilever is partnering with Algramo on a mobile dispensing system that offers refillable products to consumers, and it is working

with Indonesian packaging-free store Saruga to launch refill stations for their home and personal care brands.

Role of consumers, businesses and governments

While businesses and governments control the design of the system and safety standards, ultimately the consumer — as the end user of the packaging — can accelerate the interest for businesses to innovate on reusable design.

At the Climate Conference in Glasgow in 2021, India announced a new campaign 'Lifestyles for Environment (LiFE).' LiFE is coming front and centre as a key issue — putting lifestyles and demand-side changes at the top of the agenda.

The World Economic Forum's 'Consumers Beyond Waste' initiative convenes leading organisations across business, civil society and government to support reuse systems fit for the modern day. Meanwhile, United Nations member states will meet in Paris at the end of May to further work to develop an international agreement on plastic pollution.

Support the businesses that have been going beyond this month

The UK has one of the fastest-growing communities of sustainable businesses in the world, with over 1,200 companies now certified as meeting high standards of social and environmental performance.



WRITTEN BY

Chris Turner

Executive Director, B Lab UK

It can feel disheartening to be an environmentally or socially conscious consumer right now. Despite many products and brands making sustainable claims, it's not always easy to find companies that have made an authentic commitment to people and the planet. Our latest research has found that the vast majority of UK customers (80%) favour buying from 'good' companies but just one in five (22%) say it's easy to seek them out.

Businesses with high standards

Certified B Corps are companies that are modelling how business



should be done. They have made a legal commitment to consider people and the planet alongside profit in their decision-making — something 72% of the public agrees should be the norm for business.

Alongside this legal change, they commit to high standards of environmental and social performance as a business and to being transparent and accountable for their positive impact. This means they measure their impact on customers, workers, communities and the environment. Knowing that no business is perfect, they commit to continuously improving to help

us move towards the economy we need.

Know who to support

B Corps exist in every sector of our economy, from clothing brands like Finisterre, Chloé and Patagonia to food and drink businesses such as DASH Water, Lucky Saint and Tony's Chocolonely. Businesses certified so far in 2023 include beauty brands Elemis and Wild and phone company GiffGaff.

March was B Corp Month, the annual celebration of what it means to be part of a growing community of sustainable businesses. The theme for 2023 is We Go Beyond, with businesses demonstrating how they're going beyond expectations to reinvent the way business is done. Look out for certified businesses shouting about the impact they're making and encouraging others to do more.

The challenges facing our planet cannot wait, and businesses must act urgently to become a force for good. For the rest of us, seeking out those who are already moving in the right direction is a small change we can make — with a big impact.



Scan the QR code to find out more





**Keeping things
working for longer
is a key part of the
circular economy.**

~Julian David, CEO, techUK

Clearing the air on environmental claims: what to look for and what to avoid

As consumers become more conscious of their carbon footprint, it's important to understand the terms, claims and labels that will help us purchase from brands taking genuine climate action.



WRITTEN BY
Natalie Morris
Global Media and
Communications Lead,
the Carbon Trust

With input from
colleagues Madeleine
Bertie & Tirza Kreuwel

According to a consumer survey undertaken by YouGov* in the US and Europe, two out of three consumers are more positive about brands that take concrete steps to reduce their products' carbon emissions. At the same time, two-thirds think product footprint labelling is a good idea. But what exactly should consumers be looking for?

Understanding environmental terms and claims

As a starting point, it's helpful to have clarity on environmental terms used in claims, which can often be confusing. Here are some key terms to know.

- Greenhouse gas emissions – Gases in our atmosphere that trap heat. CO₂ is the primary greenhouse gas emitted through human activities.
- Carbon footprint – Measures the total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by a person, organisation, service or product.
- Carbon footprint label – An on-pack label on a product demonstrating the brand is working to measure and/or reduce emissions of the given product.
- Carbon neutrality – Is defined by an internationally recognised standard (PAS 2060) which requires companies to reduce their emissions; any remaining emissions are compensated through offsets.
- Carbon offsetting – A carbon offset allows organisations to compensate for emissions they could not reduce by funding a project with an equivalent carbon saving elsewhere.

What to look for and what claims to believe

When shopping, the first thing to look for is a symbol, trust or quality mark awarded by an independent third party. Carbon footprint labels on a product or its packaging show when a brand is working to measure and reduce its carbon emissions. The more we understand a product's carbon footprint, the better choices we can make. The Carbon Trust label, for example,



shows consumers if a product's carbon footprint is reducing year-on-year, is carbon neutral or lower than other market-dominant products. It also assures a third party has verified that the product's carbon footprint is measured to internationally recognised standards.

To identify genuine environmental claims, look for specific, factual information backed by credible, evidence-based data sources. Claims should be easy to understand, providing access to further information via weblinks or QR codes.

Be wary of brands that claim to be 'the first' or saving the planet, as every product and service has an environmental impact across its lifecycle. Instead, look for brands that are transparent and share their progress on what they have achieved and what they are still working on.

What to avoid

As consumers are seeking more sustainable products, companies are incentivised to make their products as attractive as possible through their environmental claims. This has given rise to greenwashing where companies claim they are doing more for the environment than they are.

Signs of greenwashing include:

- Vague and unclear language.
- Statements that give the impression a product has no negative impact at all.
- Lack of accessible, adequate explanations or evidence.
- Eco logos and labels that are not associated with third-party assurance to international standards.
- Omitting information to appear more eco-friendly.

As a consumer, if you have any concerns or doubts about a green claim, err on the side of caution. We can't solve the climate crisis alone. But if we start to become more climate-conscious during our everyday shopping, we can reduce our footprint — one foot at a time.

*Source: Product carbon footprint labelling consumer research 2020, the Carbon Trust

Find out more at
carbontrust.com

Paid for by the Carbon Trust

