

WHAT SHOULD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MEAN FOR BUSINESS IN CHALLENGING TIMES?

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ABSTRACT

SABMiller approaches sustainable development as a core part of business and a critical enabler of commercial success. When considering SABMiller's 10 sustainable development priorities - which include using less water to make beer; reducing the energy and carbon footprint; tackling poverty by stimulating economic activity among local suppliers and reducing the spread of HIV/Aids in local communities – it is not hard to see the contribution they make both to the business and to society.

Despite current economic challenges, environmental issues remain a high priority for consumers, investors, employees and other stakeholders and continuing scientific investigation confirms the challenges society will face in the near future regarding climate change, water scarcity and ecological resources.

SABMiller has undertaken comprehensive value chain footprinting of carbon emissions and water use to understand potential risk areas and develop action plans in response. Using such analysis enables a business to pinpoint where to focus its resources to make a real difference.

Often a business cannot deal with a challenge such as water scarcity or reducing greenhouse gas emissions, on its own. It must work in partnership with suppliers, local communities, academics, governments and non-governmental organisations to find solutions to complex problems. A good example is the partnership SABMiller business Bavaria has with The Nature Conservancy in Bogota, Colombia to reduce water costs through better management of the watershed, improving ecology whilst meeting business goals.

SABMiller takes a leading approach to issues such as water and enterprise development through leveraging its global scale to identify the best models available around the world and implementing them in different markets. Its smallholder farmer sourcing model, which is now employed across Africa, in India and in Latin America is an excellent example of this.

Sustainable development activities should enable the business to grow and flourish as a meaningful contributor to economic growth and social development in the context of challenging environmental limits.