10 tips to go green in the grains, pulses and oilseeds sector

Last updated:
08 November 2023

Going green is very important in the grains, pulses and oilseeds sector. If you become more environmentally friendly now, you will be ready for the extra green requirements that both European buyers and consumers set. Improve the quality of your soil, choose more sustainable farming methods, improve packaging and transport, get certified and use green innovations, and this will help your business strategy. When you include sustainability in your business, it benefits the planet and it also gives you a better reputation and a competitive advantage in a market that is changing fast.

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1. Recognise the importance of responsible production

Just like every industry, the grains, pulses and oilseeds sector impacts the environment. As a producer of these products, you can help the environment by using sustainable methods.

If you are more sustainable, you will reduce your impact and protect natural resources for future generations.

As the global population grows, there is more demand for food. The current food system is not sustainable, and people are worried about how it will meet demand in the future. We can make the grains, pulses and oilseeds sector more sustainable, to help to guarantee food security by protecting natural resources and supporting sustainable farming practices.

The planet and the people need it

‘Going green’ often goes together with ‘going social’. When you use sustainable farming practices, this is good for nature and also good for the farmers. Going green can also lead to higher yields, healthier crops and a healthier living environment for the people who live on and near the farm.

Round table on Responsible Soy

One example of when going green goes together with going social is the Round Table on Responsible Soy. This is an initiative for a global conversation about soy that is financially, socially and environmentally strong. The first members included the food retail chain Coop and the international company Unilever that owns many other companies.

Health and nutrition

Many products in this sector are an important part of what people eat. However, many common farming practices, like using pesticides and fertilisers, can be bad for people's health. When the sector is more sustainable, this can help to make sure that these foods are grown in ways that are safe and nutritious.

Buyers and consumers increasingly require it

Supermarket chains are adding more organic products and they require importers and exporters to have certifications that show that they work in a sustainable way. Companies that can prove that they are sustainable can do business with supermarket chains in Northern Europe, and these companies have more long-term business relationships in the European market

It is not enough to be competitive; sustainability is now a basic feature of every successful grains, pulses or oilseeds business.

Consumer awareness

All over the world, consumers are thinking more about environmental issues. In Europe, consumers think a lot about climate change and what they can do to reduce its effects. More and more consumers choose products that have organic certification and that are produced locally. This means that, as a non-European supplier, you need to be just as sustainable as European farmers. For example, the Swedish cooperative Lantmännen had the ambition to grow its products sustainably, so they started a Climate & Nature programme for sustainable grain cultivation and introduced a wheat flour that has a smaller impact on the climate and the environment.

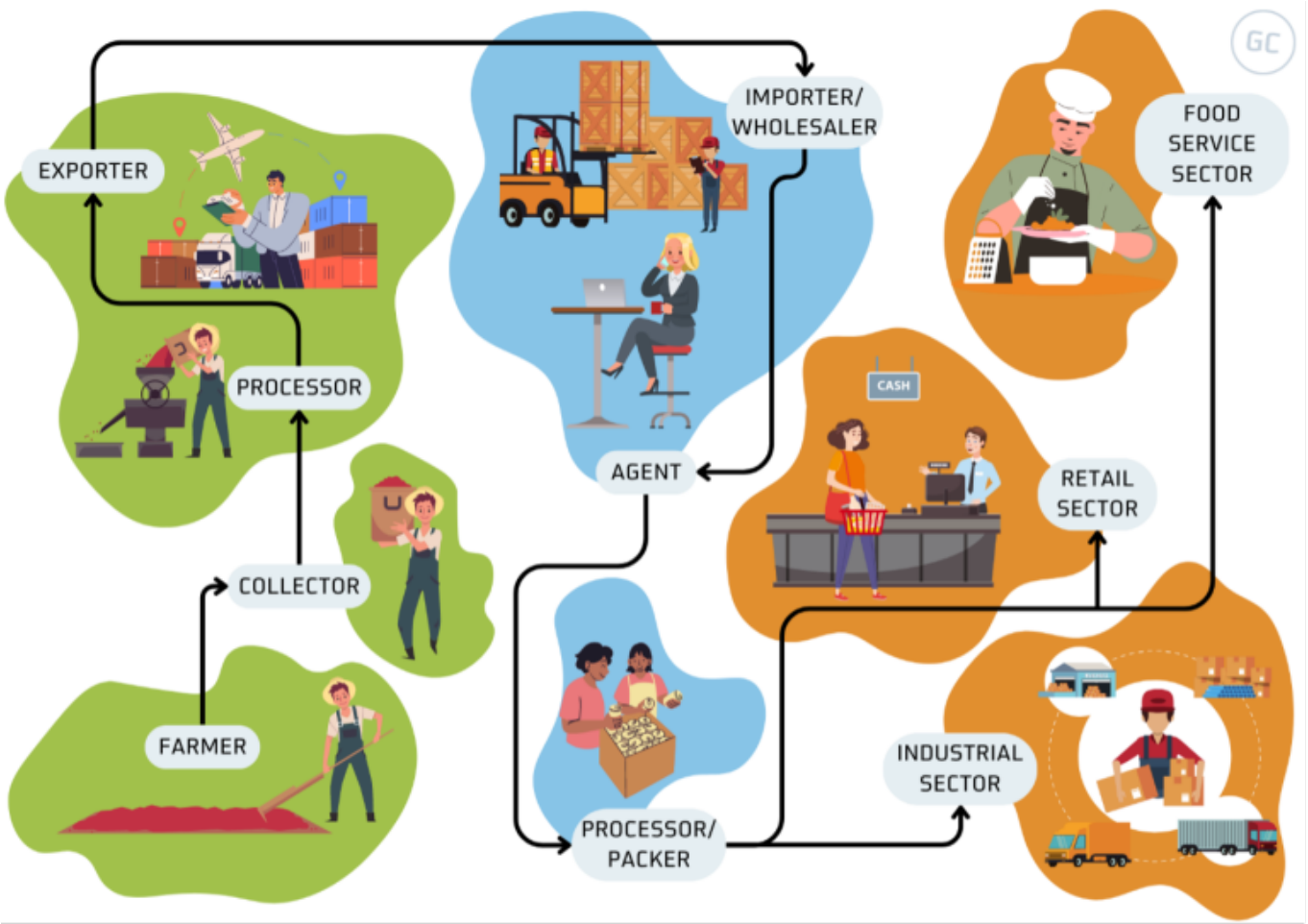
Governments are working on legislation

Governments in Europe are always working on rules and laws for the food industry. These rules and laws often focus on sustainability.

2. Analyse your supply chain to find the key issues

You may not be able to influence every aspect of the supply chain, but you can control your impact in important areas like inputs, primary production and primary processing. Some parts of the supply chain can do more than 1 task. For example, an importer/wholesaler can also be the processor/packer.

Figure 1: Sustainability impacts along the grains, pulses and oilseeds supply chain (not exhaustive)



Source: Globally Cool, 2023

The aspects of this sector that cause pollution are fertilisers, processing, packaging and transport. Other things may not pollute the environment directly but they cause environmental problems, for example the wrong kind of water management and deforestation. We will talk about that in Tip 3.

Fertilisers

Fertilisers cause the most pollution in the grains, pulses and oilseeds sector. Going green means choosing organic fertilisers like compost, liquid plant manures, humic acid, grain meal, amino acids and seaweed extracts.

Processing, packaging and transport

Processing, packaging and transport also cause a lot of pollution. You can become greener by reducing your environmental impact when you process, package and transport your products

For example, quinoa has new packaging options available that can hold between 1 and 2 tons of quinoa, instead of the original bags that can hold 40–60 kg. This means that we can use less packaging material per kilogram of quinoa

Another way to reduce the environmental impact of your product is to improve the packaging in a way that reduces food waste. For quinoa, you can use ‘impermeable’ flexible packaging that reduces the amount of oxygen that gets to the product, and you can use transport methods that have less oxygen.

3. Use sustainable farming practices

Sustainable farming is about using resources, including land, fertile soil and animals, in a way that lets them be renewed without damaging or polluting other resources. 2 important sustainable farming methods are organic farming and regenerative agriculture.

You can use regenerative agricultural practices like inter-cropping (growing 2 or more crops in the same field), reducing or stopping tillage, crop rotation and precision agriculture (reducing chemical and biological inputs). This improves the health of the soil so you can grow good-quality food, and it helps to reduce climate change and restore biodiversity.

Organic agricultural practices can reduce the environmental impact of farming. These methods include using natural pesticides, crop rotation and composting. You can also use renewable energy sources, for example solar or wind, for your irrigation and farm equipment. This can help to reduce the carbon footprint of farming operations.

Shares Uganda Ltd develops, finances, processes and exports organic and regular agricultural products in Uganda. They work directly with small-scale farmers, and they give training so that the farmers can keep up with high standards. They follow the standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which do not allow chemical pesticides or child labour.

Optimise your soil quality

'Soil optimisation' (making sure that your soil is the best possible quality) is important in farming because we need healthy soil to grow healthy plants. When soil is optimised, it has a lot of organic matter, it has a healthy balance of nutrients and it loses less water. Experts say that 'soil depletion' (when soil becomes less fertile) is the biggest problem in the grains, pulses and oilseeds sector, and it is related to sustainability.

The soil is being depleted in the countries where the grains, pulses and oilseeds are grown. This happens more often in regular, large-scale, single-crop agriculture like soybean cultivation.

Soil optimisation in organic farming usually involves methods like crop rotation, cover cropping, organic fertilisers and products that help the soil. For example, sorghum can be a perfect cover crop to keep water in the soil. Rotating your crop with pulses can keep nitrogen in the soil. These practices help to keep the soil healthy, improve the soil structure and grow more helpful microorganisms in the soil.

When they optimise their soil, farmers can produce high-quality crops that are healthy and nutritious, and also protect the long-term health of the soil and the environment. This is different from conventional farming, which often uses a lot of chemical fertilisers and pesticides that can make the soil quality worse in the end.

You can use methods for regenerative agriculture to optimise your soil quality. Regenerative agriculture is a food production system that focuses on results. It protects and restores healthy soil, it protects the climate, water and biodiversity and it makes farms more productive and profitable.

To use regenerative agriculture, you need to look at all aspects of farming. You can look carefully at things like how well nutrients work together in crop rotation between different crops or the best type of soil cover for the type of cash crop you want to grow.

Tips:

Measure your inputs, and store them properly to reduce waste and overuse. Use technology that helps you to make the best use of inputs, because this will reduce emissions and costs. For example, satellite data can help you to decide how to use fertilizer.

Reduce soil disturbance like tillage. This might work differently for different crops and different amounts of weeds, so you could try the low-tillage variants first.

Regenerative agriculture practices can be a very good solution for soil depletion, but you cannot just say that your farm is regenerative. If you want to tell the world that you have a regenerative farm, you should give details about how it is regenerative. If you do not explain how it is better than other common practices, people may think that you are 'greenwashing' (pretending that your farm is more sustainable than it really is).

Reduce water use

Agriculture uses a lot of water, and inefficient use of water can be a problem if you do not have a lot of water available. Good water management can help to increase crop yields and profitability at the same time as it protects natural resources. There are many options. 1 good practice is drip irrigation, which sends water directly to the roots of plants. You can also collect rainwater. If you have more water than you need, you can divert some of it from fields, and you can also use natural stream beds to control water flow.

There is a lot of information online about water management for this sector. For example, you can read this study about the drip irrigation effect on sunflower oil production in sandy soil or this example of drip irrigation for rice growers. However, drip irrigation is not very common for most products in this sector. If you are an arable farmer, Agrismart has made a list of water management tools for arable farmers.

Solar irrigation can also be a solution for areas where there is not a lot of water. In the Indonesian village of Krincing, rice farmers have installed solar panels to power a water pump that irrigates rice fields.

If you have problems with water and climate in your area, you can try different crop varieties. Instead of producing common wheat, you can choose ancient grains such as einkorn, spelt or emmer that can survive drought. Native African grains like teff, fonio and sorghum are also good options in dry, warm climates.

You can also use seed varieties that need less water. Timothy is a sunflower farmer from Tanzania. He grew the same kind of sunflowers in his fields for more than 10 years, but then the weather in his area became dryer. This made it difficult to keep his crops healthy, and his harvest was reduced by more than half. Timothy joined a project by Farm Africa called Flourishing Futures. They introduced him to an improved variety of a seed called Hysun 33, which can grow well in dry conditions. Timothy now harvests nearly 5 times as many seeds from 1 acre of Hysun 33 flowers than he harvested from 5 acres of the traditional variety.

Avoid deforestation

Some products in this sector cause serious deforestation. Deforestation is a big cause of biodiversity loss, soil erosion, less storage of carbon and also climate change. Growers should try not to clear forest land to turn it into farmland. There are initiatives that do 100% sustainable trade with no long-term deforestation. One example is IDH's Sustainable Trade Initiative, which has a project for crops like soy.

Another way to improve biodiversity that was lost because of deforestation is by protecting or planting 'forest curtains'. These forest curtains protect the agricultural fields in between them, and they also help to protect diversity and soil quality. Semear Group from Bolivia is a chia seed company. They have a video that shows these forest curtains.

Improve your farming practices

These practical measures will help you to improve your farming practices in a fast and efficient way.

Track inputs and outputs:

Keep accurate records of important details such as the amount of seeds you sow, the yield you get and the amount of fertiliser you use. These records can help you to understand how effective different approaches are and to make the right decisions for you.

Monitor water usage:

Use a water meter to measure how much rain falls on your farm. This information will help you to decide how much extra water you need to add and how often you should add it. When you understand your water usage patterns, you can improve your irrigation practices and use your resources more efficiently.

Analyse results:

Look carefully at the information you collect, and do this regularly. Look for patterns to find out which areas you can improve. For example, if you notice that you use a lot of fertiliser but you still get low yields, you may need to change your fertilisation strategy.

Continual improvement:

Focus on understanding your farming practices better with each season. Experiment with different methods and ways of working, and use the results to make changes. This process will help you to improve your methods over time and to get more efficient and sustainable results.

If you are thinking about introducing sustainable farming practices, it is a good idea to get help from an agricultural advisor who has experience in changing from traditional to sustainable farming. You can use their experience to help you introduce the new methods faster. This will reduce the training time for the people who work at the farm, and it will also build trust in the process. You can find advisors online, but you can also contact them through business support organisations (BSOs) or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that work in your country.

Tips:

Introduce ‘circular economy’ principles. This can help to reduce waste and make the best use of resources. It includes things like composting food waste, using recycled materials in packaging and creating ‘closed-loop’ supply chains that aim to re-use resources instead of throwing them away after the first use.

Try to use green and organic inputs from your own farm or from neighbouring farms. You can also try to get your agricultural inputs from local companies so that you reduce the emissions from transportation.

Visit Organic Africa if you want to find out more about this topic. It has some interesting sources, for example this poster about how to prepare organic compost. They are also making a poster about how to prepare liquid fertiliser. Check their website regularly to find out when it will be published. You can also read this document about reducing emissions from fertilizer use by the International Fertilizer Association, or learn about how regenerative farming increased yields in cereal and oilseed crops in Germany.

If you are a rice producer, watch the recording of the CBI Webinar on Speciality and Sustainable rice to learn more about the product and about the opportunities in these niche markets.

4. Improve your transport and logistics

It is very important to reduce transport emissions so that we can reduce the environmental impact of the food industry. Efficient transport is good for the planet, but it can also be more profitable. Most grains, pulses and oilseeds are already transported in bulk, which is usually the most efficient method. However, it is always good to think about improvements.

Food system emissions around the world produce 5.8 gigatonnes of CO2 equivalent (GtCO2e), which is 30% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

A lot of these emissions are caused by products that come from animals, like meat and dairy, and by animal feed (like some grains that are included in this study). Of course, pulses, oilseeds and grains that are grown for other purposes also cause some of these emissions.

Table 1: Selected grains, pulses or oilseeds with relatively lower CO2 emissions per kilogram produced

Product	In store	Kg CO2e / kg
Chickpeas (dry)	Europe	0.74
Dried beans	Europe	0.81
Linseeds	Europe	1.2
Chia seeds	Europe	1.2
Dried lentils	Europe	1.2

Source: Carbon Cloud

Table 2: Selected grains, pulses or oilseeds with relatively higher CO2 emissions per kilogram produced

Product	In store	Kg CO2e / kg
Sunflower seeds	Europe	1.3
Peanuts	Europe	1.5
Jasmine rice	Europe	2.9
Nut bar	Europe	3

Source: Carbon Cloud

The emissions from these products happen during the agricultural phase, the processing phase and the transport phase. It is important to reduce transport emissions so that we can reduce the environmental impact of the food industry. For spices and herbs, packaging has a big effect.

You have several options if you want to make your transport and logistics more sustainable:

- use bulk packaging;
- use vacuum packaging for grains or seeds that lose their unique features when they are stored for a long time, or if there is an increased risk from pests. This type of packaging often costs more money, and your buyer may not be willing to pay for it. 1 example is the VacQPack system;
- save space in the container by transporting the bags without pallets. Use liners on the floor and walls (see pictures of dunnage) to protect the bags and to make sure there is enough ventilation. Remember that this may increase the handling costs for your buyer because they need to unload manually;
- use more fuel-efficient vehicles;
- send several shipments at the same time;
- find the best routes;
- choose varieties of grains, pulses or oilseeds that can be sent by sea, because this transport method has much lower emissions than air transport.

Tips:

If you offer more sustainable packaging than your competitor, this can give you a competitive advantage. For grains, pulses and oilseeds, the most sustainable packaging is often bulk packaging. If you are exporting processed grains, pulses or oilseeds that are transported in smaller packages, please remember that using glass or cans instead of plastic packaging will probably be heavier, and this can have a higher carbon footprint.

Use high-quality packaging for your product. This will impress your buyer, and it also reduces the risk of damage to the product.

It can cost a lot of money to invest in new types of packaging. You should always talk to your buyer about what your options are and what they want.

5. Become a certified grains, pulses and oilseeds producer

A way to become a greener producer in this sector is to get a green certification.

It is a good idea to become a green certified producer, because:

- It shows that you are committed to environmentally responsible farming practices. This gives you a competitive advantage over growers that do not have certification.
- Certification bodies guide you through the process. They will probably see issues that you did not notice.
- Certification can also improve your access to markets that focus on sustainability, including retailers, food processors and exporters.

Organic

If you want to sell your products as organic in Europe, you must grow them with organic production methods that meet European legislation. Growing and processing facilities must be audited by an accredited certifier. After certification (never before you are certified), you can put the European Union's organic logo on your products. You can also add the logo of the standard holder, for example Soil Association in the United Kingdom or Naturland in Germany.

You can only import organic products to Europe if you have an electronic certificate of inspection (e-COI). Each batch of organic products that is imported into the European Union (EU) must have an e-COI that complies with the rules in Annex V of the Regulation defining imports of organic products from third countries.

It is important to know that the market for organic grains and oilseeds is mostly driven by the strong growth of organic animal products, especially dairy and eggs. These organic feed grains are often low-cost products with a strong competition from European farmers. Only a very small part of all organic certified organic cereals and oilseeds are directly consumed. For human consumption, the more exotic a grain or oilseed is, the more the potential organic certification offers. This offers opportunities for niche products such as specialty rice, teff, fonio, quinoa and chia.

Global GAP

GlobalG.A.P. is a third-party certification for good agricultural practices. You need this certification if you want to import many of the grains, pulses and oilseeds products that are sold in supermarket chains in Europe. This means that GlobalG.A.P. certification is something you really must have. If your product does not have this certification, supermarkets will not sell it in their stores.

Retailer standards

Retailers can also impose their own standards. For example, the British supermarket Tesco has its standard Tesco Nurture. Especially larger retail chains in Northern Europe will be more willing to buy your product if you meet social and sustainability standards.

ETG is 1 of the biggest African suppliers of sesame seeds and pulses. They describe their policy on sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) on their website. They are also ISO14001:2015 certified. This a sustainability certification that is recognised by a lot of European buyers.

Sustainability initiatives from the sector

The ProTerra foundation has developed a standard on social responsibility and environmental sustainability for soy. The ProTerra Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that encourages sustainability at all levels of feed and food. Its members include Cargill, Bunge, Alpro and Barry Callebaut.

Tips:

Most certifications are not available for free. The cost of certification is paid by the producer (you). Work together with European buyers, NGOs and national or international government organisations that can help you to be able to pay the certification costs. You can get more information from websites like the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Check the guidelines for imports of organic products into the European Union so that you understand the requirements for European traders.

If you grow niche products like teff, fonio, quinoa or chia, going organic can be very good for your business. You will have more opportunities for your product and you will be able to trade with an important market segment for at least some of these products.

6. Stay on top of new green European legislation

It is important to keep checking for new green European rules and laws. Governments are always writing new rules. The European Due Diligence Act and the European Green Deal are some of the most important green laws and rules in the EU.

European Due Diligence Act

It is becoming very important to do business responsibly and sustainably and to treat everyone in the supply chain fairly. To encourage companies to take action for human rights and to reduce the environmental impact in their supply chains, the EU has laws for due diligence that everyone has to follow. These laws make sure that everyone in the whole supply chain respects human rights and the environment.

The European Green Deal

In the next few years, the European Green Deal will affect how resources are used and how greenhouse gas emissions are reduced. The new EU policies on sustainability will prepare Europe to be the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

The Farm to Fork Strategy is at the heart of the European Green Deal. This strategy aims to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. It will make sure that food production is sustainable and it will focus on things like packaging and food waste. EU trade agreements, for example the agreement with Costa Rica (Central America), already include rules for trade and sustainable development. The EU expects other countries to follow these rules. For suppliers, it is important to get ahead of the new standards and to try to be 1 of the first companies to comply with them.

1 example of this is the target to reduce the use of pesticide by 50% before 2030. To achieve this goal, the maximum residue limits on imported products are now even stricter. 1 example is the pesticide glyphosate, which is used to produce agricultural products all around the world. It is currently approved for use in the EU, but the approval ends on 15 December 2023 and it may not be renewed. If the EU banned it, this would probably be followed by stricter glyphosate residue limits, which would also affect imports.

Tips:

On the CBI website, you can find more information about the European Due Diligence Act, The EU Green Deal - how will it impact my business? and an overview of sustainability developments in the European grains, pulses and oilseeds market in Trends on the European GPO Market.

For more information about certification and other buyer requirements for this sector, you can read market studies on the market information page of CBI, the study How to organise your export and the buyer requirements study.

7. Be aware of the challenges

As a producer and exporter in this sector, you can face different challenges when you try to become more sustainable. The biggest challenges are:

1. More demand (with lower yields): The demand for most grains, pulses and oilseeds is increasing around the world. This makes it difficult for farmers to meet that demand. At the same time, many grains, pulses and oilseed farmers are getting lower yields.
2. Higher farming costs: Inflation is high in most parts of the world. This also causes higher farming costs. Investment in green technology, or even just introducing greener agricultural practices, also usually costs money.
3. Changing requirements that suppliers must satisfy: The certification costs are paid by suppliers.
4. New knowledge and skills are needed: Investment in knowledge and skills takes time, effort and often also money.

These challenges increase the costs of many products in this sector. For some primary producers, this means

that they make very small profits, or they can even lose money. When the margins are small, it is even more difficult to invest in sustainable farming practices.

However, if you do it right, going green will be more profitable in the long term. Most farmers already have lower yields, even without using sustainability practices. Even if sustainable farming might reduce yields a bit, this should be only temporary. The costs of green farming can be higher, but when both the yields and the prices go up (buyers usually pay more for sustainably produced products), it should be good for business in the long term.

The market keeps changing. It is very important to stay up to date on the buyers' requirements and the knowledge and skills that you can develop to become a better grower of grains, pulses and/or oilseeds.

8. Make use of green innovations

The grains, pulses and oilseeds industry is big, and new technologies are invented all the time. These technologies offer solutions and improvements for farmers. Now that the connection between agriculture and climate change is clear, many new developments focus on this issue and offer opportunities to be more sustainable. At the moment, precision agriculture uses technology to offer opportunities to be more efficient in how you use inputs like water and fertilisers. Scientists are researching new sustainable methods for plague control to give farmers more environmentally friendly options.

Robots

Technology improves fast in the agricultural sector. Now, it is possible to use robots to harvest more and more crops. There are also robots for weeding, for seeding and planting and for fertilising. For example, these farming robots help you to grow grain.

Online platform for farmers

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is working with CropIn, a supplier of digital solutions for farmers. Together, they have launched a project for smallholder farmers in Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Tanzania and Mozambique. This project offers digital solutions to strengthen farmers and to encourage them to reduce the effects of climate change.

On the CropIn website, you can ask to try their product for free. You do not have to promise to buy the product after you try it. The website also has case studies, blogs, webinars, white papers and other resources to learn about 'intelligent agriculture'.

CropIn's platform was launched in 6 countries, and it helped farmers to digitise end-to-end agricultural operations. For example, farmers 'geotagged' agricultural land (they added geographical information to things like satellite photos) and 'digitised' the farm and the farmer (they turned physical information into digital forms). This meant that they could bring all the information together in central cloud storage. The platform also supported individual farmers with its Package of Practice (PoP). The PoP tracks agricultural inputs, offers information about the best times to sow seeds and warns farmers about pests and diseases before they start, so that farmers do not lose as many crops.

For example, 2Scale made a traceable rice value chain in Africa. They digitised farm operations and added real-time farm information, using satellite pictures and precision agriculture. Here are some of the ways this helped the farmers:

- Digitised buying and post-harvest process;
- Business intelligence;
- A supply chain that is more predictable;
- Better harvest and acreage.

Contact 2Scale for support if you are a producer of rice or a local SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) rice trader or processer. They are currently active in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and South Sudan.

Source: Youtube

There are more examples of how farmers use technology and innovation in agricultural projects. The UDNP report about precision agriculture for smallholder farmers has more information about this. The report describes technologies and how they can be used in precision agriculture. They give real-life examples and describe practical situations.

The report also focuses on important factors like how practical it is to introduce these technologies. It talks about good business models that many different people can use and about how to recognise potential problems. For example, it is a problem if you do not have enough digital infrastructure, or if farmers do not have enough digital literacy and digital skills.

Tips:

When you go to international trade shows, look for new solutions and ask the makers what the options are for your type of crop. New developments are often presented in the academic programme of the show.

Read more about precision agriculture in the study 10 tips to go digital in the GPO sector. This study gives the example of the Brarudi Sorghum Case. In this case, AUXFIN created e-Services in rural areas to support the local sourcing of the Brarudi brewery, which is a daughter company of the company Heineken in Burundi.

Watch the videos by FarmKenya. They have interesting videos about farming, like this 1 about data-driven agriculture.

Look at the Indian oilseed sector's sustainable innovations, if you are an oilseed producer.

9. Embedding green principles in your code of conduct

A code of conduct (COC) is a set of guidelines that describes the behaviour that an organisation thinks is right. Every company should have a COC. When you record environmentally friendly principles in your COC, you show your commitment to sustainability and you encourage the industry to become more environmentally responsible.

To do this, follow these steps:

1. Check your COC: Take the time to look carefully at the COC that your organisation has now.
2. Introduce green principles: Use clear, short sentences that talk about environmental responsibility and sustainability.
3. Tell people about the principles: Share the updated COC with everyone in your organisation to make sure that all your employees know about the green principles you have added.
4. Encourage people to follow the principles: Tell people how important it is to follow the COC, and encourage your employees to use environmentally friendly practices in their work every day.

Every organisation can have a COC, even if the organisation is small. Many smaller buyers that trade grains, pulses or oilseeds include social and environmental requirements in their buying policy. They will ask you about your policy for these subjects. You can expect more buyers to ask you for documentation and certification that prove your good behaviour in your own operations and in your whole supply chain.

When you include green principles in your COC, you show your commitment to sustainability and you help the industry to focus more on its effect on the environment.

Your COC should include information about:

- the values your company believes in
- guidelines for behaviour
- business practices you use every day
- how your employees should treat people who come from outside your company

Valamis has a good article about what to include in your code of conduct.

Best practices in Codes of Conduct

Unilever and Cargill each have a long COC that focuses on sustainability. You can use these examples to learn about ‘self-verification’. This means that you check your own compliance with the buyer’s sustainability code. Click these links to read Unilever’s Sustainable Agricultural Code (SAC) and Cargill's Supplier Code of Conduct.

Mayorga Coffee is a company from South America. They have very clear information about their sustainability practices on their website. They are excited about sustainability, and that is easy to see from the story on their website. They trade in coffee, but they also buy and sell quinoa and chia seeds. Their sustainability story about quinoa tells you about their supply chain, direct relationships and organic products.

Source: YouTube

Tips:

Encourage your employees and customers to behave sustainably. You can do this by reminding them to recycle and reduce waste, and to save energy. Talk to them about sustainable behaviour, and offer them training and education.

Work together with your suppliers to encourage sustainable practices in the whole supply chain. This includes encouraging sustainable farming practices and reducing the use of chemicals that damage the environment.

Check your environmental performance regularly and report on this. Your report should include your greenhouse gas emissions, water usage and how much waste you produce. This can help you to see what you can improve, and it shows your commitment to sustainability.

10. Find funding, investors and/or partners

When you grow grains, pulses and/or oilseeds in a developing country, it can be a good idea to find funding, investors, or partners to support your sustainability efforts.

Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI)

Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) has export coaching programmes that give small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) information about markets and support them to trade. The programmes are made for these companies, and they also include training about how to do business in Europe. You can find their projects on their website.

GIZ

GIZ is an organisation that is based in Germany. They aim to offer personal, low-cost and effective services for sustainable development. They have programmes in countries around the world, including in the agricultural sector.

Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)

The Sustainable Rice Platform unites rice companies around the world. For example, AMRU Rice in Cambodia helps farmers to meet the SRP standard.

Import Promotion Desk (IPD)

The Import Promotion Desk (IPD) helps exporters from partner countries to find contacts in the EU. It also gives them market information and helps with capacity building. 1 of the sectors that they operate in is natural ingredients, which includes grains and seeds (quinoa, amaranth, rice) and pulses (kidney beans, pinto beans, white beans, peas).

International Trade Centre (ITC)

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is a development agency for sustainable trade. It publishes written materials and has an SME Trade Academy that teaches online courses (some courses are available for free). You may be interested in courses like 'Export Sales and Negotiation' and 'Helping SMEs Generate Export Business' if you want to develop as an exporter of grains, pulses or oilseeds.

Research other potential partners yourself

- Look for government programmes or grants that encourage sustainable agriculture and offer financial or technical help to farmers.
- Look for NGOs or non-profit organisations that work with farmers to encourage sustainable agriculture and offer financial or technical help. We have already described some of these organisations. Some other examples are the World Bank, the United Nations and NGOs like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). They offer financial and technical support to SMEs in developing countries. This is usually part of projects that offer investment, training and technical help and that last for a specific amount of time. This means that SMEs must find out which new projects are being launched in their regions.
- Join certification programmes that encourage sustainable agriculture, for example Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance. These programmes can offer access to markets and buyers who are interested in products that are produced sustainably.

Find funding through a national agricultural or development bank

Agricultural banks offer loans to companies in the agricultural sector. Strengthen your network of organisations that support farming, development or exports. International NGOs often ask these organisations to manage projects that may include grants and other business support. Look for new projects and register your company with them, so that they can contact you when there are opportunities.

The Agricultural Bank of Egypt is an example of this type of bank. It offers special loans and services for agricultural activities, and it has branches in rural areas of Egypt. Look into your country's agricultural or development bank. They probably have special projects to help the agricultural sector.

Tips:

Work together with other farmers or cooperatives to use your resources and expertise efficiently, so that you can introduce sustainable agriculture practices.

Go to events or conferences that focus on sustainability. At these events, you can meet and talk to potential partners or investors and learn about funding opportunities.

Work together with universities or research institutions to get funding or technical expertise to help you to use sustainable agriculture practices.

Look for investors or partners who are interested in supporting sustainable agriculture projects. These could include impact investors, socially responsible investors or companies that have sustainability goals.

Think about using crowdfunding to raise money from a community of people who are very interested in sustainable agriculture.

Globally Cool in cooperation with ICI Business, carried out this study on behalf of CBI.

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