

THE OPPENHEIMER GROUP

Incorporating Sustainability into Processes and Systems

HIGHLIGHTS

- 5% carbon emissions reduction target by end of 2013;
- Participating in the Carbon Disclosure Project;
- Preferred carriers are Smartway Certified;
- Bringing socially responsible products to market;

CONTEXT / BACKGROUND

For more than 150 years Oppenheimer has been riding the waves of the dynamic fresh produce industry. With a rich history nurtured through grower alliances, hard work and visionary thinking, the company's entrepreneurial culture remains intact as much today as it did in 1858 when the Oppenheimer brothers started providing food and supplies to thousands seeking their fortune during the BC gold rush in 1858.

Sustainability has been a part of Oppenheimer's culture for years, but after benchmarking their carbon emissions in 2009, their commitment to sustainability has taken on a life of its own. The company has joined the Carbon Disclosure Project, and is aiming to take the equivalent of 745 cars off the road by 2013.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Carbon emissions - If you can't measure it you can't manage it!

In 2009 Oppenheimer benchmarked the emissions of all business activities within their operational control, learning in the process that 85% of the company's emissions were a result of transporting produce. The company subsequently committed to a 5% carbon emissions reduction target by the end of 2013; and

HEAD OFFICE: Vancouver, BC

TYPE OF OPERATION: Full service produce marketer and distributor

NO. OF EMPLOYEES: 260

ESTABLISHED: 1858

WEB: ppy.com

developed a strategy that included ways in which transportation emissions could be reduced, including:

- In 2012 Oppenheimer began a preferred carrier program using SmartWay Certified¹ tractors and trailers. These Certified tractors and trailers significantly reduce fuel consumption and emissions over traditional equipment by incorporating such things as trailer aerodynamics and low-rolling resistance trailer tires;
- Using rail to ship produce in high density markets such as Northeastern US, thus reducing the number of trucks on the road;
- Evaluating the opportunities to reduce emissions associated with container and break bulk oceanic shipping;
- Implementing a new logistics system that optimizes load planning, filling trucks to capacity including backhauls and expanding their third party freight business;
- Increasing the use of communications technology to reduce employee related travel.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In an effort to take care of the land, and the farmers that work it, Oppenheimer has become a North American leader in providing products that are Fair Trade² or Rain Forest Alliance Certified³.

Fair Trade seeks to ensure that farmers get a better deal including longer-term and more meaningful trading relationships and better pricing. Rain forest alliance certified products are farmed under strict sustainability conditions, ensuring, for example, that farmers produce food without destroying other vegetation that protects, streams, prevents soil erosion and provides habitat for wildlife.

In 2012, the company marketed Rain Forest Alliance certified grapes from Peru, Chile and Brazil, and organic and conventional greenhouse sweet bell peppers grown to Fair Trade standards by Divemex in Mexico. As a result, for every box of Fair Trade peppers sold by Oppenheimer, for example, \$.50 is delivered into an account managed by Divemex workers. In the past, the workers have used these funds to provide scholarships for their children, and continuing education for themselves.

As part of their sustainability strategy, Oppenheimer is looking to increase the volume of these products that they bring to market. Having recently established its baseline, the company is now in the process of establishing corporate targets to measure how much this volume increases.

OTHER INITIATIVE

In addition to these initiatives, Oppenheimer has created a number of other successful projects aimed at reducing their environmental and social impacts, including:

- Established a “Green Team” with a member in each office who helps identify opportunities to reduce waste and conserve resources;
- Introduced a lunch room perishable foods disposal program;
- Implemented a program to channel edible but not marketable culls from repacking activities to local food banks. Non-edible culls go to a composting service to minimize landfill usage;
- Implemented virtual servers that reduce energy consumption by 50%;
- Developed a policy to replace all computers and laptops within 48-months, which eliminates older equipment that consume 54% more energy than newer models;

- Installed motion sensors and low energy lighting in all warehouse coolers to minimize power usage;
- Encourage staff to carpool, and reduce single occupancy commuting journeys;
- With its BC greenhouse pepper partner, SunSelect, marketed peppers grown using green carbon capture technology, whereby waste CO₂ is transformed into fertilizer for the plants in the greenhouses

SUMMARY

Oppenheimer has recognized that consumers like to buy from responsible companies, that these companies tend to outperform others, and that companies with a happier workforce typically find it easier to retain and recruit new staff. Oppenheimer therefore sees sustainability in a way very few others do – essential to business.

By joining the Carbon Disclosure Project the company has joined the ranks of leading companies in sustainability, by publicly acknowledging their carbon emissions and establishing targets for improvement. Perhaps more importantly, these baselines have enabled the company to identify priorities and address them through an action plan.



1 Smartway is managed by the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Smartway Transport Partnership
2 www.fairtrade.ca
3 www.rainforest-alliance.org