

## Sustainable Agriculture Initiative: Platform and sustainable agricultural practices

### Introduction

SAI, Sustainable Agriculture Initiative, is a platform that was originally created by the three large food companies Danone, Nestlé and Unilever. The platform is thus an initiative from the industry, which felt the need to create the SAI platform to enhance sustainable agriculture. The underlying reason for this was to better cope with quality and safety problems, as well as adverse effects and pressure of agriculture on natural resources in order to ensure future availability of raw material.



### Aim and scope

The SAI Platform aims to develop harmonised sustainable agricultural practices. The platform is open to all food industry companies.

### Outline of the SAI platform themes and activities

The ultimate goal of SAI Platform is the development of harmonised sustainable agricultural practices. Sustainable agriculture is defined as:

*"a productive, competitive and efficient way to produce agricultural raw materials, while at the same time protecting and improving the natural environment as well as the socio-economic conditions of local communities"*

In order to achieve this, SAI Platform has created four main themes, around which all activities are carried out. These main themes are:

#### 1. Knowledge building and management

There is a database of programmes run worldwide on sustainable agriculture, including research programmes, case studies, guidelines and standards for agriculture. Introductions to these programmes are available on the website, but in order to download specific information one needs to be a member. Please see the section on SAI Platform in practice further down in this document.

#### 2. Support to the Implementation of sustainable agricultural practices

This is the main work of the Platform. A number of activities are developed, including case studies, general and crop-specific frames to assess agricultural practices and guidelines for sustainable agricultural practices. SAI platform is currently focusing on these products/product groups: dairy, cereals, coffee, fruit, palm oil and potatoes & vegetables.

#### 3. Awareness raising

SAI platform communicates information both to its members and to the general public. This is done by means of information published on the website, a quarterly newsletter, as well as articles published in specific newspapers. The newsletters can be downloaded on the website, also for non-members.

#### 4. Stakeholder involvement

SAI platform communicates and exchanges knowledge with different stakeholders in the food chain. All stakeholders are welcome to participate in the discussions.

### SAI Platform in practice

All food industry companies which agree with the SAI Platform's principles and are committed to support sustainable agricultural practices can join the Platform. The initiative counts many

large companies among its members, in addition to the founding companies these include Campina, Findus, Kraft, McDonald's, McCain Europe and Neumann Kaffee Gruppe.

As mentioned above, the main part of the work of SAI Platform is supporting the implementation of sustainable agriculture. In practice the work is carried in working groups. Each member company interested in a specific commodity or horizontal issue can propose the launch of a new working group to work on that particular issue. SAI Platform staff can help in technical and administrative work, but the member companies are the ones taking the lead in a working group. Examples of existing projects are:

- *Fruit*, where Dole, Friesland Coberco, Groupe Danone, McDonald's and Nestlé make up the working group. The working group was created on September 15, 2004. It aims at promoting the sustainable production of fruits worldwide, in temperate and in tropical zones as well as from fruit plants and trees.
- *Green coffee*, where Ecom, Efico, Kraft, Nestlé, Neumann Kaffee Gruppe, Sara Lee DE, Tchibo and VOLCAFE are members of the working group. The group was founded in 2003, and has since released a mission statement on sustainable green coffee, as well as principles and practices for sustainable green coffee production. At present there are fifteen pilot projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These aim at testing SAI Platform sustainable principles and practices for green coffee production, as well as at identifying key indicators of progress towards sustainability.

#### **Certification scheme & promotion of sustainable green coffee in Latin America**

This long-term and supply chain-based SAI Platform programme focuses on Latin American countries. The overall aim is to certify cooperatives and farms under Rainforest Alliance's (RA) "sustainable agriculture" scheme and promote sustainable coffee for the mainstream. The program started in 2003 and will end in 2006. About 100 farming organisations are involved, including large and small farms and cooperatives.

Main activities of the programme include the development of a guide for farm improvement, creation of an incentive for change as well as monitoring and verification of progress towards the sustainable production and post-harvesting of green coffee.

Key stakeholders are farmers, who are committed to implement best management practices and thus reduce environmental impacts, increase social benefits and improvement their incomes and overall living conditions. Rainforest Alliance is responsible for certification, auditing and promotion of sustainable mainstream coffee. Kraft Foods Inc. is committed to purchase RA certified coffees and promote sustainable mainstream coffee. Local NGOs in each country support activities of certification, auditing and technical assistance. Finally, trading houses are also involved (ECOM, Neumann Kaffee Gruppe, Taloca and VOLCAFE).

➔ [For more information](#) on the activities of the working groups, please see the external link.

#### **The role of farmers**

As described above, the activities carried out in the working groups are initiated by member companies, which are in general major food companies. The role of farmers is thus that of exchanging views and knowledge, as well as potentially being involved in a project carried out by a SAI Platform member company.