Sustainability: What Is It and Why Should I Care?

FMC's Michael Wilson talks about sustainability and what it means to our businesses.
What is Sustainability?

FMC employees recently received an email from Michael Wilson (president, FMC Specialty Chemicals), who serves as Executive Committee Member for Sustainability. In his email and subsequent video message, he provided information about the Sustainability Council's findings, the importance of FMC's Sustainability Initiative, and our path forward.

Sustainability Means Different Things to Different People

The United Nations defines sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present “without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The Dow Jones Sustainability Index describes corporate sustainability as a “business approach to create long-term shareholder value.” At FMC, we see sustainability as a business strategy to drive long-term value creation while addressing market and societal needs.

“As individuals, I think it is safe to say we all have a desire and commitment to protect the environment,” says Michael. “But for us as a company, as employees of FMC, sustainability is more than an environmental initiative and much more than favorable public relations. Sustainability is both a basis for future competition and an enabler of corporate strategy. It’s about creating competitive advantage while doing the right things, in the right way, to ensure the long-term success of FMC. It’s about ‘the Right Chemistry’.”

In other words, there is a growing acknowledgement across business, social, environmental, governmental and non-governmental groups that viable, valuable businesses have a right to compete and deliver shareholder value as one component of sustainability. The challenge is to ensure that we are doing everything within reason to reduce or eliminate adverse effects on future generations while strengthening the role we play in bettering the lives of people everywhere today.

So, “sustainability” really means respecting people and the planet, as well as ensuring business continuity.
What, Exactly, is FMC’s Sustainability Goal?

“Our vision for sustainability is really quite simple,” says Michael. “But achieving it will be challenging.”

He says the Sustainability Council has already agreed that being more intentional about sustainability is a top priority at FMC and it will demand significant changes in approach and mindset to almost everything we do – from developing and designing new products, to how we produce them, to how we respond to market and societal demands.

“Our commitment to sustainability must address economic, social and environmental performance,” Michael adds. He says this will happen by:

- Creating and delivering long-term shareholder value through lower cost and enhanced growth.
- Improving products and enhancing customer relationships.
- Creating greater opportunity for employees.
- Making a positive impact in the communities where we operate.

The Council has indicated that achievement of our Vision 2015 business goals are closely intertwined with our demonstrated progress in various areas of sustainability. So the marriage of business success and sustainable development couldn’t be more clear. **Our future as a company and our individual contributions to sustainability are directly linked.**

“If we do not embrace sustainability, our competition surely will, seizing competitive advantage and growth,” says Michael. “It is a critical enabler to achieving our long-term success.”

What Are The Factors Influencing Sustainability?

In our next article, we will explore **5 Market-Shaping Shifts** that are driving the need for sustainability and how our individual businesses are aligning products and practices to address those shifts. You will also learn about ways you can become personally involved in our sustainable future.

Do you have comments or ideas on sustainability for FMC? Please share them at sustainability.info@fmc.com.