

ing more rice companies interested in SRP rice production and making these standards incrementally binding. This may only be achieved through a continuous dialogue with those who matter – and by disseminating a business model through different awareness raising mediums at local and national levels.

In the longer term, the partners will facilitate collaboration between actors in the rice supply chain to build a supportive infrastructure for

rice growers, and to integrate rice growers into a more effective rice value chain by providing them with better access to technology, knowledge and training and linking them better to markets. This would drive positive change in the rice sector and develop an inclusive value chain, where rice farmers may supply quality rice, become stewards of the environment and increase the economic viability of their households. Partnerships are the basis for making a change – as stipulated in SDG 17.

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"The world we want tomorrow starts with how we do business today"

Five questions to Ian Knight, Global Sustainability Manager at Mars, Incorporated.

Mr Knight, you work in Pakistan and India with the WAPRO project. Why these countries, and why rice?

India and Pakistan are the largest producers of Basmati rice, and for us as the owner of the world's biggest rice brand, Uncle Ben's, Basmati rice is an important and growing part of our portfolio. Rice is a staple for half the global population, so it needs to be protected. We are working to create a sustainable rice supply that can help support business growth and the nutritional needs of a growing population.

What is the benefit evolving from such a kind of partnership for a company like yours?

Through collaboration and building partnerships, we believe that we are able to create mutual benefits for all involved. WAPRO serves to promote long-term relationships with our suppliers and the farmers who supply them. This encourages investment in training and deployment of more sustainable agricultural techniques that can improve yield and smallholder farmer income whilst reducing environmental impacts like water use.

What exactly is your role in this multi-stakeholder partnership?

Mars targets to ensure that all its rice farmers are working to implement the best practice techniques contained in the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standard, such as alternate wetting and drying and laser levelling. Mars invests in agronomy to support and train farmers with implementation of the SRP. We also support the use of the Alliance for Water Stewardship's International standard as a framework for wider stakeholder consultation and engagement within the WAPRO project. Helvetas and its partners within WAPRO work to address the shared water challenges faced by communities in the areas we source rice from.

What has been reached so far? What are the lessons learnt?

In the first phase of WAPRO in Pakistan, we saw farm income and water productivity improve by 30 per cent. This encouraged us to

extend our participation in WAPRO phase 2 to our Indian Basmati rice operations. A key learning has been the benefits of the Push Pull Policy approach and its suitability to be scaled, as WAPRO is now involved with projects in six countries.

What is next?

In terms of the partnership, we are keen to carefully assess the impact of WAPRO in Haryana state, India, and we are hopeful that the project will again be enabling significant water and economic productivity improvements.

As a business, we believe that the world we want tomorrow starts with how we do business today. We will be continuing to work to improve the sustainability of global rice supply and make sure that this crucial crop is around for generations to come.



The questions were asked by Silvia Richter.

Mars Sustainability Plan

In 2017, Mars announced they would invest a billion dollars in their 'Sustainable in a Generation Plan'. The plan addresses key areas of the Sustainable Development Goals. The company committed to ensure that their products are sustainably sourced and have a positive impact on the value chain – with a better yield and fairer pay. Regarding rice, the company's ambition is that by the end of 2020, 100 per cent of its rice is sourced from farmers working towards the Sustainable Rice Platform standard. By 2025, all farmers are to be on the path to sustainable income, and the gap to sustainable water use is to be reduced by 50 per cent. In addition, the company made a global commitment that 100 per cent of their packaging would be recycle-ready by 2025.