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## Scaling the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Agri-processing Sector

The NBI (National Business Initiative) in collaboration with DI (The Confederation of Danish Industry), are running a new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) project with the Agri-processing sector in South Africa. The process commenced in Cape Town at the end of April 2019 with a two-day Bootcamp.

The aim of the project is two-fold:

### Organisations participating in the project:

- Agbiz
- Distell
- Philip Morris
- Pioneer Foods
- Rhodes Food Group
- Sappi
- Tiger Brands
- Tongaat Hulett

1. To work with participating sector stakeholders to identify a set of priority SDGs and 'Sector Level Objectives' for the Agri-Processing Sector against which (a) the sector can develop a roadmap for implementation and measurement of impact and (b) around which companies can align their internal SDG prioritisation processes.
2. To build the capacity of participating member companies to internally identify a set of priority SDGs and to incorporate them into their core business, thereby enhancing company sustainability and competitiveness for the future. Taking time to support and build company capacity has the added advantage of enabling companies to recognise the value of the sector level component of the project and to engage with it in a more meaningful way, therefore providing more direct and cohesive action for SDGs implementation.

SDGs Bootcamp Feedback:

Representatives from the companies listed above participated in the bootcamp and our guest speakers included **Dr John Purchase**, CEO of Agbiz and **Tatjana von Bormann**, Senior Manager of the Policy and Futures Unit at WWF South Africa. The NBI and DI jointly facilitated the rest of the engagement.

On day 1, the NBI as the lead facilitator focused the content around understanding the SDGs and the role of business in their implementation at scale. This served to frame the sector level component of the project that ultimately aims to lay the foundation for sector level collaboration projects for SDG implementation and promote sector sustainability. Key takeaways included:

1. This SDGs project has emerged from the past 7 years of NBI work which has been done to construct a shared understanding of the kind of socio-economic transition scenario that business would prefer and the importance of collaborative action to achieve it, was emphasized.
2. The strategic importance of growth and sustainability in the Agri-processing sector and how, if achieved, it could be a key contributor to national economic recovery.
3. The value of stakeholder collaboration and planning for sustainability.
4. An overview of the many trends that will shape the agriculture and Agri-processing sectors, emphasising the potential effect of climate uncertainty, resource scarcity, changing diets and the global fight against food waste. These trends present both threats and opportunities to Agri-processing and sustainability will depend on how well they are managed.
5. Participants had the opportunity to engage with each SDG in more detail and realised that one needs to understand the content, at SDG target level, in order to engage with them in a useful way.
6. Participants acknowledged the sense of urgency behind the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs. 11 years is a short period of time considering the scale of what needs to be delivered.
7. It was agreed that it is possible for sector stakeholders to collaborate to enhance sector sustainability and unlock opportunity provided we remain mindful of the boundaries of competition law.
8. Participants were provided with tools and arguments that they can use internally to emphasise the impact of SDGs and a project website was established to share resources and maintain regular communication.

On day 2 participants were invited to start exploring how the SDGs can be used to enhance sustainability and competitiveness at individual company level. DI led the discussion about what it means for companies to build the SDGs into their core business, how it is beneficial and how to get started. Valuable insights from a similar project that DI has run with their company members over the last 3 years were shared. Key takeaways included:

1. There is opportunity to be unlocked at company level, in most sectors, when company risk and strategy is considered from the perspective of the SDGs.
2. Several companies (large and small) have already taken a SDGs perspective to improve their competitive edge and have already benefitted from building the SDGs into their core business.
3. Now is the time to act and get ahead of the game or risk being left scrambling to keep up.
4. There are a variety of tools, frameworks, models and databases available to support companies in understanding where and how the SDGs can be used to the greatest effect; companies will need to consider which combination would work best for them. Doing a value scan is a good place to start.

5. There is no substitute for a robust change management process to engage and secure organisational buy-in of initiatives and processes to build the SDGs into companies' core business. This is also one of the most challenging steps but, if done properly, can be crucial to unlocking the full potential of the company to set and achieve sustainability goals.
6. Building a community of practice is helpful, however; this can be a difficult process.

On reflection, existing participants felt that, given the nature and importance of this project, it would be beneficial to increase the number of contributors. The NBI will therefore continue to engage with other organisations to increase involvement. Interested companies (that work in the food/drink manufacturing/Agri-processing sector) are invited to contact **Geeta Morar** should they wish to learn more or partake in this exciting project.

Overall, participants left the bootcamp feeling both enlightened and somewhat 'overwhelmed', but overall inspired and ready to accept the challenges involved in this process. The NBI believes it was a job well done and commend them for taking the crucial first steps in what, we hope, will be a fascinating and complex, yet rewarding journey.

Following the boot camp, three processes will take place in parallel:

1. NBI will continue to run the recruitment process to increase the number of participating companies.
2. Participants will be given a homework exercise that they are required to do ahead of the next workshop (the dates are still to be confirmed). NBI will also schedule one-on-one meetings with each company beforehand.
3. The next workshop will be used to collectively identify a set of priority SDGs for the Agri-processing sector that will form the basis of the Sector Level Objectives to be drafted later in the project.



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