

Sustainability in perspective

Sustainability is often thought to only be about 'environmental' sustainability but this is only one element of overall sustainability. Sustainability must also consider economic and social aspects and all of these elements are important when defining sustainability. In addition to the main issues, there are 'linking issues' which connect the main elements. These are the issues where company actions can improve two of the main aspects, e.g., good energy management can improve both environmental and economic sustainability. Doing good things for the planet can also do good things for the economics. Sustainability is about more than the product and the environmental impacts. It is also about the company and the community.

Environmental sustainability (Planet)

- Resource use (raw materials and other resources)
- Environmental management
- Environmental protection (pollution prevention)
- Emissions control

- Community protection
- Discharge controls (air, water and land)
- Climate change

- Energy management
- Water management
- Waste management
- Materials management

Social sustainability (People)

- Human rights
- Labour practices
- Environment
- Fair operating practices
- Consumer issues
- Community involvement and development

- Health and safety
- Skills training
- Business ethics
- Good jobs and poverty reduction

Economic sustainability (Profit)

- Profit
- Cost reduction
- Growth and expansion
- Innovation
- Investment
- Owners/shareholders
- Other stakeholders
- Risk management