

Sasini to ride on sustainable model in business growth plan



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For the last 70 years, Sasini PLC has been successful in integrating sustainability into their business model. Behind this approach has been the realisation that in order to grow a sustainable business, social, environmental and financial resources need to be managed prudently.

“Sustainability is at the very core of our existence, and one of the key pillars that drive our business strategy,” Martin Ochien’g told *Business Daily* in a recent interview.

Being an agricultural business that derives its success from the rich resources afforded to them by nature, Sasini is deeply cognizant of the role the environment plays in the business.

“We’re inextricably linked to sustainability by the very nature of what we do as a business. Therefore, we have chosen to underpin our business’ future on being sustainable,” Mr Ochien’g added.

Sasini MD Martin Ochien’g (centre) at a past sustainability event with Judy Njino, Executive Director, UN Global Compact Kenya and Phyllis Wakiaga, CEO Kenya Association of Manufacturers and Board Chair, UN Global Compact Kenya. POOL

As a result, Sasini has committed to align themselves to the principles that govern the global corporate ecosystem through the push for the sustainable development goals (SDGs). To this end, the company has chosen nine SDGs to work on. These are commitments to No Poverty, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Responsible Consumption and Production and Life on Land.

Already a trendsetter in its industry, their aim through working on these goals, is not only to connect their achievements with social progress, but also establish Sasini as a strong voice for sustainability.

Sasini has since marked several milestones. They have been a signatory to the global sustainability drive under the United Nations Global Compact, the world’s biggest

and most effective sustainability initiative for business for several years. In 2019/20, the company kicked off their gender balance drive at the workplace through endorsement of the Women Empowerment Policies (WEP) and participation in the Target Gender Equality Program managed by UN Global Compact Kenya.

In this nature dictated dispensation, the environment is crucial to the society and economy. The latter two cannot thrive and prosper without suitable, prosperous and healthy surroundings. This reality has seen this top agricultural company apply various changes across board.

Locally, Sasini PLC has adopted responsible production and consumption methodologies that ensure the preservation of natural resources and prevention of extinction of flora and fauna. Therefore, at all their tea, coffee, avocado, macadamia and dairy operations, they employ farming mechanisms that minimise harmful environmental effects.

Additionally, they have secured all the riparian areas and ravines in all their properties, use recycled water, and harvest rain water to buttress their water requirements. Through the Rainforest Alliance, they maintain their own forests of indigenous trees at all their farms/estates. Following this is Sasini’s intent on setting a goal that will see them walk away from reliance on trees for fuel for their operations. One of the options they are currently considering is harnessing the power of the Kenyan sun for solar energy.

Sustainability in Sasini is also about understanding and addressing human needs in the societies the business operates and lives in. In this regard, they have strategically aligned their sustainability goals to four key thematic areas of advancing all human rights: good

labour practice, protection of the environment and anti-corruption.

In human rights, the Group has constructed and maintains four primary schools and one secondary school within its tea operations and also renders support to neighbouring schools by providing bursaries, stipends and educational resources. Sasini also continues to provide its workforce with safe working environments, meals on station, and medical care and facilities for their health and well-being. In ensuring an environment marked by high levels of integrity, Sasini has a zero tolerance for corruption in all aspects of its business interactions and are guided by a strict code of ethics that governs their modus operandi.

The enterprise values a strong and diverse workforce. As such they strive to create a conducive environment that empowers people to grow and thrive irrespective of their backgrounds. Within the next few years, there’ll be a deliberate approach to seek out and employ people from these different spaces. Moreover, they aim to grow operational proficiencies and achieve excellence by attracting, training, re-training, re-skilling, retaining and growing the diverse talents they get to their full potential.

Their unwavering dedication to sustainability has yielded phenomenal results.

“We have seen a great focus in our employment base in adjusting what they do while conducting our business,” Mr Ochien’g explained.

“A good example is under good labour practices. In deliberately choosing to advance gender equity, 40 per cent of our corporate leadership roles are now occupied by women.”

The Sasini-maintained forests have trees that total to over 1.3 million in number. With the forests offering rich habitats for flora and fauna, they are able to advance towards their goal of supporting life on land.

Their use of innovation and technology in implementing sustainability has also positively affected the business. For example, in the tea business, tea bushes remain productive for longer as Sasini has employed prudent and new ways of managing plucking rounds, fertiliser choices and application to ultra-modern plucking methods.

In 2021, Sasini plans to publicly launch this sustainably journey they’ve been on, draft and produce their first ever Sustainability Report.

Going forward, it’s their resolve to uphold these sustainability principles to not only create a culture and practice of integrity but also deliver on their three-pronged bottom line goal of Planet, People and Profits for Prosperity.

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