

Sustainability - Lafarge

The Lafarge Group is the world's largest supplier of building materials and has a global reputation for developing creative and innovative products, services and solutions. The company produces essential products – cement, aggregates and concrete – which are integral to society. As a major extractor of raw materials in the primary sector, issues of



sustainability and corporate social responsibility are of high importance. The drive for increased sustainability affects every part of Lafarge's activities – from extraction and manufacture, to transport and delivery, to waste reduction and restoration.

A sustainable supply chain aims to ensure that the business is conducted in a manner which can be maintained in the future and which does not impact adversely on future generations. The key challenge is to deliver products and services that give value to the business and the customer, whilst maintaining a positive environmental impact. Lafarge is committed to sourcing its materials and managing extraction in the most responsible and sustainable way possible. At the end of the quarry's life, Lafarge is committed to the restoration of land. It works in partnership with other organisations (such as the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust) to re-use the land for the good of the community and to provide a lasting legacy. For example, the National Memorial in Staffordshire is on a former quarry site. Lafarge has also been involved in managing 34 SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), as well as creating award-winning parks, lakes and education centres.

By its nature, cement manufacturing consumes large amounts of non-renewable resources and also generates CO₂. One way in which Lafarge helps to minimise its impact and emissions is by having on-site concrete production plants for large-scale projects. This is more efficient and enables Lafarge to provide continuous supply throughout the life of the project. As a major user of significant amounts of water in its processes, Lafarge is also piloting 'water footprint' assessments. These aim to use water more efficiently and reduce consumption where possible.

Lafarge also takes innovation right through the supply chain into its packaging. Its weather-resistant plastic packaging is easier to handle and is tear-resistant. Both effects benefit customers. Plastic packaging for cement, perhaps surprisingly, is more sustainable than paper as less material is lost through damaged bags, which is better for the environment. Lafarge uses different means of transport – road, rail and water – to help it reduce carbon emissions wherever possible. Of its nationwide network of 14 depots, 11 have direct rail access. More than one million tonnes of cement a year is moved by rail, more than any other company. This removes hundreds of thousands of vehicles off the roads each year, reducing congestion, pollution and CO₂ emissions. Lafarge is also an expert in transporting by water.

Lafarge continues to demonstrate its innovation and sustainability in the tertiary sector. As part of its sustainability plans, Lafarge goes beyond simply managing or restoring its extraction sites. By adopting the principles of re-using waste products from other industries, Lafarge can respond to environmental challenges in a sustainable way:

- Its energy recovery service recycles used tyres for fuel.
 - Landfill sites have processes for separating out waste in order to recover re-usable materials.
- By focusing on re-use, recycling and reducing emissions in every stage, from initial planning of a quarry, to final restoration of the land, Lafarge is maintaining a sound business whilst respecting the environment and supporting local communities.

Questions

1. What is sustainability?

2. Describe why sustainability is a particular issue for Lafarge.

3. Give examples of sustainable practices used by Lafarge.

4. Explain how innovation can be used to increase sustainability.

Task

Devise a poster for your school or college that can encourage sustainability. Include specific examples of sustainable practices that might be adopted by students and staff.

What have you learned?

In exactly eleven words, explain something you have learned about sustainability in this session.