

ORGANISATION NAME:

**EBRO FOODS**

**Ebro**

Ebro Foods is a Spanish company producing rice and pasta, a worldwide leader in this sector. It has a presence in more than 52 countries in Europe, North America, Asia and Africa through its extensive network of subsidiaries and brands.

Ebro Foods has successfully worked with the UN Global Compact to implement codes of conduct within the company and is now looking outward to implement projects focused on sustainable agriculture in the developing countries in which it works.





**Engagement with External Partners**

**\*1.** Discussions with government, private sector and NGOs on sustainable cultivation of rice and capping agricultural CO2 levels.

to redesign the whole food value chain to be more sustainable.

**\*2:** Company-driven platform aiming

Ebro Foods has internalised the case for shared value into its corporate culture, due in a large part to the dedication of its current president, Antonio Hernández Callejas, who is committed to working with the UN Global Compact.

Callejas focused initially on advocating for sustainability within the company before making the case externally.

The company works in agricultural supply chains where environmental and social sustainability are already considered critical to the long-term survival of its business model. This means that it is often not difficult to convince internal and external stakeholders of the importance of the company’s social initiative. The company also has a long history of philanthropic activity, with an eponymous foundation that has operated for nearly a decade.

Ebro looks for opportunities to drive systemic change and often works beyond its own value chain, for example, by promoting sustainable practices for rice production and training producers to use environmentally friendly tools and methods.

The company feels that its engagement with the UN Global Compact has been very positive and considers the organisation’s principles to be well-aligned with its own internal views. Working with the UN’s frameworks has helped the business to scope and evaluate its sustainability work. However, the company feels that there needs to be more, clearer communication between public and private actors on development and poverty reduction. The overarching social goals promoted by the UN and NGOs are noble, but businesses look for more practical targets and objectives.

“Eradicating poverty in the world is a wonderful but massive goal that companies feel is too vague and out of reach,” says Blanca Hernandez Rodriguez, the Foundation’s Chairman. “The key to engagement is breaking down objectives into concrete steps, into bite-size pieces.”

## SUPPORTING THE SDGS

The following are two illustrative examples of initiatives that are supporting the SDGs.

### Rice crop sustainability programme

**Partners: Research and Training Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries, a public institution of the Regional Government of Andalusia**

Ebro Foods developed this programme through its subsidiary Herba Ricemills to improve the environmental sustainability in its supply chain of agricultural commodities, especially rice.

The programme has to date resulted in the following:

**Optimising of nitrogen fertiliser:** it has been proved through several field studies that the doses of nitrogen fertiliser permitted by the European Union (EU) are not the most adequate, since they cause a loss of profit of around 8% for growers. Ebro is requesting the EU change adaptation of the permitted doses to the optimum dose, which is just 10% above the dose currently permitted.

**Phosphorus fertiliser:** studies conducted in rice fields over ten years have established the evolution of phosphorus content in the soil after applying different doses of fertiliser.

These results will enable growers to optimise their use of phosphorus fertiliser, thereby reducing costs and environmental impact.

Calculation of the global crop water balance: two components of the water balance have been determined scientifically: evapotranspiration and percolation, for which there was previously no reliable data. The results show that owing to the particular irrigation system with recirculation used in the Seville area, the real water consumption of the crop (water lost through irrigation) is much smaller than the water used. Contrary to what was commonly believed, most (over half) of the water that enters the fields is returned to the environment, in this case, the River Guadalquivir.

**Effect of salinity on the crop:** the programme has obtained the first results about the impact of salinity on the different physiological states of the plant.

### Membership - the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI)

Internationally, Ebro Foods joined the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) platform in 2015. The SAI platform, founded by Danone, Nestlé and Unilever in 2002, is designed to help food processors and farmers to work collectively to redesign the whole food value chain to make it sustainable. Ebro Foods has focused on its rice value chain within this engagement. The projects being carried out internationally are still private initiatives and, as the projects are at a nascent stage, the company has not yet approached governments for partnership. There are plans to engage local governments in the countries to let them know what activities are being carried out and to explore possibilities for collaboration and support.