

APPENDIX A

Case Study -Yearsley Group

AS ONE OF THE LARGEST privately owned cold storage and distribution companies in the country, Yearsley Group works with some of the UK's best known food brands and stores as well as supplying public sector contracts.

They decided to implement a sustainability programme as they felt that not having one could put them at a disadvantage, especially in public sector tenders. This formed the basis of the argument to invest in developing a sustainability programme.

As the public sector was a focus area, Yearsley decided to implement an Environmental Management System (EMS) and certify it to the ISO 14001 standard. To add further credibility to their approach they used the ISO 26000 guidelines to inform their sustainability strategy and integrated the social aspects identified through this into the management system to give a combined Social and Environmental Management System (SEMS). This gave their approach and systems the credibility and assurance required by public sector and large private sector buyers.

In a busy, growing company like Yearsley time is always at a premium, so when the SEMS implementation stalled they engaged external expertise to give the process the momentum it needed.

Many of the material issues they identified as part of the implementation process were existing concerns such as electricity and fuel use and health and safety. Other areas were new, such as sourcing sustainable fish.

However, even for existing aspects the new framework gave a new perspective and renewed impetus. Actions ranged from installing solar panels and improving energy efficiency to developing a line of sustainable fish products.

It wasn't always an easy journey. The development and implementation of the SEMS took a lot of hard work and time, a scarce commodity in this thriving company. However, the hard work paid off and the systems quickly became routine.

Key to Yearsley's success was a committed team who understood the purpose of the programme and worked hard to implement the various parts. However, one of the biggest

challenges was to keep sustainability near the top of a group of busy people's to-do lists. One solution to this was to hold regular team meetings to review targets, discuss progress and plan next steps. These regular check points – initially monthly and moving to quarterly – encourage team members to take action and make continuous improvements. Similarly, regular audits and an annual sustainability report help keep the programme at the forefront of people's minds.

As well as a committed team Yearsley have invested in capital projects and external help. The capital projects – such as solar panels – had clear payback periods which formed the basis of the business case for investment. The external consultancy included expertise to increase the efficiency of the cold stores, which had the knock-on effect of reducing costs and implementing the management system, which gave the process momentum and helped meet customers' needs.