

INFORMATION MODULE 5

In good shape for the natural environment: working with the workforce to protect biodiversity

The area of activity What this is all about

Let's go outdoors! – Nature can be experienced by everyone, and this makes it the perfect common ground for the whole of the workforce. A wide range of different objectives can be pursued by implementing employee campaigns for biodiversity – such as tree planting, beekeeping on the premises, a “Biodiversity week in the canteen”, or a nature protection day on the company grounds. Businesses can make an important social contribution to raising more awareness about the value of natural life-support systems. The campaigns may also have a positive impact on team spirit and employee loyalty. And another key aspect: your employees or your colleagues can become important allies to help integrate biodiversity into the company's own environmental strategy step-by-step.

The involvement here is by no means restricted to the top of the company hierarchy: it is just as feasible for the initiative to be kicked off by the company management or other committed people within the organisation – whether they are environmental officers, working in the works council, staff council, or as employee representatives, trainees, or in any other department. The company “suggestion box” may also open up opportunities for harnessing employees' potential for ideas within the company. This is because no limits are put on ideas: the options range from joint environmental campaigns, to employee training courses, or raising the awareness of the entire workforce for sustainable procurement

strategies within the offices and the canteen. In this way, the sustainability strategy oriented to the core business activities can be flanked, and therefore brought alive, by practice-oriented environmental campaigns of this kind.

Approach

Questions & advice for the beginning

- » Think about the following: how can you attract “helpers” within the company to protect biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources? What are the appropriate aspects which attract the attention of the workforce, or how can the management be convinced (if they are not the initiators themselves)? Which specific actions could be considered? Every company has its own individual conditions.
- » Which specific occasions or which associated topics have the potential to involve the employees and to raise awareness for the topic of biodiversity? Perhaps you already have enough suitable opportunities that you can use for this topic (e. g. anniversary celebrations, company outings, International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May, etc.).
- » How much time do you wish to, and can you, invest in this, and who could take charge of planning and implementation? Is external support or expertise required?
- » Do you want to develop measures for all of the company's locations and with the whole of the workforce, or launch them with a specific group, such as the trainees?
- » Are any of the employees actively involved in nature conservation in their leisure time, and would they be willing to make use of their commitment and their knowledge at their place of work?
- » Should this commitment be publicised? Which accompanying communication measures make sense in this context (company magazine, intranet, local press)?
- » The company can benefit from long-term added-value by taking part in joint campaigns, such as the jointly realised natural landscaping of the company grounds (cf. info module 2).



Areas of activity and measures From simple to ambitious

ON THE COMPANY PREMISES

- » The workforce itself can become active and roll up their sleeves when taking part in **joint environmental campaigns** on the company grounds – such as a tree planting campaign!
- » Hang up **nest boxes** for birds, “insect hotels”, and **bat boxes**, or set up a **company bee hive** which can be looked after by a few employees or even a whole department – and you can soon “harvest” and enjoy the taste of your own company honey.
- » Improve the **quality of the working environment** for the workforce, and create a pleasant atmosphere, by planting a wide variety of vegetation on the company premises, especially around the areas where employees spend their breaks. Fruit trees and soft fruit bushes, for instance, are particularly welcome here.
- » Maybe some of your expert employees would even be interested in using the knowledge they have gained in their spare time on birds, insects and plants, to **monitor the biodiversity on the company premises**.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF TEAM AND COMPANY OUTINGS

- » Take part in guided **nature walks**, of the kind organised by various providers, or initiate your own tours of the already naturally landscaped company grounds, to bring nature alive.
- » **Team or company outings** can be attractively combined with nature protection activities – shared and “practical” activities in the countryside strengthen employee loyalty, promote team spirit, and therefore also have a positive overall impact on the company.
- » **Corporate/employee volunteering**: by creating appropriate structures and free time, e.g. allowing people to take a day off, you can support the commitment of your employees to protect biodiversity in nature conservation areas.
- » **Citizen science**: citizens join in research activities in an increasingly systematic way. Comprehensive species monitoring is almost unfeasible without this voluntary commitment. You can also become active here by taking part in species counting activities for instance.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT & MOBILITY

- » Raising the awareness of employees for a **sustainable procurement strategy** (office supplies, energy, canteen), as well as **promoting sustainable mobility** when commuting and on business travel (car-sharing, rail, public transport, company bicycles).
- » **Canteen**: buy regional and seasonal food, and products which have been organically grown, MSC-certified fish, and less meat. Biodiversity also includes old varieties of fruit, vegetables and cereals.

TRAINING COURSES TO RAISE AWARENESS

- » **Employee seminars**: regular training courses can be held to teach your workforce about the importance of biodiversity, and to raise awareness of nature and conservation.
- » Organise a **lecture** on the topic – in the evening, or as a “brown-bag-lunch” during the lunch break.
- » **Teach your employees more about the environment using online tools** (webinar, intranet, etc.).
- » Or how about an internal **ideas competition** on what could be done in the various company departments to protect biodiversity? The best three ideas will be implemented!

COMMUNICATION IS (ALMOST) EVERYTHING!

- » **Involve the workforce in environmental measures right from the start to enhance their acceptance**: if a weekly vegetarian day or local procurement by the canteen is being planned, then talk to your employees in advance and inform them about the benefits of sustainable and regional consumption. Involve interested employees right from the start if you plan more natural landscaping of the company grounds, and install e.g. **information boards** presenting details of the various measures. This will help you acquire employees as **ambassadors and very important allies** to help you achieve your biodiversity and sustainability objectives.
- » **Do good and talk about it!** – by publishing special biodiversity-promoting activities and successes in the protection and conservation of biodiversity, and **informing the workforce** via employee magazines, the intranet or appropriate training and information events.
- » Combine activities in the countryside or on the company premises with an in-house **photo competition** on the subject of biodiversity – this will rapidly reveal the natural wealth in your own direct surroundings, and the accompanying exhibition will get the workforce talking about nature.

Examples of actions practical implementation within companies

SOME EXAMPLES FROM THE 'BIODIVERSITY IN GOOD COMPANY' INITIATIVE



Aleph Inc. [restaurant chain]

Aleph, a Japanese restaurant chain, raises the awareness of its employees for the diversity of rice fields as habitats for numerous species. Activities include species monitoring carried

out in rice fields by restaurant customers, as well as the implementation of nature conservation measures by restaurant service staff, who also took part in a planting and harvesting campaign – hands-on nature!



Bionade [beverages industry]

Creating awareness for the value of honey bees! The "Company beekeeping" initiative was launched at the beginning of 2014 in the town of Ostheim vor der Rhön, where Bionade is located.

A dedicated team managed the project with the help of regional bee mentors for the first year. The project started with two bee hives kept according to the "near-natural beekeeping" methods. The next step is for other interested employees to be made more aware on the basis of voluntary courses so that they become actively involved in looking after the bees.



HiPP [baby food]

As part of a regular seminar programme, employees find out more about the importance of, and reasons for, protecting biodiversity. For instance, information events were carried out

at the Ehrensberger Hof farm, which is considered to be a biodiversity model farm. In addition, all employees, and the trainees especially, take part in the annual environmental campaigns, plant trees, dig amphibian ponds, or create habitats for endangered bird species.

Neumarkter Lammsbräu [beverages industry]

The Neumarkter Lammsbräu organic brewery raises the awareness of its own workforce for species diversity by way of measures including the "meadow orchard" employee project, where they work together to plant trees and hedges, as well as in the "biodiversity pavilion" project involving the trainees. In addition, Neumarkter Lammsbräu also organises public guided nature tours to provide information on biodiversity to people within and outside of the company, with the aim of creating a platform for joint commitment on behalf of biodiversity.



Werner & Mertz [detergents and cleaning products]

In the natural world, frogs tend to dive out of sight when storks get too close. Things are different at Werner & Mertz where their Frosch (frog) brand wants to get as close as possible: at the stork counting campaign in Poland 2014 – which has been carried out throughout Europe ever since 1934 – the Polish "stork" society, and the local sales and marketing operation of the Frosch brand (Werner & Mertz Delta Poland), worked together for this good cause. Werner & Mertz employees and the chairman of the supervisory board from company headquarters in Mainz, Germany, took regular turns in and around the city of Plock on the river Vistula, and visited the stork villages, inspecting nests, and counting breeding pairs and young birds.



"Basic knowledge: companies and biodiversity" is a series of short, cross-industry information modules for companies interested in finding out more on this topic. The modules offer guidance, suggestions and advice, helpful not only for large, but also smaller businesses. The 'Biodiversity in Good Company' Initiative published the German version of these publications in the framework of a project promoted by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment. This is an English edition of the series, adapted for international use. Available for downloading at www.business-and-biodiversity.de/en.

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