

International Council of Chemical Associations Responsible Care® and Our Contributions to Sustainability

Overview

Sustainable development has emerged as the guiding principle for driving long-term global progress. The United Nations defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹

Chemistry plays an essential role in driving progress across all three dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, social and economic – and helping to address and overcome the world’s most pressing sustainability challenges. Responsible Care®, the chemical industry’s environmental, health, safety, and security performance initiative, enables the industry to foster sustainable development practices, community relationships and a culture of continuous improvement. At the same time, Responsible Care should not be confused with sustainable development. Rather, Responsible Care is the framework, the cornerstone which allows the chemical industry to contribute to sustainable development agenda. The global chemical industry embraces and implements Responsible Care to drive safe operational and business practices at facilities around the world. The implementation of these sound practices through Responsible Care is one of the chemical industry’s contributions to sustainable development

The chemical industry is a solutions creator. We are the initiators for the development of cutting-edge technologies that provide solutions, improved functionality, reduced costs, and greater productivity to address today’s challenges. The chemical industry is committed to enhancing sustainability and to overcoming the world’s most pressing sustainability challenges. As a basis for sustainable development, ICCA is committed to continuously improving the environmental performance, safe operations and open communication with communities through the Responsible Care Program.

Responsible Care

For more than 30 years, Responsible Care has been the industry’s global initiative to strengthen our environmental, health, safety, and security practices and performance. Even before the trends of sustainability became the movements they are today, the leaders of the global chemical industry committed to continuously improve the industry’s environmental performance, operational safety and communicate openly with communities through Responsible Care.

Elements of Responsible Care naturally contribute to sustainability. As stated in the [2014 Responsible Care Global Charter](#), ICCA and company signatories are committed to contributing to sustainability through improved performance, expanded economic opportunities and the development of innovative technologies and other solutions to societal challenges.

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development, <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/65/issues/sustdev.shtml>

Responsible Care has grown to be a significant performance asset for the chemical industry, with its focus on continuous improvement in the core areas of the industry's operation and business practices. Under the Global Charter, global chemical manufacturers are actively working together to track and improve performance, while enhancing accountability to and transparency with stakeholders. For example:

- A key focus of Responsible Care is employee health and safety and ICCA member companies recognize the importance of making sure our employees go home safely every day. Between 2000 and 2015, Responsible Care companies demonstrated a 60 percent reduction in lost-time injury rate.
- Resource conservation and the safe transportation and handling of chemical products are other key components of the initiative. Between 2000 and 2015, Responsible Care companies reduced SOx/NOx emissions by 36 percent and reduced distribution incidents by 45 percent.²

Responsible Care is not the industry's only contribution to sustainability, but it provides a superior foundation from which to embrace sustainable development initiatives and goals more broadly. Responsible Care helps enable the chemical industry to innovate products and implement practices that can make life better, healthier and safer for people around the world, from protecting worker safety, enhancing high-quality employment opportunities and engaging with and supporting plant communities, to developing products that benefit society. Responsible Care enables the chemical industry to contribute to most of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), as well as address some of the major sustainability footprint issues that face the chemicals industry, including product stewardship, pollution prevention, occupational & process safety, emergency preparedness, community engagement, safe chemicals distribution and chemical security.

The Journey towards Sustainability

While Responsible Care is the foundation, the chemical industry's contributions to sustainability are much broader. Specifically, innovative products and technologies that depend on chemistry will play a critical role in meeting the challenges and targets set out across the SDGs.

As an industry, we are committed to improving our own sustainability performance and collaborating with policy makers and stakeholders across the value chain to help others do the same. Building on our Responsible Care commitments, ICCA members are committed to:

- Expanding the safe and sustainable management and use of chemicals throughout the global value chain;
- Improving industry's sustainability practices and holding ourselves accountable;

² Additional information regarding data can be found on [ICCA's website](#). Data reflects ICCA member association reporting as of 2015.



- Protecting our environment by supporting efforts to reduce and manage waste so our environment, including land, oceans and water sources, are not polluted with mismanaged plastic or other materials;
- Tracking our progress through metrics to help us continuously improve our performance;
- Ensuring the safety of our workers, the communities where we operate, and our products.
- Improving the availability, performance and cost-effectiveness of renewable energy, clean drinking water, and energy efficient technologies enabled by chemistry;
- Elevating the quality of life for people around the world through technologies that improve health and wellness, enable food security, reduce pollution, increase access to clean water and provide comfortable shelter;
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the manufacturing and use of our products;
- Empowering community leaders and helping build capacity to enhance safe chemicals management;
- Promoting innovations in product design, product reuse, repurposing and recycling to improve and extend the useful life and value of all products and contribute to a more circular economy.

In addition, through Responsible Care capacity building efforts, ICCA will play a critical role in supporting sustainability progress in the future. First, Responsible Care can provide the essential initial steps toward safe and sustainable chemicals management by providing support to emerging economies working to build industry capacity. Second, with further development, ICCA is establishing a model for more advanced organizations that are ready to take their systems toward greater convergence with the broader issues encompassed by sustainability, potentially using global standards. These efforts will help expand best practices to new regions, ultimately facilitating progress towards sustainability globally.

While the industry's contributions to sustainable development will evolve over time, Responsible Care remains the foundation of the global chemical industry's commitment to sustainability.