WWF

CASE STUDY

DEC 2014

WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER MORE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

M&S EST. 1884

Case Study

FRESHWATER STEWARDSHIP

Tackling water risk in M&S' agriculture supply chains

Only 3% of the world's water is fresh and only 1% of this is accessible. 1 billion people worldwide lack access to water and at current consumption rates, two-thirds of the world's population may face water shortages by 2025. On top of this, 70% of all freshwater is used in agricultural methods. So as population levels increase, water shortages pose a major challenge to communities, the environment and to businesses including retailers like Marks & Spencer, whose supply chain operations need a healthy water supply.

It is an area that requires innovation, expert advice and a collective approach to water stewardship.

WWF has developed a Water Risk Filter to enable businesses like M&S to identify key risk hotspots across their operations and supply chains. In 2008, M&S began working with WWF's water and agriculture teams and the Water Risk Filter to understand the risks and impact in their produce supply chain.

By analysing the data in the Water Risk Filter it became clear that the water used in the production of stone fruit in the Breede River Catchment of South Africa's Western Cape was an area of particular concern. Risk hotspots were highlighted in the UK and Kenya – as well as South Africa, which is where we focused our work together. South Africa is a major fruit exporting region. It also faces many water issues including limited and variable rainfall, growing water quality concerns and ongoing challenges implementing water policy. It presented a risk hotspot not just for M&S but other food retailers.

Plan A DOING THE RIGHT THING

"We're determined to reduce our impact on the environment and, through Plan A, we're making great progress. But we can't achieve our ambitious goals on our own. We need experts by our side and we are delighted to be working with WWF. The support and advice we receive is invaluable."

Marc Bolland, Chief Executive, Marks and Spencer

The first step to developing a collective action project was to seek other stakeholders. Subsequently, M&S and Woolworths (South Africa) partnered with WWF and the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) to work with farmers in the stone fruit supply chain to implement the AWS standard and mitigate their water risks both by working on water management on their farms and in the catchment where they operate.

In 2013, nine farmers who supply stone fruit to M&S and Woolworths volunteered to participate in a pioneering water stewardship project. The local farmers follow the AWS standard and with ongoing support from M&S and WWF, have been building insight into farming practices that use water or are affected by water levels. This has involved gathering data on water quantity and water quality, as well as important water sources such as rivers and wetlands.

The farmers identified areas of potential improvement, tailored to the specific local conditions of each site based on risks, cost-benefits, and financial and time commitments. With the guidance of AWS and WWF, the farmers then develop a tailored water stewardship plan, with clear goals around efficiency, water quality monitoring, on-site wetland management and staff training. These goals look to address physical, regulatory or reputational risks.

This has been an experiment in the development of standards and methods to create robust water stewardship plans. It has required both M&S and Woolworths to share best practice and insights into their supply chain. It has also helped shape the AWS international standard, which was launched in April 2014 after a four-year development phase.

Alongside this, WWF and M&S have been developing best practice guidelines so many more farmers can improve water stewardship practices. The project, which is just over one year old, is now working with other stakeholders in the catchment in order to build resilience in the supply chain. Three shared risks have been identified in the catchment as follows:

- Risk of pollution from rapidly expanding low-income urban areas
- Risk of rapidly invading alien plant species, as these decrease available runoff
- Risk of continued poor practice because of low awareness and poor access to information, especially among emerging farmers.

WWF and M&S will continue to work with the region's broader coalition of stakeholders to address these risks through tailored collective action and to help other water users become good water stewards in the Western Cape.

Find out more about the M&S / WWF partnership: wwf.org.uk.

A global challenge:

70% of all freshwater is used in agricultural methods to help feed a growing population. However, two-thirds of the world's population may face water shortages by 2025.

A collective approach: *M&S, Woolworths (South Africa), the Alliance for Water Stewardship and farmers in the Breede River catchment in Western Cape, South Africa, are piloting a collective approach towards water stewardship.*

ALLIANCE FOR WATER STEWARDSHIP

International guidelines: *2014 the Alliance for Water Stewardship have launched an international standard with the insight from WWF and M&S's water stewardship programme.*

WWF and M&S

Better managing freshwater risks

3% of the world's water is fresh and only **1%** of this is accessible

66%: At current consumption levels, two-thirds of the world's population may face water shortages by 2025

2008: M&S and WWF begin working together to better identify and manage freshwater risks

2014: Following a four-year development phase, an AWS international standard is launched using insight from the M&S / WWF partnership

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact:

Lesley Urquhart, lurquhart@wwf.org.uk

Amy Langridge, alangridge@wwf.org.uk

Why we are here
To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
wwf.org.uk