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Marks & Spencer launches "Plan A"- £200m 'eco-plan'

Marks & Spencer announces "Plan A", a business-wide £200m "eco-plan" which will have an impact on every part of M&S' operations over the next five years. The 100-point plan means that by 2012 M&S will:

become carbon neutral

send no waste to landfill

extend sustainable sourcing

set new standards in ethical trading

help customers and employees live a healthier lifestyle.

M&S Chief Executive, Stuart Rose said:

"Every business and individual needs to do their bit to tackle the enormous challenges of climate change and waste. While M&S will continue to sell great quality, stylish and innovative products, our customers, employees and shareholders now expect us to take bold steps and do business differently and responsibly. We believe a responsible business can be a profitable business. We are calling this "Plan A" because there is no 'plan B'.

"M&S will change beyond recognition the way it operates over the next five years. We will become carbon neutral, only using offsetting as a last resort; we will ensure that none of our clothing or packaging needs to be thrown away; much of our polyester clothing will be made from recycled plastic bottles instead of oil and every year we will sell over 20 million garments made from Fairtrade cotton.

"We will clearly label the food we import by air; UK, regional and local food sourcing will be a priority and we will trial the use of food waste to power our stores. We will do this without passing on the extra cost to our customers."

"We will also help our suppliers and customers to change their behaviour. Because we are own-brand our influence extends to over 2,000 factories, 10,000 farms and 250,000 workers, as well as millions of customers visiting over 500 stores in the UK."

"This is a deliberately ambitious and, in some areas, difficult plan. We don't have all the answers but we are determined to work with our suppliers, partners and Government to make this happen. Doing anything less is not an option."

Jonathon Porritt, Founder Director of Forum for the Future, who has advised M&S on "Plan A", said:

"This plan sets a new benchmark in the way businesses should be tackling critical sustainability challenges like waste, fairtrade and climate change. It raises the bar for everyone else - not just retailers, but businesses in every sector. We all know that even at the end of these 5 years there will still be a huge amount for M&S to do but we warmly welcome the scale of the ambition of this plan in particular the commitment to include customers and suppliers."

Blake Lee-Harwood, Campaign Director, Greenpeace UK said:

"We're glad a company like M&S has proposals that begin to match the scale of the challenge of climate change and protecting our oceans and forests. If every retailer in Britain followed Marks & Spencer's lead it would be a major step forward in meeting the challenge of creating a sustainable society."

Robert Napier, Chief Executive, WWF-UK said:

"Research clearly shows us that agricultural activities and other food production and distribution have some of the greatest impacts upon our environment. It is vital that we all find ways to achieve a One Planet lifestyle. Such bold aspirations as outlined by Marks & Spencer can only help drive other supermarkets and the retail sector towards supplying products in a way that protects our planet and sustains the natural resources we depend upon."

The 100-point Plan A includes commitments in five areas:

1. CLIMATE CHANGE - making our operations in UK and Republic of Ireland carbon neutral. We will minimise energy use, maximise the use of renewables and use offsetting as a last resort. This will be equivalent to taking 100,000 cars off the road each year and will mean we meet the challenge set by the Stern Review of reducing CO2 emissions by 80%, nearly 40 years ahead of target. As a significant amount of emissions come from our suppliers and customers making and using our products, we will also mobilise them to reduce their carbon footprint. Our commitment includes:

Reducing the amount of energy we use to make ourselves 25% more energy efficient and powering our stores with 'green' renewable energy. This will include trialling the use of 'anaerobic digestion' - to create renewable energy generated by waste from our food halls, farms and factories

Committing to buy as much food from the UK and Ireland as possible, double regional food sourcing within 12 months and grow our existing local supply networks. In addition, we will minimise the amount of food we air freight as well as labelling the food we import by air as 'flown'

Initiating 5 new research and development projects with our UK growers to develop production techniques and varieties to reduce the amount of food we import

Only using carbon offsetting as a last resort, where there is no short to medium term prospect of green technology being developed. Where we use offsetting, we will allocate the cost of doing so to individual business units, as a commercial incentive to minimise CO2 emissions

Opening a model 'green' factory with a supplier, as well as model 'green' stores in Pollok, Bournemouth and Liverpool and a Simply Food 'green' store at Galashiels.

Using 50% bio-diesel in all our lorries

Working with suppliers through the M&S Supplier Exchange to share best practice and to mobilise suppliers to reduce their carbon emissions

Helping customers reduce energy use in their homes by developing low carbon products and services and running a Carbon Challenge with the Women's Institute as well as a campaign run by the Climate Group.

2. WASTE - stop sending waste to landfill from our stores, offices and warehouses, reduce our use of packaging and carrier bags, and find new ways to recycle and reuse the materials we use. Our commitment includes:

Reducing our use of packaging by 25%

Stop sending food waste to landfill and use it to generate green energy from our stores, via anaerobic digestion

Recycling all waste from our store remodel and construction programme and stop sending it to landfill

Using packaging materials from sustainable or recycled sources, for example cardboard, metal, glass and plastic

Restricting the range of materials we use in packaging to ones which are easy to recycle or compost, so customers do not have to throw rubbish away. This will include focusing on using four types of plastic (corn starch derived plastic PLA, PP, PET and PE)

Printing simple symbols on all our packaging, to make it easy for customers to recycle or compost waste

Reducing our use of carrier bags by 33% and making all our plastic bags from recycled plastic

Trialling 'closed loop' recycling in six of our Café Revives, where used packaging can be recycled into M&S product packaging. We aim to roll this out across our 450+ Café Revives and staff restaurants

Ensuring that, within 5 years, no M&S clothing needs to end up in landfill by finding alternatives to disposal such as reusing, composting and recycling.

3. RAW MATERIALS - ensuring that our key raw materials come from the most sustainable source possible, in order to protect the environment and the world's natural resources. Our commitment includes:

Using only wood which is recycled or certified as coming from a sustainable source by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or equivalent standard where FSC wood is not available. This will include wood used in: furniture, books, cards, packaging, catalogues, kitchen/toilet roll, printer/photocopier paper and marketing materials. This adds to the 80 million sandwich packs we sell each year made from cardboard from FSC certified sources and the A grade rating we received from Greenpeace for our garden furniture in 2006

Converting all our fresh turkey, geese, duck and pork to Free Range, building on our industry leading position of only using Free Range shell eggs and eggs used as an ingredient

Selling only fish which is certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) or another independently certified source, adding to the steps we have already taken and building on our position as Greenpeace's no.1 responsible fish retailer

Using recycled plastic (e.g. bottles) not oil, to make polyester for clothing and home products

Tripling our sales of organic food and launching organic cotton, linen and wool

Ensuring our produce and livestock farmers meet an independent environmental standard such as LEAF or FWAG

Reducing the water use in stores, offices and distribution centres by 20% and working with suppliers via the Supplier Exchange to reduce water use during the growing, production and manufacture of our products.

4. FAIR PARTNER - improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in our supply chain and our local communities. Our commitment includes:

Being a leader in managing labour standards in our supply chain, building on our existing global standards and robust monitoring programme

Converting key clothing ranges to 100% Fairtrade cotton, including all our £5 women's and men's t-shirts and around 12 million garments in total. Over the next twelve months this will rise to 20 million garments, as we add in new ranges of men's shirts, and lingerie vests. This equates to around one third of the world's supply of Fairtrade cotton in 2006

Building on the success of Fairtrade coffee and tea by offering Fairtrade bananas, jam and bagged sugar and moving into other vulnerable supply chains like those for sugar cane and cocoa used across our food range

Working with farmers to extend our existing industry leading Milk Pledge pricing scheme into new farming sectors

Launching the M&S Supplier Exchange to support our suppliers - by sharing best practice, stimulating innovation and helping them secure funds for investment

Helping disadvantaged groups like the disabled and homeless get into jobs through work placements in the UK (600 adults per year) and overseas (150 adults per year) through the Marks & Start programme

5. HEALTHY EATING - helping thousands of customers and employees choose a healthier lifestyle. We will build on the work we have already done, removing HVOs from all our food and removing artificial colours, flavours and all unnecessary preservatives from all fresh prepared food. We are also introducing Food Standards Agency Traffic Lights and Guideline Daily Allowance (GDA) product labelling. Our commitments include:

Introducing 1,500 Healthy Eating Assistants in our stores and extending the same training, developed in collaboration with the British Nutrition Foundation, to all staff in food halls within 3 years

Aiming to increase the amount of "Eat Well" nutritionally balanced food we sell from 30% to 50% of food sales

Continuing to lead the sector in reducing the use of salt to meet and exceed 2010 FSA targets having already achieved these targets for ready meals, bread and breakfast cereals

Replacing artificial colours with natural colours in kids' sweets and cakes in 12 months

Helping our employees to live healthy lifestyles by launching a M&S Health and Lifestyle Information Intranet, providing them with advice and maintaining free breast screening for female employees over 40.

-ENDS-

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