

# The ADM Way

**An Interview with Victoria A. Podesta,  
Vice President and Chief Communications Officer, Archer Daniels Midland Company**

**EDITORS' NOTE** Victoria Podesta joined ADM in May 2006. Before this, she served as President of Victoria Podesta Communications where her clients included ADM, Chevron Corporation, Macy's, AAA, VISA, Charles Schwab, Bank of America, and Kaiser Permanente. From 1981 to 1989, she worked for Union Bank in San Francisco as Assistant Vice President, Public Relations. She began her career in 1981 as a writer and editor in the marketing and sales promotion department with



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Transamerica in Los Angeles. Podesta received a Bachelor of Arts from Scripps College for Women in 1978 and a Master of Arts from the University of San Francisco in 1990. She received a Business/Arts Award from the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce for work in community events.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Archer Daniels Midland Company ([www.adm.com](http://www.adm.com); ADM), headquartered in Decatur, Illinois, operates one of the world's largest agricultural networks: purchasing, storing, and transporting crops on six continents. At more than 230 facilities around the world, each day they process 3.5 million bushels of soybeans, canola, sunflower, and other oilseeds; two million bushels of corn; and one million bushels of wheat. They also grind about 15 percent of the global cocoa crop. The crops are transformed into hundreds of food ingredients, animal feed ingredients, fuels, and industrial products that are consumed and used by millions of people every day.

**Would you highlight the importance of corporate philanthropy and social responsibility to the culture of ADM?**

It's very important to our culture. In fact, it served as a framework to our recent update of The ADM Way, a comprehensive statement that defines our purpose – to serve vital needs – as well as our business strategies, corporate priorities, core values, and our ambitious vision, which is to be the most admired global agribusiness: Creating value. Growing responsibly. Serving vital needs.

**How do you focus your CSR efforts?**

We focus our corporate responsibility efforts by aligning them with our business strategy. Two key components of our growth strategy are to expand our presence in key agricultural growing regions and to expand the variety of

crops we work with worldwide. I can point to our recently announced plans to invest in sustainable palm production in Brazil as a move that advances our business strategy and commitment to promoting a sustainable palm supply chain. We'll be contracting with small family farms for 6,000 hectares of palm production and providing them with technical assistance focused on sustainable agricultural practices. This investment will positively impact the lives of more than 3,000 people through higher farm incomes.

**Are your efforts focused on a global basis and how do you engage employees in ADM's social responsibility and corporate citizenship efforts?**

Yes, it's important that we work to make a positive impact everywhere we do business. We have 29,000 employees and more than 240 processing plants globally, so we're connected to an extraordinary number of people and communities throughout the world.

One way we engage employees globally in our philanthropy efforts is with ADM Cares, our social investment program. ADM Cares provides funding to local managers to help meet needs they identify within their communities, and with the Colleague Giving Council, ADM Cares gives colleagues the opportunity to define programs and activities they want ADM to support. ADM Cares also promotes employee volunteerism around activities that align with our business.

**How do you evaluate the success of your efforts?**

Metrics vary by program, but measurement is always critical for our responsibility efforts. For some programs, it makes sense to set improvement targets – like a 10 percent companywide improvement in energy efficiency by 2015. For other programs, like our Socially and Environmentally Responsible Agricultural Practices (SERAP) program that promotes sustainable agricultural practices among cocoa growers in West Africa, we measure farmer participation and adherence to sustainable agriculture action plans. We know that the number of farmers participating in the SERAP program has tripled in the past five years and participants are regularly producing higher quality beans using sustainable growing practices.

**Are you focused on partnering in your social responsibility programs and would you highlight some of these relationships?**

Yes, we are. We believe that complex, global issues – like the responsible growth of sustainable agriculture around the world – are best addressed through partnerships and collaboration. One recent example is our partnership with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to form the ADM Institute for the Prevention of Postharvest Loss. Drawing on the university's global network and experts on postharvest loss, the institute will help smallholder farmers in the developing world advance practical strategies to combat postharvest loss, which is a truly significant issue. Over time, we hope our efforts will enable farmers in the developing world to use more of what they grow and enhance their livelihoods, and the economic viability of their communities.

Another partnership we've formed in the past year is with Opportunities Industrialization Centers International–Côte d'Ivoire (OICI-CI) to fund bridge and well construction projects in 24 villages throughout this cocoa-growing nation. The projects, which will result in improved farm incomes for about 120,000 people in these communities, are on-pace to be completed by OICI-CI in the next two years.

And our Doing It Right program is a partnership with Aliança da Terra, a Brazilian sustainable-agriculture advocacy group. Expanded in 2010, Doing It Right offers Brazilian soybean farmers instruction in agronomic and operational best practices, and provides them with a plan to help improve their yields and minimize the need to expand into environmentally sensitive regions.

**How critical has it been to maintain your philanthropic efforts during the past 24 months with the global economic crisis?**

It's always important to give back. That's one reason why we designed ADM Cares to invest a percentage of our pretax earnings – up to one percent – rather than a fixed dollar amount. We also believe it's important for corporate giving to address immediate needs and invest in long-term solutions. For instance, ADM provides grants to Friends of the World Food Program, a way to help meet immediate food needs in parts of the world, and we established the ADM Institute for the Prevention of Postharvest Loss as a long-term investment to help the world use more of what's already being grown. It just makes sense. As we look to agriculture to meet the world's growing needs for food and energy, we should make the most of the crops we already produce. ●