

How To Make a Difference

Sustainably Serving Vital Needs for Food and Energy

An Interview with Victoria Podesta,
Vice President-Corporate Communications, Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM)

EDITORS' NOTE In her current position, Victoria Podesta is responsible for the company's communications activities worldwide, including media relations, advertising and marketing, employee and shareholder communications, community engagement and philanthropy. Podesta has a B.A. in literature from Scripps College and a master's degree in writing from the University of San Francisco.



Victoria Podesta

COMPANY BRIEF Archer Daniels Midland Company (www.adm.com), 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 social responsibility and community involvement to the culture of ADM?

Our sense of responsibility is wrapped up in our purpose: serving vital needs for food and energy. We work to fulfill this purpose through what we do and how we do it – responsibly turning crops grown by farmers around the world – primarily corn, wheat, oilseeds, and cocoa – into hundreds of food ingredients, animal feeds, and renewable alternatives to petroleum-based fuels and chemicals. Because of our global reach, we are connected to an extraordinary number of people and communities throughout the world. So, we work to make a positive impact everywhere we do business.

How do your corporate responsibility efforts align with ADM's business strategy?

They are thoroughly aligned. We aspire to achieve the right results, the right way – and that means profitable growth achieved by living our values. Our corporate sustainability efforts, for instance, look to build sustainability into our everyday business practices as well as our long-term strategic thinking. We also developed our social

investment program, ADM Cares, to ensure that efforts we support will advance sustainable agriculture and contribute to the welfare of our operating communities in ways that are consistent with our overarching business strategy.

Would you provide an overview of some of the CSR programs that ADM supports?

Through ADM Cares, we support programs and activities in three categories: Strong Roots invests in projects and organizations that promote sustainable agriculture where ADM meets the farm;

through Strong Communities, we support programs and organizations that improve the quality of life in our operating communities, with a particular focus on education for children and young adults; and our Strong Bonds component fosters colleague-to-colleague efforts, such as financial assistance, disaster relief, and our volunteer programs.

Are you focused on collaborating/partnering in your programs, and would you highlight some of these relationships?

One of ADM Cares' signature programs, Doing It Right, is in partnership with Aliança da Terra, a Brazilian sustainable-agriculture advocacy group. 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.

Another partnership we've forged is with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Cocoa Foundation, and several industry peers to launch a \$40 million program to improve the livelihoods of approximately 200,000 cocoa farming families in western Africa.

ADM's own Socially and Environmentally Responsible Agricultural Practices program works with cocoa-growing cooperatives to improve productivity and confront issues ranging from poverty and disease to concerns about child labor.

Other ongoing ADM partnerships include those with Living Lands and Waters, a not-for-profit organization that promotes the health and vitality of inland U.S. waterways on which our domestic business relies.

How do you measure the success of your programs?

In the case of our sustainable agriculture programs, metrics vary by crop and by region, but accountability and measurable results are always critical. We look at factors such as farmer

participation and adherence to sustainable agriculture action plans, as well as crop quality, health and wellness outcomes, and in the case of some of our cocoa-sustainability efforts, local school enrollment trends.

How do you engage employees in ADM's social responsibility efforts?

One of the ways we ensure involvement is through our Strong Bonds Colleague Giving Council. Employees can volunteer to serve on this Council and help to define the programs and activities they want ADM to support. They also direct our in-kind food donation program, which provides a direct link between their work and the alleviation of hunger. And they promote volunteerism around activities that align with our business, for instance protecting the health and vitality of U.S. waterways on which our domestic business relies.

Our colleagues were a driving force behind ADM's efforts to provide much-needed food aid to Haitians in the wake of January's earthquake. During the first days of the crisis, our people identified 700 metric tons of top-quality long-grain rice – a key staple for the Haitian people – already in Haiti. We were able to donate that product, providing millions of servings of rice to those in need.

How do you define the role of leadership in communicating ADM's efforts and programs to employees?

I'd say it's vital, but it can't stop there. Our Chairman, CEO, and President, Pat Woertz, is a very vocal and visible champion of our sustainability and CSR initiatives internally, and her personal commitment and involvement have made an indelible impact. But we expect all leaders, and indeed all colleagues, to reinforce the importance of corporate responsibility, both through their own actions and through the expectations they communicate each day.

What are the key priorities for ADM going forward, in regard to your CSR efforts?

We believe there are opportunities to help shed light on and make progress around the issue of post-harvest waste. Today, throughout the world, some 15 to 35 percent of crops are lost through poor handling and storage. We are exploring opportunities with the Postharvest Technology Research and Information Center at the University of California, Davis, and others to develop programs that may help prevent crop waste, particularly in the developing world. It just makes sense that, as we look to provide food, feed, and fuel for a growing world, we should all make the most of the crops we already produce. ●