

Sustainability Performance in Food Supply Chains

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Abstract: Companies in different industries are dealing with increasing pressures from stakeholders, policymakers, and consumers to devote efforts to environmental and social sustainability; and thus, deploying supply chain management strategies (Seuring and Müller, 2008; Gualandris et al., 2015; FAO, 2014; European Commission, 2014). Literature has grown about sustainable practices implementation, drivers and performance indicators, in different industries and with different supply chain scopes. However, limited attention has been devoted to sustainability assessment at the different stages of the supply chain, which in turn is a key element to define appropriate strategies according to the company's objectives and performance aims. Sustainability performance measurement is key to evaluate whether sustainability goals and stakeholder requirements are achieved (Beske-Janssen et al. 2015; Schaltegger and Burritt, 2014; Taticchi et al. 2013). Although a vast diversity of indicators are proposed in literature, the assessment risks to be ineffective when companies do not know how practices should be evaluated and for what reasons (Bourne et al. 2002). Researchers have studied how different actors in different supply chain stages have different sustainability challenges and thus, implement different practices requiring with different tools to measure performance (Golini et al., 2016).

In sensitive industries as food, the implementation of sustainability practices and the effects that such practices can have on sustainability performances in different stages of the supply chain call for further analysis. Sustainability has become increasingly important for companies in the food supply chains (FSC) because they deal with issues such as food and packaging waste; land, energy and water consumption; food safety insurance; unfair trade relationships (Fritz and Schiefer, 2008); health, hunger, malnutrition, rural support and animal welfare (European Commission, 2014a; FAO, 2014). Hence, consumers and government agencies are paying growing attention to the social and environmental performance in this industry (Maloni and Brown, 2006). Accordingly, companies are implementing sustainability practices as a response to strict regulations, consumers' expectations and for the search for competitiveness (Taticchi et al. 2013). In this context, this study addressed the need of understanding how companies in different stages of the FSC assess sustainability, if they do, and how.

Keywords: Supply chain management, sustainability, food industry