

THOMAS LINGARD

GLOBAL HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY
(ENVIRONMENT), UNILEVER



Where are you currently at on your transition journey?

Unilever is right at the beginning of its climate transition journey. We've had environmental programs and targets for many years, but it was only last year that we put all of this together into a climate transition action plan, which we put to an advisory shareholder vote at our AGM. We were delighted that it passed with 99.5% of the votes cast, and we're now busy implementing that, both in our operations and through our value chains, products and our wider influence on society.

How are you working with others to deliver the transition?

We have been clear right from the start, that you can only take action on the climate transition in partnership with others, this isn't something that any one company can do on its own. In fact, if you look at Unilever emissions, something like only 3% of the emissions actually occur within our operations, the rest are up and down in the value chain.

There are three main groups that we're working with to deliver Unilever's climate transition plan. The first is suppliers, about two thirds of our full value chain emissions are upstream and in our suppliers' operations, and therefore we need to work with them in partnership to find ways to produce the raw materials, and packaging materials that we need, and with radically lower footprints. Second is our peers and our competitors. A lot of the work that's being driven now has to be driven at an industry level. We're working with groups like the Global Consuming Goods Forum, RE100, and other coalitions of companies who are trying to all move the climate agenda in the same direction.

And then finally governments are critical to the transition. We know that the world won't transition to net zero without much more ambitious policy frameworks than we've got at the moment, and that's why we prioritize engagement with groups like the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition, the Corporate Leaders Group on Climate Change, to make our voices heard loud and clear to policy makers around the world.

What has been the main challenge in driving the transition within your company?

I think the main challenge for driving the climate transition is the fact that so many of our emissions occur outside of our operations. So they're outside of our direct control but within our sphere of influence. So that means having to work in quite creative ways, quite in systems thinking ways about how best we can apply the leverage and the pressure we have to accelerate the change.