



THE COMPANY: Alara Wholefoods Ltd was infamously started in 1975 with £2 found on the street by the now senior director who was living a 'money free' lifestyle. With the company factory now located in the heart of King's Cross London, Alara produces over 70 tonnes of organic muesli a week, including manufacturing over 250 flavours and combinations. This accounts for almost 50% of all the organic muesli produced in the UK. Alara is the only Fair Trade muesli range in the world, and is also nut and Gluten free.

The business's commitment is to provide very high quality products to meet specific requirements, should that be organic, gluten free, Fair Trade or small production runs of customer specified blends using its unique data base control solution.

Certified by the Soil Association since 1988, Alara was also the very first company in the UK registered with the Coeliac Society and production is always performed in adherence to British Retail Consortium Grade A quality standards.

THE DRIVERS: In 2005 Alara set up two specific goals within the first Knowledge Transfer Partnership into Sustainable Development in the UK. These goals were to become Zero Waste and Zero CO₂.

BECOMING A ZERO WASTE FOOD COMPANY

ALARA WHOLEFOODS LTD

As quoted on the company website: "We live in a throw away society...but there's no such place as 'away'..."

Alara recognises the literal waste in sending rubbish to landfill, letting all that potential nutrition and energy rot away in dumps rather than being used for energy or to fertilise new crops of food. In addition to this, landfill sites create further pollution by not capturing the methane emitted from decomposing refuse. This greenhouse gas which contributes to climate change can be used to create energy.

Alara takes waste management very seriously and has managed to reduce the food waste produced at its factory by 150 kg per day. This has been achieved by training staff to separate their production-line waste into different waste bins. In 2009 Alara became the first Zero Waste manufacturer in the UK and now no waste from the factory is sent to landfill or incineration.

TAKING ACTION: Using a variety of funding and support networks Alara has followed the reduce, reuse and recycle format. Top in the hierarchy is to stop waste being produced in the first place.

1. Reduce

Some of the ways that Alara has reduced the amount of waste produced are:

- Wrapping pallets in the thinnest material possible;
- Not printing out documents in the office unless it's absolutely necessary;
- Having separate bins throughout the factory so waste can be separated by staff and recycled more effectively.

2. Reuse

- Alara sends any undamaged cardboard boxes, which the ingredients arrive on site in, to a neighbouring wholesaler who uses them for packing goods.
- Other ingredients arrive in plastic sacks. These are used as recycling bags for collecting plastic film, or bin liners for non-recyclable material.
- All ingredients arrive on wooden pallets. Any that are undamaged are used to pack Alara's own finished products.

3. Recycle

- Alara uses cardboard from sustainable resources for its packaging, and is one of only two companies in the UK using a bag made of Super-Eco film – completely biodegradable within 18 months.
- Any cardboard boxes that can't be reused, get recycled.
- Film wrapping from incoming pallets of ingredients is collected and a baler used to make bales of plastic which are also collected to be recycled.
- All offices have separate bins for collecting office paper which is recycled separately.
- The factory has area sensitive lighting to make sure that electricity is not wasted by staff leaving lights on.

- Every day, Alara's chef cooks a healthy lunch for the staff. Vegetable or fruit peelings get collected and put on the compost bin or in the wormeries in the company's permaculture forest garden.
- Any damaged pallets are used as firewood for the staff BBQ.

WHY IS IT CSR? Alara has realised multiple benefits through its Sustainable Development Commitments; not only has it been able to position its organisation and brands within the ever-expanding 'ethical consumption' market segment, but the company have been able to experience real financial, bottom-line rewards. As MD Alex Smith commented, *"We estimate we now save over £15,000 pa from not having to pay for commercial and council waste collections."* Furthermore by involving staff in the programme, the employees are engaged with the company's wider vision and values.

WHAT NEXT? The company has set the following goals:

- Become Carbon Negative in 2010;
- Expand the fruit tree orchard which began in 2009;
- Extend the permaculture forest garden for sequestering CO₂ to make space for a small scale anaerobic digestion plant.

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For further information, please contact Article 13 on 020 8840 4450 or visit www.article13.com

For more information on Alara's sustainability strategy and performance, please contact Alex Smith on alexsmith@alara.co.uk