2009 Corporate Social Responsibility Report

Summary
Our mission at General Mills is Nourishing Lives™ – making lives healthier, easier and richer – and we strive to bring that mission to life every day through our brands. Take Cheerios, for example.

It’s made from whole grain oats, and it’s good for you. Studies have shown that Cheerios can lower cholesterol when eaten as part of a healthy diet.

After milling oats to make Cheerios, we recycle the oat hulls. They’re burned to generate electricity in a facility that is among the first in the nation fueled by 100 percent renewable materials.

The paperboard used to package Cheerios is also made from 100 percent recycled paper. That’s true of all General Mills cereals – and it has been for decades.

We also strive to help strengthen families and the communities where we live, work and play. We do that through programs like Box Tops for Education, where parents can earn cash for their children’s schools by clipping Box Tops from our products. Or through the Cheerios Spoonfuls of Stories program, which has distributed more than 30 million free books over the past six years and funded several literacy programs.

All of this – health benefits, social benefits and environmental benefits – from the No. 1 selling cereal franchise in the United States.

Nourishing Lives. We believe we can do well for shareholders while doing good for our customers, our communities and our planet. That’s what sustainability means to us.

A globally respected company

We’re making progress on our corporate responsibility goals. Several independent organizations have recognized our efforts.

- Forbes magazine ranked General Mills as the fourth most respected company in the U.S. – and 11th most respected in the world.
- The Ethisphere Institute, a New York-based ethics think tank named General Mills one of the “World’s Most Ethical Companies.”
- CRO magazine (Corporate Responsibility Officer) ranked the company No. 2 on its list of “100 Best Corporate Citizens.”
- Fortune magazine included General Mills in its first-ever ranking of the top 50 “World’s Most Admired Companies.”
Over the past four years, we’ve improved the health profile of products that comprise 40 percent of the company’s U.S. retail sales. Since we reached our target ahead of schedule, we’ve set a new goal to improve the health profile – as defined by our internal health metric – of 45 percent of the company’s U.S. retail sales by 2010.

Since fiscal 2005, more than 350 different General Mills products have had their nutrition profile improved. Whether it’s fortifying Yoplait yogurt with vitamins A and D, reducing sugar in cereals such as Frosted Cheerios and Honey Nut Chex, or trimming the salt in Bisquick, our nutritionists and researchers are always working to develop healthier products that taste great.

Senior research scientist Heidi Teoh

Progresso: A labor love

For senior research scientist Heidi Teoh, developing a low-calorie Progresso soup was a labor of love.

“I had a lot of personal passion for this project because three years ago I was 310 pounds,” says Teoh, who has since lost 140 pounds by eating right and exercising regularly.

Teoh focused on how people on a diet would react to the new soup rather than zeroing in on what ingredients to trim.

“People eat with their eyes and nose, so to begin with, we really wanted a soup that was visually pleasing,” says Teoh. “But it also had to taste and smell great.”

The result was Progresso Light, which has 80 calories or less per serving.

Researching health and nutrition

Many of our health improvements are driven by a team of research scientists and registered dietitians at the Bell Institute of Health and Nutrition, which was formed in 1999 to help develop food products and nutrition information for the company. The Bell Institute sponsors studies on a variety of health-related topics.

*U.S. retail products

To read more about how we’ve improved the health profile of our products, see page 7 of our full Corporate Social Responsibility report at www.generalmills.com/csr.

“Each time we touch a product – whether it’s new or existing – the health metric motivates us to think about what big or small steps can be made.”

– Dr. Susan Crockett
Leader of the General Mills
Bell Institute of Health and Nutrition
General Mills has long been recognized as a leader for its commitment to communities.

Since 2000, General Mills has contributed about 5 percent of its pretax profits to a wide variety of causes, including programs that feed the hungry. But we don’t just give money. We encourage our employees to volunteer. About 82 percent of our U.S. employees volunteer—many of them at organizations that we support financially. So we are contributing our energy and passion, too.

Supporting education and breast cancer research

Our Box Tops for Education program has now raised more than $300 million for K-8 schools in the United States over the past 13 years—money that schools use to buy things like computers, books and playground equipment.

PTO Today magazine, whose audience is 80,000 parent-teacher organizations, gave the program an “A” and a rave review. “These guys have really figured this out,” said the PTO Today article. “The best of the bunch by far.”

And our Yoplait brand’s Save Lids to Save Lives program is now more than 10 years old. Save Lids and our broader, companywide Pink Together campaign have raised more than $26 million for Susan G. Komen for the Cure, which supports breast cancer research and awareness.

Helping Africa feed itself

General Mills’ contributions have also continued throughout the world. Our African Women and Children’s Hunger Project—with its focus on sustainable agricultural development in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia—is making a difference. General Mills’ technical and financial support have been used to develop irrigation systems, dig new wells and establish a “village savings and loan” micro-financing organization to help women start small businesses.

What’s more, hundreds of our employees have volunteered to work with groups in Africa such as COMACO, which was created to curb the illegal poaching of animals and destruction of forests. The organization, with General Mills’ help, is creating alternative ways for people to earn a living, including more productive farming and food processing.

A great place to work

Closer to home, General Mills has received praise for its workplace culture. Among many other honors, our company was named one of the:

- “100 Best Companies to Work For” by Fortune magazine.
- “United Kingdom’s 50 Best Workplaces” by The Financial Times.
- “100 Best Companies for Working Mothers” by Working Mother magazine.
- “Top 50 Companies for Diversity” by DiversityInc.

“Twenty-five years ago, General Mills was the first company to support our network. Today, we continue to count them as one of our closest partners.”

– Vicki B. Escarra
President and CEO, Feeding America (formerly America’s Second Harvest)
General Mills continues to make progress on reducing our environmental footprint.

Three years ago, the company established global five-year goals to reduce our:

- Energy consumption rate by 15 percent by 2010.
- Greenhouse gas emission rate by 15 percent by 2010.
- Solid waste generation rate by 15 percent by 2010.
- Water usage rate by 5 percent by 2011.

**Doubling corn yields**

We’re doing more to leverage our expertise in sustainable agriculture, built over more than a century with our Green Giant brand of vegetables. We’re now growing twice the sweet corn on the same amount of land as we did 35 years ago, which means we use less fertilizer and water. Our ongoing commitment to sustainable agriculture has been broadly recognized.

In Labatut, France, for example, our Green Giant facility was recognized with the ARVALIS – Institut du Végétal certification, awarded by the French Institute of Cereal, for its sustainable agricultural practices. We were the only sweet corn manufacturer in Europe to earn this distinction.

**Generating electricity from methane**

At our Häagen-Dazs ice cream plant, also in France, we’re using methane gas from our wastewater treatment plant to generate electricity that is then sold to a local power supplier, Electricité De France. The new technology saves money, reduces methane emissions and increases the plant’s use of renewable energy by about 5 percent.

Throughout the United States and Canada, we’ve rolled out a more efficient, computer-based transportation system. It consolidates loads, and maps the most efficient routes to deliver our products to market. By significantly reducing our total miles traveled, we’ve trimmed our transportation costs by about 10 percent while also reducing our use of fossil fuels.

We’ve reduced the packaging by more than 20 percent in Yoplait yogurt that is sold at club stores such as Costco and Wal-Mart. The new packaging saves more than 1,200 tons of plastic per year.

**Saving water**

In Irapuato, Mexico, we’re working with broccoli farmers to use more efficient drip irrigation, which is saving about 1.2 billion gallons of water per year – enough to supply the annual needs of about 33,000 people a year in the United States.

At our plant in Covington, Ga., we’ve built a state-of-the-art onsite wastewater treatment plant that has reduced its use of water by 46 percent – enough to supply about 1,000 homes (about 5.3 million gallons per month).

“We couldn’t ask for a better corporate partner in our community than General Mills,” says Covington Mayor Kim Carter. “General Mills was green even before it was cool to be green.”

“To be a successful company, we must do much more than achieve financial success. We must also make substantial contributions to society and to the environment that sustains our lives.”

– Gene Kahn
Global Sustainability Officer
General Mills

To view a video of one of our water-saving initiatives, see page 49 of our full Corporate Social Responsibility report at www.generalmills.com/csr.
Nourishing Lives™

For a more comprehensive overview of our commitment to stand among the most socially responsible food companies in the world, see our 57-page Corporate Social Responsibility report online at www.generalmills.com/csr.