

Setting the Standard for Sustainable Ingredients

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As the global food industry intensifies its focus on transparency, climate resilience and responsible sourcing, sustainability has become a defining benchmark for ingredient manufacturers. In this evolving landscape, companies are increasingly expected not only to reduce their environmental footprint but also to demonstrate measurable, third-party-verified progress across their value chains.

Against this backdrop, the GNT Group has emerged as a frontrunner, recently earning the prestigious EcoVadis Platinum rating, placing it among the top 1 per cent of food manufacturers globally for sustainability performance. The achievement marks a significant milestone in the company's journey, following its progression from Silver in 2023 to Gold in 2024.

In this interview with NUFFOODS Spectrum, Akshat Rawat, Sustainability Specialist at GNT Group, discusses the operational shifts, supply chain oversight, and innovation strategies that have underpinned the company's sustainability transformation. He also outlines how GNT's commitment to the United Nations Global Compact is shaping its long-term business strategy and how sustainability credentials are influencing customer partnerships in the fast-evolving natural colours market.

What key initiatives and operational changes were most critical in helping GNT achieve the EcoVadis Platinum rating and enter the top 1 per cent of food manufacturers globally?

We're committed to leading the food colouring industry on sustainability. All our EXBERRY® colours are made from non-GMO fruit, vegetables and plants and we've brought in many important measures to optimise our environmental impacts over recent years. Our initiatives have included training our farmers in sustainable agriculture, implementing biodiversity projects and reducing carbon intensity at our factories.

EcoVadis awarded GNT a Silver medal for sustainability performance in 2023 and we received a Gold medal in 2024, which was a very important achievement. We then stepped up our planning so we could address every area where there was room for improvement, and we updated our existing policies and procedures as needed.

For example, we looked at how climate change could introduce new risks to our supply chain in the coming years and then introduced measures to address that. It's hugely important that we choose the most suitable sourcing areas and sow colourful, resilient crop varieties that are adapted to the local conditions.

We earned the Platinum award after providing evidence to show our policies and procedures were being implemented effectively. We also collected and shared additional data related to managing sustainability across our supply chains, and wherever possible we secured external validation in the form of certifications and audits.

How have improvements in resource efficiency and waste reduction translated into measurable environmental and cost benefits across your EXBERRY production operations?

Our major focus areas include optimising energy and water use at our factories, and we've made significant progress on both these fronts. We're also committed to ensuring the side streams from our fruits, vegetables and plants are put to good use, such as animal feed, biogas and food ingredients.

These measures help us cut resource use and reduce waste, and they also benefit EXBERRY® colours' Product Carbon Footprint. We share carbon footprint data for the vast majority of colours in our portfolio, and customers are able to use that information on their product labels and in marketing materials.

Supply chain transparency is increasingly important for food brands. How is GNT strengthening supplier oversight and risk management to ensure ethical sourcing and long-term resilience?

We work closely with our agricultural partners and suppliers around the world. We have a closely managed supply chain model that allows our agronomists full oversight of our contract farmers' fields. We build long-term partnerships that help us guarantee the crops are grown in line with our expectations and deliver on quality, quantity and sustainability year in and year out.

We've maintained our standards by strengthening oversight through structured risk assessments and audits. We invest in training for the farmers who provide our key raw materials so they can achieve recognised standards such as GLOBALG.A.P. and Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA).

We're also increasing our assessments of our non-agricultural suppliers. We do this through a combination of our internal risk assessment methodologies and SEDEX for environmental, social and ethical performance.

Our rigorous approach to supplier selection and monitoring ensures high levels of transparency, reduces risk, and supports resilient supply chains that can adapt to regulatory, climate and market challenges.

With your commitment to the UN Global Compact, how is sustainability being embedded into GNT's long-term business strategy and innovation roadmap?

Sustainability is a core pillar of our long-term strategy rather than just a parallel activity. Because of that, the UN Global Compact aligns closely with the way we do business.

Its principles guide decision-making across operations, product development and partnerships. This includes making consistent progress across all areas that are material to our business. We proactively assess the possibility of any risk or opportunities within GNT and our value chains and then act on them.

The assessment helps us in identifying and managing any possible risks in due time, and it also allows for better product development because we're taking future requirements into consideration.

From a customer perspective, how do sustainability credentials such as EcoVadis ratings influence brand partnerships, product development, and purchasing decisions in the natural colours market?

Sustainability credentials have become a key differentiator in the food manufacturing sector. Consumers want sustainable food and drink, but they're wary of greenwashing and meaningless claims. Because of that, manufacturers are looking for partners who can demonstrate credible, third-party-verified performance.

We've been publishing independently audited Greenhouse Gas Verification Statements in recent years that back up our Product Carbon Footprint data.

Securing EcoVadis Platinum now also provides independent assurance that GNT meets the highest standards across environmental, social and ethical dimensions. This strengthens trust, supports long-term partnerships, and increasingly plays a role in supplier selection, joint sustainability projects and customer sustainability reporting. For many brands, working with a Platinum-rated supplier helps mitigate risks in their own value chains.

Looking ahead, what new sustainability targets or technologies will define the next phase of GNT's environmental and social performance journey?

GNT is committed to setting the highest standards on climate, health and safety, ethics, sustainable value chains, circularity and resource efficiency.

We have a number of key priorities for the years ahead. We want to make our processes even more efficient to achieve further reductions in carbon emissions and water use. GNT has also grown significantly in recent years, so we need to ensure we maintain strong due diligence and risk management processes across the value chain as we expand our operations. We need to continue finding new and innovative ways to maximise the value extracted from waste and byproducts as well.

Supply reliability is an important challenge across the industry too. We've been putting safeguards in place to ensure we can continue to deliver sustainable, high-quality and affordable plant-based EXBERRY® colours for all our customers worldwide for decades to come.

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