



For the food industry, climate change presents real risks—flooding, heat waves, and drought can ruin crops, and water shortages can limit production at factories. Food companies are already cutting emissions and planning to adapt. But one group of corporations is taking the next step and calling on the U.S. government to take stronger action, including setting a price on carbon.

“It’s vital that corporations like Unilever demonstrate that sustainable practices can be good for society, good for the environment, and good for business,” says Stefani Millie, senior manager of external affairs at Unilever North America. “We know we can’t solve these systemic issues on our own, so we work with other large corporations, as we do with the Sustainable Food Policy Alliance, to use our collective leadership to drive more powerful change at a quicker pace.”

“What I think is really unique and excellent here is that they’re going a step further and saying that the federal government has to lead on this,” says Christina DeConcini, director of government affairs at the nonprofit World Resources Institute, adding, “I couldn’t overstate the importance of businesses writ large—including these big food companies—saying, ‘We want a price on carbon and we want strong climate policy.’ Because we know we’re not going to get climate policy without a wide spectrum of voices being very vocal in advocating for it.”

Carbon pricing is a key part of the overall strategy, and a “helpful tool to support the transition to a zero-carbon economy,” says Millie. “It encourages low-carbon behaviors and incentivizes new innovations for cleaner options.” Since 2016, Unilever has internally priced emissions from its own manufacturing, using the money to pay for new clean technology at its sites. Some of its brands have similar approaches, including Ben & Jerry’s. That means the company is prepared for a carbon tax, and it wants other corporations to follow. “We want to play a leadership role in the transition to a zero-carbon economy.”

Adele Peters is a staff writer at Fast Company who focuses on solutions to some of the world's largest problems, from climate change to homelessness. Previously, she worked with GOOD, BioLite, and the Sustainable Products and Solutions program at UC Berkeley. [More](#)

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