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Tessenderlo Group Leadership Team Summit

Reconnecting as a must for our planet

Ignace Schops

Climate change has already had a major impact on the ways of our planet and will continue to leave irreparable traces. So how can we turn things around and save the future of our planet and the species that live on it? Ignace Schops, winner of the 2008 Goldman Environmental Prize also known as the green Nobel prize, explained during the Leadership Team Summit of Tessenderlo Group how reconnecting with biodiversity and nature is the only answer.

"Biodiversity matters." With these words Ignace Schops started his presentation to make sure that in the sustainability story we would not lose track of nature itself. And in order to do so we need to reconnect society with biodiversity, people with nature.

Schops quoted Thomas Friedman in order to clarify how to put this theory into practice. "We need green hawks, flying over industries and helping them." "We need to build a bridge between environmentalists and the business world", he added. Especially in 2011, the International Year of Chemistry, this could mean a substantial opportunity for Tessenderlo Group.

► Why we do what we do

The key message Schops wanted to bring was captured by an anecdote he told. A little girl and her mother are cooking in the kitchen. Mother takes a sausage, cuts off both ends and puts it in the frying pan. "Why do you do that?", the girl asked. "Actually, I have no idea", the mother said, "but you can go and ask your grandmother. I learned it from her." So the girl went to her grandmother and asked: "Nana, when my mum fries a sausage, she always cuts off both ends of the sausage before frying it. Why does she do that?" And the grandmother answered: "Is your mum still using that same old small frying pan?"

The moral of this story is that we have to ask questions. We have to ask ourselves: why are we doing what we are doing?

► Alarming evolutions

Already we perceive some alarming evolutions as a result of climate change and they are still advancing faster and faster. At this rate, the Arctic will be ice-free in 20 years. Already the rate of extinction of species is 1000 to 10,000 times faster than it used to be. Snow slopes are becoming snowless so that they have to be artificially reconstructed. And natural disasters are becoming more and more frequent, with devastating consequences for numerous people and costing excruciatingly huge amounts of money. And yet, when we take a look at the issues considered most important by the EU, environment only takes up 4%.



Bringing Chemistry to Life

"We know what is happening to the world, and it is up to us to solve it", Schops argued. People are already trying to find solutions: meat flavoured water, veggie days, alternative energy sources,... But much more needs to be done. Businesses can deliver a significant contribution in this matter. "Take responsibility and become world champion in your niche", Schops advised.

In conclusion, he showed the audience a series of striking photographs of how nature can be an inspiration. "Everything I learned, I learned from nature. And I am convinced that nature can hold lessons for businesses as well."