

[Analysis](#)[Events](#)[Webcasts](#)**Biz**[Videos](#)[Climate Tech](#)[ESG/Finance](#)[Circularity](#)[Sustainability Professic](#) **Sponsored Article**

# Companies, consumers can meet climate action goals together

By **Vance Merolla**

September 22, 2021



Colgate-Palmolive is reimagining a healthier future for all people, their pets, and our planet.

[Courtesy of](#)

**Vance Merolla**

Worldwide Director, Global  
Sustainability  
Colgate-Palmolive

*This article is sponsored by [Colgate-Palmolive](#)*

The effects of the climate crisis are playing out in extremes worldwide, and [according to climate scientists](#) the situation will worsen if the world doesn't change course. The time for transformative action is now, and companies must play significant roles in these efforts.

A life-cycle analysis of Colgate-Palmolive products showed the company contributes about 10 percent of its products' carbon footprint through processes such as sourcing, production and distribution. The remaining 90 percent derives from consumer use.

To make a real impact given this breakdown, companies such as Colgate-Palmolive have the responsibility — and opportunity — to enact more sustainable, climate-friendly business practices and help consumers develop sustainable habits.

## Taking responsibility at the company level

To meet climate action targets, Colgate-Palmolive has engaged in formal climate action planning for two decades. The company continues to make [significant progress](#) toward its sustainability goals guided by its [2025 Sustainability and Social Impact Strategy](#), grounded in its purpose to reimagine a

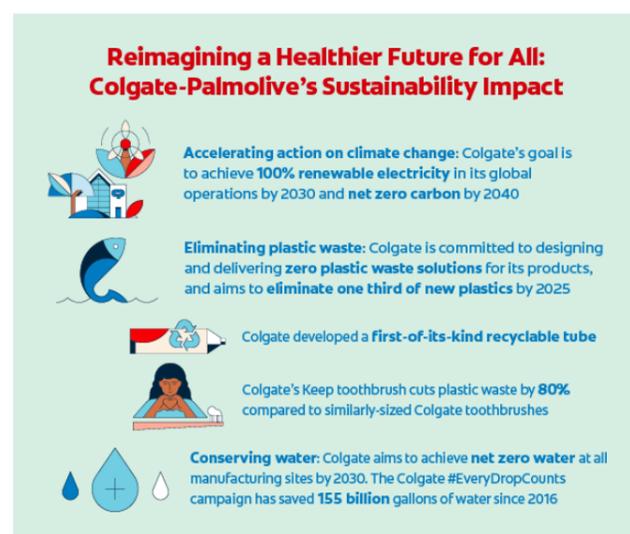
healthier future for all people, their pets and the planet. Its targets are science-based, such as net-zero carbon emissions by 2040 and 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030; coordinating with its manufacturing sites to realize net-zero water by 2030; and eliminating one-third of new plastics by 2025.

"Consumers today are looking for action from companies, not just pledges," said Ann Tracy, Colgate-Palmolive's chief sustainability officer. "Companies that don't respond run the risk of deselection, particularly among younger consumers who expect genuine efforts to minimize plastic, reduce water usage and develop climate resiliency. This work is critical to ensure a healthy planet for future generations."

## Focusing on consumer behavior

Consumers expect organizations to produce sustainable products, which creates a powerful opportunity for companies to meet the climate change challenge.

Colgate-Palmolive is committed to developing products that help consumers live more sustainability — without sacrificing quality or convenience. The Colgate brand is in more homes than any other: Right now, six in 10 households on the planet have a Colgate-branded product. Through this unparalleled reach, the company is well-positioned to make significant impacts that scale.



Colgate-Palmolive is bringing its sustainability mission to life by taking meaningful actions that drive social impact, help millions of homes, and preserve the environment. *Courtesy of*

As part of its process for developing sustainable solutions, Colgate-Palmolive employs behavioral scientists to gain insight into consumer behaviors to help bridge the "intention-action gap" — the concept that consumers desire to make good sustainability choices but then don't for various reasons.

Bottom line: The fewer behavioral changes required, the greater the chance for success.

To that point, consider the Colgate Keep toothbrush, which offers the familiar benefits and features of Colgate's popular brushes but uses an aluminum handle with replaceable plastic brush heads. Users keep the handle and replace only the head — rather than the entire brush — which cuts down plastic waste by 80

percent compared to similarly sized Colgate toothbrushes.

To optimize for sustainability throughout the R&D and design processes, Colgate-Palmolive taps cross-functional teams and subject matter experts throughout its value chains, which include employees, consumers, retail partners, regulatory bodies, non-governmental organizations, industry trade groups, community groups and media.

## Making sustainable living easier for consumers

By improving the sustainability of all its product offerings, Colgate-Palmolive empowers consumers to live more sustainably, even if they are not actively seeking out alternate solutions. While Tom's of Maine is a brand that consumers recognize as sustainable, Colgate-Palmolive's portfolio also includes sustainable mass brands not traditionally labeled as such. For instance, Palmolive Ultra dish soap is sold in bottles made of 100 percent post-consumer recycled plastic, a strategy estimated to divert more than 5,200 tons of plastic a year out of landfills in the U.S. and Canada.

Educating consumers is also key to driving impact. For example, Colgate's #EveryDropCounts campaign encourages consumers to turn off the tap while brushing their teeth — a message that has saved an estimated 155 billion gallons of water and 8.3 million metric tons of CO2 since 2016, according to consumer feedback. Meanwhile, its upcoming "Recycle Me" packaging will inform consumers that its toothpaste tubes are recyclable.

However, even if consumers choose Colgate's recyclable tube, they need a robust recycling system to complete the recycling process. Colgate has been working with peer companies through the Consumer Goods Forum to tackle these sustainability hurdles. One of these workstreams is an "optimal extended producer responsibility (EPR)" white paper, which makes the case for building infrastructure to optimize the current materials management system.

# Supercharging sustainability initiatives

Some companies looking to embrace more sustainable business practices will face inevitable roadblocks. Altering stakeholder mindsets and enacting cultural shifts takes time and steady engagement. Expenses associated with innovation can also create apprehension because many sustainability concepts are not embraced at scale initially.

Despite these challenges, Colgate-Palmolive is committed to its ambitious goals because it recognizes that sustainability isn't a trend: It's the way the world needs to start doing business. It's an opportunity for leadership, innovation and growth. In honor of its commitment to sustainable practices, Colgate-Palmolive has been recognized four years in a row by Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI) for "building environmental and social consciousness into every decision."

To amplify the impact of its sustainability strategies, Colgate engages in third-party partnerships. For example, Colgate-Palmolive is a member of the United Nations Global Compact and works with third-party entities such as the Energy Star program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the World Resources Institute, CDP, the Consumer Goods Forum, Dow Jones Sustainability Indices, the U.S. Green Building Council and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

Once sustainability innovations do reach scale, real change occurs. Getting there can be challenging, however, as early adopters must be bold, visionary and then help the rest of the field to "play catch up." Colgate-Palmolive recently developed a first-of-its-kind recyclable toothpaste tube, and it plans to transition to 100 percent recyclable tubes by 2025. As the maker of roughly half the world's toothpaste, this is a big deal.

To maximize the impact of this groundbreaking innovation, Colgate-Palmolive shared its recyclable tube technology with the entire industry, earning the company a Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies award. In the past, this sharing model likely would have been unthinkable. Now, Colgate and the three other most prominent global toothpaste players — which together make three out of four of the world's toothpaste tubes — have pledged to make the switch to recyclability by 2025.

As humanity races against the climate emergency clock, this type of collaboration is essential to unlocking a brighter, healthier future — for all.

Show comments for this story. 

## ALSO ON GREENBIZ

			
a month ago • 1 comment	19 days ago • 1 comment	a month ago • 1 comment	2 m...
Is your company ready to meet the post-COP moment?	To decarbonize sectors like steel and long-distance transport, we need to ...	As COP26 beckons, the United States is being held hostage. Is there hope?	Plus dev COI

0 Comments GreenBiz  Disqus' Privacy Policy  Login 

 Favorite  Tweet  Share Sort by Best 



LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS 

Be the first to comment.