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 **TECNOPOOL**  
FOOD PROCESSING EQUIPMENT

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# Sustainable change

Today's economic papers as well as food trade magazines are dominated by one topic: sustainability. This subject is not forced by the food producers but rather by the large retail companies around the world. Just recently Metro, Migros, Carrefour, Wal-Mart and Tesco entered into an agreement to develop guidelines for socially acceptable processes along the supply chain. In simple terms they will look for suppliers in the future who comply with employment law and safety at work, suppliers who do not support child labor and keep minimum ethical standards.

However, it is not the case that the large enterprises of this world have suddenly become do-gooders. They are strictly pursuing sound economic interests.

Indecency is becoming an undesirable risk in the globalized information society. News on disastrous working conditions travel around the world faster than the purchasers of the trade chains. However, the trade managers do not like to be held responsible for what their suppliers do. Financial partners in particular distance themselves from such practices because they might lead to decreasing sales and therefore profit losses. A multi-national food company can not afford customers who like to buy somewhere else, and financial partners who invest somewhere else.

So it all boils down to the suppliers and the suppliers of the suppliers. They all need to comply with the social and ethical codes and see this compliance reviewed by neutral bodies. In this case NGOs are often used because for most consumers their commitment and name stands for precise control and incorruptibility. We will have to wait to see as to whether this will stay this way since a certification industry is being set up with a lot of money in the background, which sometimes brings weaker characters into the arena.

The social charter will not be the last code food producers all over the world will have to adhere to in the future. The term "sustainability" is already pointing to future developments. First there was hygiene, then social standards followed by economical issues. Who knows what will come next! Perhaps the fairness of distribution! Obviously, the people of this world are sick of turbo capitalism and the trade companies have always been good sleuths for what the consumers will accept in the future. That's their job.

Let's see what course the development will take and whether the instruments applied for the evaluation of suppliers will really change the world in a sustainable way.

Sincerely yours,



**++ Hildegard Keil, editor-in-chief**  
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