

Sustainability Matters

17th Sept. 2015

A fortnightly selection of topical **news and views** about economic, social and environmental issues.

Designed especially for accountants and those who use the services of accountants.

Sustainability Matters is;

- Compiled and published by Ray Skinner of *Sustainability Matters*, providers of specialist services relating to sustainability and business support. **Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children.**

Climate Change Denier Rupert Murdoch Buys 73% of National Geographic

"You read that right: one of the world's most notorious climate change deniers, whose Fox media empire propagates global warming misinformation on a massive scale, just got control of National Geographic – including its magazines, maps, books, TV channels, digital media platforms and a whole lot else besides.

"The National Geographic Society does incredibly important work on climate change – from publishing ground breaking stories to giving grants to scientists. But the new deal hands 73% ownership of its media operations to Fox.

"We can't stop the deal from going through, but we can limit its damage. Half of National Geographic's new board will be Fox representatives – and if Murdoch succeeds in getting like-minded climate deniers on there, it will be game over for The National Geographic we know and love, and game over for its work on climate change.

"The \$725 million deal marks the end of 127 years of non-profit science journalism for National Geographic. The new Fox-controlled company, National Geographic Partners, will be run for-profit, and it will answer to Murdoch's shareholders – via its board.

"From interfering in elections to hacking the phones of murdered teenage girls, Rupert Murdoch's media empire has shown time and again that it will do anything for profit and power. But his most dangerous legacy by far will be his scientific illiteracy – and his consequent quest to ensure that human-caused global warming is dismissed as a loony conspiracy by much of the world's media and many of its policy-makers. Just two weeks ago he called climate change concerns 'endless alarmist nonsense' and last week, he blamed 'extreme greenies' for hindering economic growth.

"For the sake of the National Geographic's editorial integrity, its educational programmes and its scientific grants, we need to keep Rupert Murdoch's views out of National Geographic's boardroom.

"SumOfUs was created to take on the power of huge media empires like Rupert Murdoch's. To do that, we need to tell National Geographic loudly and clearly that letting Rupert Murdoch's climate change denying views near its boardroom will ruin its reputation, its credibility and its reach. Keeping climate change denial out of its boardroom isn't just sound ethics – it's sound business.

More: <http://action.sumofus.org/a/murdoch-national-geographic/3/10/> plus two links to *Washington Post*.

Source: SumOfUs, 13th September 2015. ❖

SUSTAINABILITY GROUP EVENTS

Next event – Date of webcast yet to be 'sorted'.



Announcements in 'due course'. ❖

Brad Pitt Builds 109 Homes in Katrina-hit New Orleans

"When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in late August 2005, it left an overwhelming amount of wreckage where homes once stood and, tragically, claimed more than 1800 lives. This Saturday will mark 10 years since the devastating event and no celebrity is more in sync with the anniversary than Brad Pitt.

"Pitt, along with the help of 20 internationally renowned architects, launched *Make It Right* after Katrina, a project set to build 150 houses to replace many destroyed homes in the hard-hit Lower Ninth Ward.

"Pitt was to later face many challenges along the way, however that didn't stop him or his team from plugging along. To date, the non-profit has built 109 colourful, sturdy and eco-friendly homes.

"We went into it incredibly naïve, just thinking we can build homes – how hard is that?

"Some of the world's most celebrated architects, including Frank Gehry, designed the tall, angular, solar-panelled homes that now line the streets.

"The residents – limited to teachers, first responders, and people who lived or had family members in the neighbourhood before Katrina hit – chose some of the features themselves, including the exterior paint colours, and the amenities.

"Built with reusable, non-toxic materials and solar panels, and filled with energy-efficient appliances, the homes are a reflection of Pitt's belief low-income housing does not have to use the cheapest materials that keep families in a poverty trap. Pitt said he's driven through the neighbourhood and struck up conversations with homeowners sitting on their porches. 'I say what's your utility bill? And they'll throw something out like, '24 bucks' or something, and I feel fantastic', said Pitt. 'It's a reminder of why we're there.'

"There are more houses on the way, with *Make It Right* breaking ground on new projects every month.

More: www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/home-property/71538279/Brad-Pitt-builds-109-homes-in-Katrina-hit-New-Orleans

Source: Rob Skinner 28th August 2015.

Editor: 3:50 video – at the very least look at the pics. ❖

Returnable Bins Make Old Tyres Much Easier to Handle

"As well as being a major environmental problem, end-of-life tyres are difficult to handle from both a storage and transport point of view. So a simple and clever idea based of a returnable bin is solving what has been a transport and logistics nightmare in the past for council tips as well as tyre retailers, transport

companies and tyre collectors.

The bins come in 50m³, 38m³, 25m³, 18.5m³, 10.5m³ sizes and comprise of a heavy duty welded cage ... dropped off ...

More: www.ecovoice.com.au/returnable-bins-make-old-tyres-much-easier-to-handle/

Source: eco-Voice, 15th September 2015. ❖

Buying the Farm

"ROSS WILKEN, twenty-three, and his father, Harold Wilken, don't look much like starry-eyed radicals as they inspect their fields of black beans just west of Danforth, Illinois. The hot, wet afternoon sun beats down on their greasy jeans and tired eyes like it does on any other farmer. But their twenty-three hundred acres of organic crops, surrounded by millions of acres of genetically modified corn and soybeans, are nothing short of an insurgency.

"These look really good", says Ross, examining plants heavy with purplish pods. "I wish I had more acres in these."

"The black beans in this eighty-acre patch, just one of the Wilkens' many nonadjacent fields scattered around the area, will fetch 80 cents per pound when sold in Munger, Michigan, and afterward might end up in your Chipotle burrito. That's a tall premium compared to conventional beans, which fetch about 50 cents. The Wilkens get similarly good prices for their organic wheat, corn, pumpkins, soybeans, and alfalfa hay. So it's no surprise this family enterprise is steadily expanding its operation in every way possible – building barns and grain bins, buying heavy equipment, experimenting with software, and taking in a son-in-law, a nephew, and a neighbour down the road as partners.

"The challenge is finding the land. Like most farmers in Central Illinois, the Wilkens lease the majority of the land they farm. Now they need to buy or lease new fields to take through the three-year transition to organic. And they need to get there before Wall Street does.

More: <https://orionmagazine.org/article/buying-the-farm/>

Source: *Orion Magazine*, 11th September 2015.

Editor: This is a VERY long article about long term thinking, about land ownership and more; seems to have direct applicability to 'Godz Own'.] ❖

Agricultural Disruption

"Disruption through knowledge rather than a farming app.

"Farming as we have largely been applying it post WWII is in terminal decline and is no longer fit for purpose.

"Farm management is changing with different pressures and different aims necessitating a differing model, a new model.

"The current approach, 'the norm' if you like, the system with which people are most familiar (willing to allocate to) and comfortable with is still delivering food (although food quality is a whole different topic) but it is also delivering soil degradation, biodiversity loss and a significant climate change footprint. Soil, biodiversity and the addressing of climate change performance/impact are essential in the immediate but also for multi-generational long-term agricultural success.

"An approach that achieves greater resilience and is able to deliver on the multiple performance metrics now demanded of agriculture has a growing advantage over the old reductionist orthodoxy. Many responses put forward as 'the answer' however are limited, linear and narrow in focus much like the historical focus on chemistry at the expense of other sciences such as physics, biology and ecology. Indeed many of the responses are of the 'making something to flog to farmers' type as opposed to holistic management knowledge driven innovation. In other words variations on the old theme, hardly disruptive, more Monty Python ('yes we're all individuals').....

More: <http://agro-ecological.com/agricultural-disruption>

Source: *AE Ecological Intelligence*, 8th September 2015. ❖

Quote of the Week

"Never be afraid to try, remember... Amateurs built the ark, Professionals built the Titanic." – Anon

Source: *Corporate Tool-Box*, 13th January 2015. ❖

Impact Investment Summit – Asia Pacific

"Join impact investment thought leaders, trailblazers, and experts at an inspiring community Summit like no other.

"Supported by Impact Investing Australia, the Summit will showcase the best strategies in finding impact investments and measuring their success. Program content will be curated specifically for impact investors – with prime focus on the capital supply side (not the demand side) of impact investment.

"...A new way of doing business is emerging, one that harnesses the power of capital markets to deliver social and environmental change. The Impact Investment Summit Asia Pacific will host international keynotes and prominent figures from the influential impact investment community

"..... Fast catching the attention of the world's leading economies, the market for impact investing market is estimated to reach A\$32 billion domestically, and US\$500 billion-\$1 trillion globally, over the next decade.

When: 19th – 21st October 2015 [NB: Low fees too!]

Where: Dolton House, Sydney, NSW, Australia

More: www.impactinvestmentsummit.com/

Source: *Ethical Investor*, 8th September 2015. ❖

Let's Uberise Sustainability

"By [John Elkington](#), Wednesday 9th September 2015.

"..... So what is the essence of this coming challenge? Here's how I see it.

"In The Stretch Agenda, our recent dramatization of a C-Suite session discussion on potential breakthrough strategies for a major conglomerate, we included the following sketch, presented by the company's CFO: [Diagram]

"On the horizontal axis, featuring up to eight growth 'engines', business manages multiple forms of capital (e.g. physical, financial, human, intellectual, social, natural). The integrated reporting movement is working to distil all of this complexity into just two main forms of value: an expanded version of financial capital, alongside more clearly defined forms of non-financial capital.

"But equally important are the vertical dimension (involving new types of modeling linking together every element of the system, from field and factory out to the biosphere and atmosphere) and the longitudinal dimension – with change dynamics tracked over decades, even generations.

"In this view, companies and economies are the aircraft, while governments and the financial markets are akin to air traffic controllers. December's COP21 climate summit in Paris will show whether or not our economic controllers are up to the task.

"At a time when a worrying number of pilots seem to be losing their bearings, or actively steering their aircraft into oceans or mountains, there is a parallel risk that the world's sustainability champions could unwittingly help crash the global economic system.

"Here's why.

"As we compete to stake out our respective bits of market turf, celebrating the incremental changes of businesses that support our platforms, we confuse the market. Are we calling for Change-as-Usual or for Breakthrough? Ultimately, too, we risk losing out to those who see the challenge through very different lenses: the Travis Kalanicks of sustainable capitalism.

More: www.eco-business.com/opinion/lets-uberise-sustainability

Source: *eco-Business.com*, 9th September 2015. ❖

Solving Wicked Problems

"When it comes to challenges, wicked problems are the toughest. Though sometimes masked as technical problems, they derive much of their difficulty from social dynamics. Many of our most important problems today fall in this category – yet few know how to tackle them. This video introduces a better way to Solve Wicked Problems. [5:41 Uploaded on Feb 6, 2012]

More: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUH5XOPF8pc>

Source: Tim Marshall, 31st August 2015. ❖

True Sustainability Means

Circularity: Linear thinking is destroying the planet

"..... Just as humans once believed that the Earth was the center of the universe, new expansive thinking will move us into the future. Our modern day minds have been trained to approach problems in a linear fashion, with a beginning and an end, cradle to grave – our society functions on this type of thinking. Markets are judged on linear measurements, quarterly numbers, annual sales, and growth projections. Entrepreneurs start businesses, grow them, and then look to sell as the end game. Supply chains have a beginning and an end and business plans are created to show value and growth, all through linear processes. We measure everything in finite models, but this linear approach, based on short-term thinking has not, and does not, complement a sustainable earth model. Our natural ecosystems work together through regeneration. It's not linear, but circular like the shape of our planet.

"Our planet is a sustainable model built on a foundation that all living systems are connected; nothing is linear. Circles are a better example of how to solve problems because they never have a beginning and an end. Our business models are viewed as cradle to grave when they should be cradle to cradle. As stated by Karl-Henrik Robert, founder of The Natural Step, 'The water that we have now is the same water we have always had on this planet. There is no new water.' One day of solar energy from our sun equals humanity's energy needs for the next 25 years. Thinking of solutions through this different lens can provide humanity with infinite possibilities.

"Our economies would see much needed growth if they went beyond the take- make-dispose system and capture the economic value within a circular model. According to the Ellen MacArthur foundation, a group dedicated to educating and informing businesses of the economic gains found in a circle economy worked with McKinsey to find that the circle economy system is worth 700 billion in the consumer goods sector alone, while benefiting land productivity and job creation.

"Once this paradigm shift takes hold our creative minds will design a future that can sustain life and an economy built on dignity and self-worth for all. Our intelligent minds got us into our current situation and they can guide us out, pending we push through the tough social, political, moral, and environmental choices before us. However, it starts with re-framing our thinking to the problem. Sustainability is anything but linear. The answer has been around us, but we were blinded by the abundance of our earth, then we feared its finiteness; yet for infinite possibilities it requires us to see ourselves as part of the cycle. As Janine M. Benyus a biologist stated, 'There is no need to invent a sustainable world; that's been done already. It's all around us.' We must courageously bring our Earth and ourselves back into meaningful balance.

More: www.fastcoexist.com/3050115/true-sustainability-means-circularity

Source: Stig Ehnbohm, 14th September 2015. ❖

GRI Helps Make Regional Development More Sustainable

"An [Australian] \$1 million partnership with the Global Reporting Initiative is a central platform in the federal government's push for the private sector to help solve the region's development challenges.

"The deal with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) will support businesses to plan and measure the effect of their work in developing countries such as Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Papua New Guinea.

"The alliance will contribute to the Australian government's efforts to create a more sustainable economy in the Indo-Pacific region, Michael Meehan Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) chief executive said.

"GRI's Sustainability Reporting Standards will be the foundation of all projects started during the partnership, he said.....

Source: <http://ethicalinvestor.com.au/gri-helps-make-regional-development-sustainable/>

More: *Ethical Investor*, 8th September 2015. ❖

Four New Training Workshops

"The most common concerns I [Clare Feeny] hear about environmental training are:

- 'It's too expensive to do it properly – I just can't get the budget for it.'
- 'They asked me for a business case and I don't know how to put one together.'
- 'They come on the training but it doesn't seem to make any difference.'
- 'I want to set up a training program but there's so much to do that I just don't know where to start.'

"Do you worry about these things, too? And do your health and safety colleagues share similar concerns?

"From November this year you can benefit from my 20-years of experience and research when you join me in your choice of three workshops that will set you up for great results, whether you are a business, non-profit or government body;

- *Creating a successful training program*
- *Becoming an excellent trainer*
- *Creating a robust training strategy*

"... A fourth workshop topic, on risk: ranging from brain science to incident analysis, will focus on extracting the benefits from six profit-draining environmental risks which fly under most businesses' radar.

When/Where: From November 2015, Auckland and elsewhere, including offshore, upon request

More: <http://us3.campaign-archive1.com/?u=58c6285b1f08add9ec513f306&id=14bdca422a&e=f7ca4c6c62>

Source: Clare Feeny, 2nd September 2015. ❖

Visit NZ's First 10 Homestar Built Home – Christchurch

"Bob Burnett Architecture's Church Square received NZ's first 10 Homestar Built rating. It is also the first project in the country to achieve a 9 Homestar Design rating. Some of the sustainable features includes passive solar design, fully insulated foundation slabs, rainwater harvesting and energy recovery shower wastes.

When: Thursday 24 September tours at noon and 1:00pm; includes a short Q&A with designer Bob Burnett.

More: www.nzgbc.org.nz/Event?Action=View&Event_id=329 includes link to TV news clip. NZGBC, 4th Sept. 2015.

Source: NZGBC, 4th September 2015. ❖

Stop GMO Corn in Mexico... Again! – Mexican Court Overturns Biotech GMO Ban

"If you've been to Mexico, you know how incredible the food and culture are. I grew up part-time in Mexico and have returned many times since, for the beauty of the land, the people, the culture and the food. Much of this food culture revolves around corn, or *maize*, as it is technically called. But corn does more than feed people. It's part and parcel of Mexico's way of life.

"Mexico is the cradle, the birthplace, of maize. Thousands of varieties have been cultivated over thousands of years by indigenous and traditional Mexicans. Many of these varieties are specifically adapted to thrive in Mexico's varied landscapes – far more effectively than the one or two genetically modified varieties that [stand to wipe out this millennia-long heritage](#).

"However, after [years of staving off the proliferation of GMO corn in Mexico](#), we've just received news of a devastating blow to the protection of everything beautiful connected with Mexico and this culinary legacy. After intense lobbying by biotech companies of Monsanto, Dow, and Dupont, Mexico's twelfth District Court just [overturned a 2013 ruling](#) which, until now, has *prevented* the chemicals giants from planting GMO maize in Mexico.

More: https://action.sumofus.org/a/mexico_monsanto/2/2/ plus <http://wakeup-world.com/2015/09/02/stop-gmo-corn-in-mexico-again-mexican-court-overturns-biotech-gmo-ban/> and <http://thefreethoughtproject.com/eu-countries-ban-monsanto-gm-corn/>

Source: SumOfUs, 9th September 2015. ❖

Move Money from Harm to Healing

Hunter Lovins, President of Natural Capitalism Solutions interviewed by impact investor and entrepreneur Donna Morton.

"Most people believe you can invest for value or invest in your values; you cannot have both. Impact investor and entrepreneur Donna Morton interviews Hunter Lovins, president of Natural Capitalism Solutions on how to build public market investment strategies that moves money from harm to healing. This interview looks at why Hunter believes finance is a powerful tool to stem climate change, address extreme poverty and grow the world we want. Hunter also gives us some insights about her new investment firm she co-founded with Donna, Principium Investments. So going beyond CSR, and leaving old school SRI behind, they discuss the new frontiers of impact investing in public markets, integrating ESG and developing divestment and investment strategies for the 21st Century.

More: www.greenmoneyjournal.com/september-2015/interview-hunter-lovins/. [Longish interview.]

Source: Hunter Lovins, 3rd September 2015. ❖

Sweden Runs Out of Garbage: Only 1% Ends Up in Landfills

"Currently less than one percent of the garbage produced in Swedish homes ends up in the landfill today, with the other 99% being recycled or composted.

".... Sweden has become so good at recycling their waste; the country now has to import 800,000 tons of trash each year from the U.K., Italy, Ireland and Norway to keep their WTE plants up and running. ...

More: www.collective-evolution.com/2014/11/26/sweden-runs-out-of-garbage-only-1-ends-up-in-landfills/

Source: CSEAR page 15, 30th June 2015. ❖

CAANZ One Day Conferences

Each of the following one day conferences mounted by Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand has a 'sustainability'/risk management presentation;

- Southern Primary Sector Update 24th Sept, Invercargill <https://events.nzica.com/wizard.aspx?ID=NSIPCOSO15&D=1>
- Northland Regional_Conference 13th November, Whangarei <https://events.nzica.com/wizard.aspx?ID=NNRCCON001&D=1>
- There was also the North Island Primary Sector Update held on 11th Sept at Hamilton. Insights at <https://events.nzica.com/wizard.aspx?ID=NNIPCOWA15&D=1> People, Planet and Profit: Building Sustainability into your DNA

Source: CAANZ Lifelong Learning, 8th September 2015. ❖

Speed Limits: Where Time Went and Why We Have So Little Left

"We live in an ever-accelerating world: faster computers, markets, food, fashion, product cycles, minds, bodies, kids, lives. When did everything start moving so fast? Why does speed seem so inevitable? Is faster always better?

"Drawing together developments in religion, philosophy, art, technology, fashion, and finance, Mark C. Taylor presents an original and rich account of a great paradox of our times: how the very forces and technologies that were supposed to free us by saving time and labour now trap us in a race we can never win. The faster we go, the less time we have, and the more we try to catch up, the farther behind we fall. Connecting our speed-obsession with today's global capitalism, he composes a grand narrative showing how commitments to economic growth and extreme competition, combined with accelerating technological innovation, have brought us close to disaster. Psychologically, environmentally, economically, and culturally, speed is taking a profound toll on our lives.

"By showing how the phenomenon of speed has emerged, Taylor offers us a chance to see our pace of life as the product of specific ideas, practices, and policies. It's not inevitable or irreversible. He courageously and movingly invites us to imagine how we might patiently work towards a more deliberative life and sustainable world.

More:

<http://yalepress.yale.edu/book.asp?isbn=9780300206470> and www.goodreads.com/book/show/21874693-speed-limits

Source: Clare Feeny, 4th September 2015. ❖

Revolutionary Fence is Set to Trap the Sea's Power

"A British company has announced plans for an array of unique marine turbines that can operate in shallower and slower-moving water than current designs. ...

"It hopes to install its new design in what is called a tidal energy fence, one kilometre long, in the Bristol Channel – an estuary dividing South Wales from the west of England – at a cost of £143m (US\$222m). The fence is a string of linked turbines, The fence's total output is 30 megawatts (MW), and 1MW can supply around 1,000 homes in the UK. ...

More: www.climate-news-network.net/revolutionary-fence-is-set-to-trap-the-seas-power/

Source: Climate News Network, 7th August 2015. ❖

Contributions and feedback are welcomed.

Send your news items, handy hints, case studies, suggestions, comments and questions to Ray Skinner of *Sustainability Matters*.
eMail: ray@sustainabilitymatters.co.nz Phone: +64 (09) 443 0773 Web: www.sustainabilitymatters.co.nz