
FAMILY BUSINESSES ON A MISSION

ATTAINING THE 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL OF CLIMATE ACTION

EDITED BY

**NAOMI
BIRDTHISTLE**

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**Family Businesses on a Mission:
Attaining the 2030 Sustainable
Development Goal of Climate Action**

FAMILY BUSINESSES ON A MISSION



Series Editors:

Naomi Birdthistle

Rob Hales

The Family Businesses on Mission series examines how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) can be applied in family businesses around the world, providing insights into cultural and societal differences and displaying innovative approaches to complex environmental and societal issues.

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Family Businesses on a Mission: Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Climate Action

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About the Editors

Dr Naomi Birdthistle is an Associate Professor who has entrepreneurship in her blood. She worked in her family business for over 20 years, which is the largest indoor funfair in Europe. On leaving the family business she ran her own consulting business for a period of time, where she consulted family businesses on management issues. Naomi's passion for family business management and entrepreneurship is evident by her research outputs. She wrote the first ever PhD on family businesses in Ireland which won the Family Firm Institute's 'Best Doctoral Dissertation Award'. She has published 32 peer-reviewed papers, six books, 24 book chapters, 63 conference papers and an abundance of national and European reports. Naomi's research covers many areas within the entrepreneurship and family business discipline including the following: entrepreneurship education, minority groups and entrepreneurship; women owned and led businesses; succession planning in family businesses; divorce and family business and the role women play in family businesses. Naomi supervises PhDs around women entrepreneurship, family business management issues and high growth firms.

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About the Contributors

Chris Cox is the Managing Director and principal shareholder of George Cox & Sons Ltd, a 75-year-old regional Highways and Civil Engineering company, working in the Northwest of England. He is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and has a hands-on role in all its commercial activities. He has overseen a three-decade long period of steady growth, now with a turnover of £12–£14 million and 80 employees. He is the grandson of the founder George Cox and son of Frank Cox, who ran the business from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. Running three separate business centres, the company principally operates on long-term framework contracts, collaborating with both local authorities and private clients to achieve shared benefits and successes. These key objectives have been recognised by numerous industry awards in recent years for this approach and philosophy. The company also won the Northwest Large Engineering Family Business Award in 2021. Chris has collaborated on several research papers, including Productivity in SMEs; Extent of notions of sustainability and responsibility central to Family Businesses; Succession planning in a family business and Effective use of IT in SMEs. He is a graduate Engineer from University College Swansea, a Teaching Fellow and an Entrepreneur in Residence at Lancaster University. He has presented a series of lectures and workshops on running a family business, succession planning and entrepreneurial learning.

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information into strategy and policy helps influence the future direction of the company.

Innes Larkin is a trained Physical Education teacher and holds a bachelor of Human Movement Studies (Ed) (University of Queensland) with a Master of Arts in Outdoor Education (Griffith University). Innes has taught in London, Brisbane and the Scenic Rim. During his master's Innes developed a Code of Ethics for the Australian Outdoor Education sector.

Innes has loved being outdoors since a young age and has climbed and hiked around the world, but always felt a tug towards Mt Barney since climbing it at age 11. Together with his wife Tracey, they started managing Mt Barney Lodge in 2003 and then purchased it in 2006 growing the business tenfold since that time. In 2016 Innes was awarded the Australian Search and Rescue award for his work in saving approximately 700 people out of the Mt Barney National Park.

Both Innes and Tracey are passionate about protecting the natural world and have found that expressing this through their business is an outstanding life. Climate change has been a major threat listed in Mt Barney Lodge's SWOT for the last 10 years, and many actions that Innes and Tracey take are the result of trying to mitigate that threat.

Dr Tafadzwa Leroy Machirori is an experienced researcher and lecturer whose interests lie in the field of entrepreneurship, in general, and more specifically, immigrant entrepreneurship where he investigated the experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs in high-tech sectors. More recently, he has begun delving into family business research and teaching. His latest contribution is a sole-authored book chapter titled *Australia – When family businesses solve social problems: The case of the McPherson family*. Here, he analysed how one family business was contributing towards the attainment of SDG#4, quality education, in Australia. Previously, he has collaborated in several multi-disciplinary projects including, the evaluation of the status of teaching in Australia, and university–SME collaboration in Australia, among others.

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Foreword

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 provide a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

They also entail elements of importance towards a strategic business engagement with sustainability issues. These offer a framework which provides businesses with a systematic approach to identify new business opportunities while contributing to the solution of the grand sustainability challenges facing the world today, including climate change. Each SDG, if achieved, will have a direct and significant positive impact on millions of people's lives around the world and the environment in which they live. Businesses have an opportunity to widen the purpose of business by adopting the SDGs as targets for their operations. Thus, they can make a meaningful contribution to the greater good by achieving their operational objectives.

Family businesses are uniquely placed to contribute to SDGs for many reasons. Firstly, because family business models have longer time perspectives, and this allows the family business to link with the longer-term SDG time frame – 2030. Second, family businesses often focus on aspects of business operation which do not have an immediate return on investment such as relationship building with stakeholder groups. Thirdly, family businesses tend to rate the importance of ethics higher than standard businesses and thus align well with the social dimensions of the SDGs. Lastly, family businesses have intergenerational perspectives which is a core principle of sustainability.

This book provides insights into how family business operationalises SDG#13: Climate Action. The book uses a rigorous case study approach for family businesses to detail aspects of their businesses that advocate for climate action. The cases provided here are living proof that family business that operate for the greater good actually work! Non-family businesses can take a leaf out of the family businesses portrayed in this book as they can provide different perspectives on how businesses can successfully align SDGs and business strategy.

Despite many businesses having adopted environmental social governance strategies and environmental management systems, the effect of this activity has

not been reflected in a healthier planet. Many ‘state of the environment’ reports indicate that planetary health is decreasing, and planetary boundaries are being crossed or are about to be crossed. Whilst the cause of this decline is not entirely the fault of business, there still needs to be a greater effort to address the decline. The challenge for family businesses is to use their unique characteristics and set ambitious programmes of work that make a meaningful contribution to achieving global goals. This book provides insights into how family businesses can achieve such a mission and how non-family businesses can be inspired to do the same.

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The Editors would also like to thank Emerald Publishing for supporting the publication of this book and the mission for deeper sustainability through utilising the SDGs.

The authors of Chapter 3 ‘Germany: *Riedenburger Brauhaus* – Organic Farming and Climate Protection Out of Conviction’ would like to thank Maximilian Krieger (Operational Manager) and Katrin Trattner (PR & Sustainability) for their time, support, and valuable insights into the *Riedenburger Brauhaus*. In addition, they would like to thank their student assistant Patrizia Pluskota (Bachelor Tourism Management at the Hochschule München University of Applied Sciences), who gave them extraordinary support in the preparation of this case study and thus also contributed the students’ perspective.

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Chapter 1

The Sustainable Development Goals – SDG#13 Climate Action

Rob Hales and Naomi Birdthistle

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all member states of the United Nations in 2015, is a shared blueprint for people and the planet, with the aim to achieve peace and prosperity for all. Within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a call to action for all countries to address the global challenges of poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. These challenges are identified by 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) as depicted in [Fig. 1](#) and within the SDGs are a total of 169 targets. These 17 SDGs acknowledge that ending poverty and other global challenges need strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests ([United Nations, 2021](#)).

The global pandemic of COVID-19 has presented challenges to those working towards achieving the goals. The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are predicted to increase the divide between people living in rich and poor countries ([UNEP, 2020](#)). However, if there can be concerted action using the blueprint of the SDGs, then human development can exceed pre-COVID-19 development trajectories ([UNEP, 2021](#)). What is needed is a combination of political commitment from all levels of government, investment in green economy initiatives, socially oriented innovation and a (re)focus on the purpose of business to align with SDGs.

This book focuses on SDG number 13 (SDG#13) which focuses on ‘Climate Action’. Climate action targets are high-level targets focused primarily on governments. The main targets within SDG#13 goal are shown below.

- 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
- 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning

Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Climate Action, 1–9

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Fig. 1. 17 Sustainable Development Goals. *Source:* [United Nations \(2021\)](#).¹

- 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
- 13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilising jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalise the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible
- 13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in less developed countries and small island developing states, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalised communities ([United Nations, n.d.](#))

These targets can be translated to business through the strategic alignment of goals and actions of a particular business. The target that resonates with many businesses is target 13.a. This target refers to the Paris Agreement which is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. The agreement was adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and came into force in November 2016. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. To achieve this long-term temperature goal, countries aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible to achieve a climate neutral world by mid-century ([UNFCCC, n.d.](#)).

Family businesses (or indeed any business) can take climate action that is aligned with SDG#13 in several ways. The first way is to strategically align mitigation efforts or carbon reduction efforts. The purpose is to reduce the carbon emissions of an organisation in line with meeting the net-zero by 2050. There are several standards and schemes developed for businesses to develop plans and actions to meet net-zero emissions targets. The science-based targets are one such scheme and are highly regarded because of the integrity or quality of the scheme to deliver the espoused outcomes – net-zero by 2050. For a small family business with no environmental and social governance (ESG) expert, such schemes are out of reach for them because of the cost, resources and time constraints. This is not to say a small family business cannot get on the net zero-emission pathway and achieve this by 2050. Many smaller family businesses have not joined such schemes but have taken action such as switching to renewable energy and switching transport modes using electricity for example.

Family businesses also have a role to play in education for climate action. Target 13.3 states that governments should improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning. Family businesses can implement educational initiatives that align with this goal. Alignment with Target 13.1 can also be undertaken by family businesses to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters. This is already happening as climatic changes are already affecting societies across the globe. The challenge for businesses is to implement adaptation planning into business risk assessment and strategy well in advance using scenario analysis. Family businesses are well placed to do so because of their long-term view on intergenerational business success.

Alignment with 13.b for family business may seem unattainable or difficult to achieve. It would seem difficult to promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in the least developed countries and small island developing states. However, if family businesses consider their supply chain impacts – the impact of materials from developing countries – then family business has a role to play in how businesses in their supply chain plan for and manage mitigation and adaptation to climate change. This also crosses into the mitigation target above as scope 3 emissions (emissions of an organisation not directly related to production but emissions they are still responsible for – eg business air travel) are also included in the higher integrity/quality emissions reduction standards for business.

Alignment with these targets is important because presently if all present commitments under the nationally determined contribution scheme which includes all governments signed up to the Paris Agreement were to be kept at the current level the Paris Agreement target would not be met.

Fig. 2 represents the pathways the globe is presently taking, based on targets set under the Paris Agreement. There is predicted to be an increase of 13.7% in global greenhouse gas emissions in 2030 compared to 2010 if the business as usual scenario is adopted. The current trajectory is going in the wrong direction to achieve the Paris Agreement target.

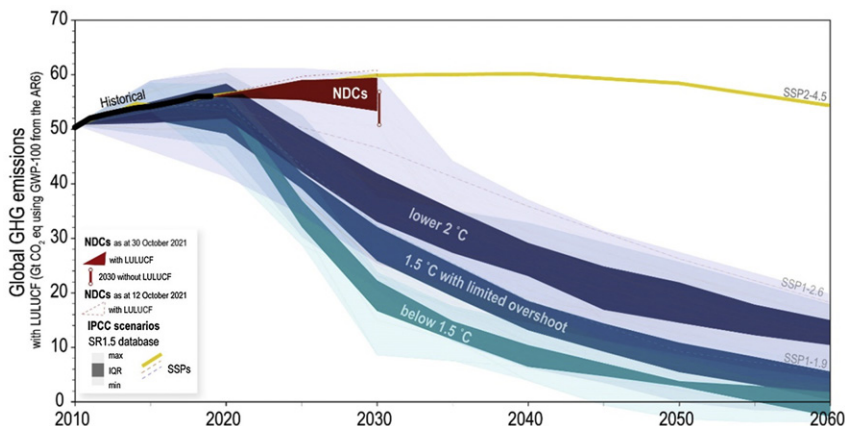


Fig. 2. Comparison of Global Emissions Under Scenarios Assessed in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming. *Source:* UNFCCC (n.d.).

The IPCC has estimated that ‘limiting global average temperature increases to 1.5°C requires a reduction of CO₂ emissions of 45% in 2030 or a 25% reduction by 2030 to limit warming to 2°C. If emissions are not reduced by 2030, they will need to be substantially reduced thereafter to compensate for the slow start on the path to net-zero emissions, but likely at a higher cost’ (UNFCCC, n.d.).

Family businesses can have a large role in reducing emissions but are also challenged by external events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and more recently energy shocks to the global economy. Family business has demonstrated their resilient nature during such events because of their long-term and relational approach to business. They are well suited to contributing to and being part of recovery plans that can shape the twenty-first-century economy in ways that are clean, green, healthy, safe and more resilient. Climate action for a family business can be summarised around the following actions.

- (1) Efficiency improvement in energy saves money and reduces carbon emissions.
- (2) Commit to an emissions reduction target aligned with the Paris Agreement.
- (3) New investment should be green and accelerate the decarbonisation of all aspects of the business.
- (4) Exit from fossil fuel investments and invest in sustainable solutions.
- (5) Consider the greening of jobs (employees) in business to advance decarbonisation
- (6) Consider supply chain and stakeholder relationships to support the transition to a low-carbon community.

- (7) Make climate change adaptation planning a priority and use principles of inclusion and justice in the process.
- (8) Link climate action with sustainability plans and organisational governance processes.
- (9) Look for collaboration in the business community and wider stakeholders to assist in mitigation and adaptation.
- (10) Advocate for climate action in the communities within which the family business is located.

There are now considerable resources available for businesses to access to develop climate action that is fit for aligning with the Paris Agreement. Much research has been directed toward family businesses, but little attention has been directed to how a family business can advance sustainability and social impact using SDGs. This book provides case studies of family businesses that advance SDG#13 through their work.

Furthermore, the SDGs are a call to action, to develop innovative solutions to some of the world's most complex, societal and environmental challenges. Businesses play a crucial role in forging this path, and since family businesses account for more than two-thirds of businesses worldwide and contribute to 70–90% of the world's GDP, we believe it is important to showcase the role they play in facilitating the achievement of these SDGs.

Furthermore, a key feature of the book is highlighting the role of gender diversity in achieving a better, sustainable world. Thus, we incorporate throughout the series, certain notions, and examples of how women in family firms influence specific, well-grounded efforts to enhance the world we live in. By including examples of women who champion SDGs within their family business, it will provide readers with examples of role models.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many family businesses have shown to be more resilient and operate more sustainably than standard businesses (such as the shareholder approach). The reason for this lies in family businesses generally taking a long-term perspective on stakeholder relationships and the real need for long-term continuity planning to sustain the people within their businesses. The people in their business are most likely to be family members. However, like all businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed financial pressures on family businesses. One needs to ask the question: *How then can family businesses extend their capacity to operate more sustainably and with more social impact during times of business stress?* Well, family businesses can offer unique insights into how sustainability and social impact can be part of the regenerative response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The idea for the book came from two observations. The first observation was that family businesses that had sustainability at their core were performing well despite the impacts of the pandemic. The second observation was that the SDGs were being used as a framework for regeneration after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This book makes an important contribution to research on family business by highlighting how businesses promote particular SDGs through their work. There

are several streams of research emerging in the literature on family business and sustainability that are relevant to this book. [Ferreira, Fernandes, Schiavone, and Mahto \(2021\)](#) identify four streams of research in family business and sustainability: family business capital, family business strategy, family business social responsibility and family business succession. The case study approach of this book provides insights into how SDGs can be used to advance the family business's sustainability strategy and social responsibility. How a family's trans-generational sustainability intentions positively influence the strategy of the business and the family's concern for its reputation has been identified as a driver of sustainability in family businesses. Additionally, family businesses routinely combine innovation and tradition to achieve and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the book series aims to contribute positively to portray the role of family businesses and/or women in family businesses, in effectively achieving SDGs on a global basis. The case studies on a family business display support and embodies the principles of an SDG in their operations, culture and/or business philosophy. The book is one of 17 vignette books in which each book will be comprised of a set of short, easy to read family business cases related to the unique SDG being discussed in the book. The format of the book series allows the works to be accessible to those working in the field beyond academia such as family business practitioners, family business owners, family business advisors, government and business policymakers, members of NGOs, business associations and philanthropic centres, as well as to those who have a general interest in entrepreneurship and business.

SDG#13 Book Series Focus

The chapters in this book focus on businesses that have climate action as a key component of their business model. There are five chapters which feature family businesses addressing SDG#13 – climate action. The first chapter features Riedenburger Brauhaus. This family business is an organically grown, medium-sized family business that now employs around 40 people. For Riedenburger Brauhaus, sustainable beer production – understood as ‘organic’ – is more than just a trend to be followed for pragmatic reasons. The brewery's main sustainability goals include the preservation of biodiversity, the promotion of regional economic cycles and the minimisation of transport routes to achieve the most positive eco-balance possible. Climate action for Riedenburger Brauhaus falls within sustainable beer production and organic beer production. Current climate policy places organic farming at the centre of climate protection measures to be able to achieve its goals on both a regional and global level. Climate neutrality and climate adaptation to changing beer production are the main focus of climate action.

The next chapter features Mt Barney Lodge. The Lodge is an ecotourism accommodation and tour business not far from Brisbane, Australia, and is situated adjacent to Mt Barney National Park. Mt Barney Lodge sits in Aboriginal

Yugambeh country – the name of the language group that has traditionally owned the area. The national park is part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia which is a listed World Heritage property. The climate action story of Mt Barney Lodge focused on the family business's response to coal and gas mining which would seriously impact the local environment and communities in which the business operates. The directors of the family business, Innes and Tracey Larkin, became key political advocates mobilising a protest movement in the region to halt exploration and mining. They were successful in having a moratorium on exploration in the region. This action and consequent bush fires and floods brought about an acute awareness of the problem of climate change. Their business has not only jumped on the path of climate neutrality but is advocating for climate action in the tourism industry in Australia.

The next chapter is W.S. Badger, a family business that produces organic body care products such as sunscreens, bug repellents, lip balms and moisturisers in New Hampshire, USA. The genesis of the business idea came from Bill Whyte who needed to soothe his fingers having been a carpenter for many years (Badger, 2022). Climate action in this family business stems from integrating daily action. The business states that 'climate justice... is an integral part of our daily practices'. Badger is also a staunch advocate for regenerative and sustainable agriculture. This family business has a clear goal of protecting their 'natural resources' and taking a responsibility for their 'actions and having a net positive impact on the world', which is aligned with SDG#13. Climate action for Badger takes the form of target setting. To address climate action the Whyte family signed an open letter in 2017 to the international community pledging their part in upholding the Paris Agreement and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 26–28% by 2025 (Badger, 2022). Their business purpose also encompasses activism with members of the business having a designated role as climate advocates and regenerative agriculture advocates. Badger has received many awards such as B Corp's Best for the world in environmental activism; the Alnoba CEO Environmental Responsibility Award 2021, and the 'Real Leaders Impact Award' in 2021.

Established in 1947, George Cox & Sons Ltd are an award-winning, medium-sized civil engineering contractor based throughout the Northwest of England. Traditionally, the company is a family-run business, in its third generation. The company is now run by a mix of directors; however, the family ethos remains, with over eight father-son and uncle-nephew duos. George Cox & Sons Ltd understands that it is a core principle of providing outstanding quality projects to its clients using an open and honest approach in all aspects of its delivery, which is fundamental to its long-term sustainable development. It has a comprehensive sustainable business plan that was initiated by the Managing Director, Chris Cox. Like other family businesses featured in this book, a champion was appointed (or emerged) to drive sustainable and climate action activities in the business. George Cox & Sons Ltd has a focus on sustainable supply chains and climate change (mitigation) is integral to this mission.

The last chapter features De Bortoli wines. This case highlights the industry leadership of De Bortoli in championing climate action in Australia's wine

industry. De Bortoli Wines is a fourth-generation family-owned viniculture and vinification business. De Bortoli has three key internal climate actions – reducing energy, waste/recycling reduction and wastewater initiatives. These actions reduce emissions. Not only does De Bortoli work to reduce emissions internally but also has a mission to change stakeholders in its supply chains. The organisation has taken significant strides to be at the forefront of sustainable actions, being certified as a Sustainability Advantage Gold partner as early as 2014, and Platinum partner by 2016.

Methodological Approach Adopted for the Book

The book used a case study method to gain insights into the practices of businesses using SDGs. The summary outline of the case study template is shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Key Aspects of the Case Study Template Used by Authors in This Book.

<i>Vision and mission, services offered by the organisation</i>	<i>How do the vision mission and background of the organisation relate to the particular SDG?</i>
<i>Background to the company</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did the SDG become important to the organisation? • Was there a person who championed the SDG? • Is the SDGs explicitly talked about by staff?
<i>Historical development</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Founding date • Founder details • Human interest angle of founder • Quotes from the founder or key people • Size of organisation 	<i>Outline the business model of organisation and add how SDG is important.</i>
<i>How do key stakeholders relate to the SDG championed by the organisation?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline key elements • Outline structure of organisation is needed. • Provide a diagram of business model • Identify key activities and return on investment • How does the SDG relate to return on investment?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stakeholders influence the organisation? • Has the adoption of the SDG in the organisation had an impact on stakeholders? • Have stakeholders influenced the actions of the organisation related to the SDG? 	<i>How does the organisation see itself in relation to providing benefits outside the organisation? What next for the organisation?</i>
<i>What are the challenges facing the organisation in implementing the SDGs?</i>	