

analysis INDUSTRY SUMMIT

Sustainability must be top of the agenda, says Leahy

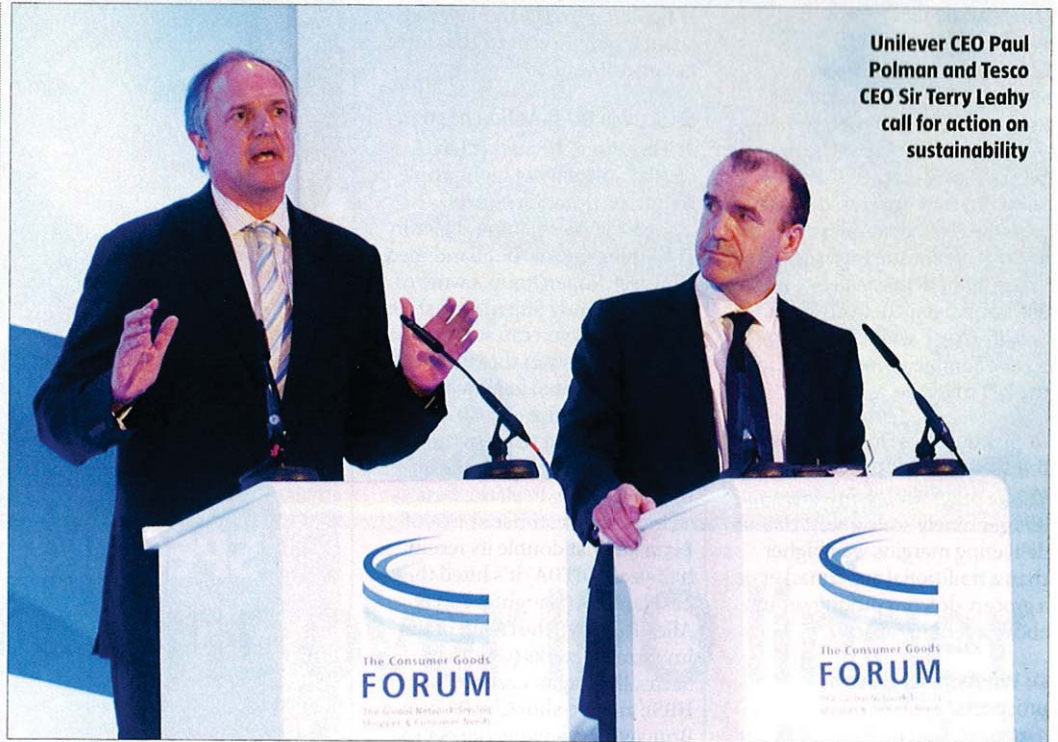
At the Consumer Goods Forum Global Summit, grocery leaders urged the industry to step up its efforts tackling climate change. **Michelle Perrett** reports

The damp squib that was the Copenhagen Summit underscores just how far sustainability has fallen down the political agenda. But it's not just MPs who are in danger of consigning it to the backburner, Sir Terry Leahy warned at last week's Consumer Goods Forum Global Summit in London.

"If, like me, you are concerned about the environment and climate change, the last year or so has not been great," admitted the Tesco CEO and forum board co-sponsor for sustainability.

"Recession, the deficit, unemployment have been the issues capturing the headlines. They have pushed climate change down, and sometimes off, the agenda. The good news - which rarely gets reported - is that responsible businesses, businesses that focus on creating long-term value, know these are short-term distractions."

Others, however, were at risk of taking their eye off the ball - to the detriment of the environment and themselves, he implied. Everyone needed to step up their efforts to tackle climate change and create "a mass movement in green consumption".



Unilever CEO Paul Polman and Tesco CEO Sir Terry Leahy call for action on sustainability

said, urging companies to support the forum's proposal to tackle deforestation and refrigeration.

"Our aim is simple: to persuade the 300 or so member companies of the forum to work together to put an end to deforestation," he said. "Between us we spend billions of dollars buying these commodities."

The forum is currently drawing up plans to find more green solu-

However, Leahy stressed the purpose of the forum was not just to come up with solutions but to encourage all members to become "agents for change".

Speaking earlier at the summit, The Prince of Wales argued that the consequences if the industry failed to act were "truly terrifying".

Fortunately, it has started to raise its game. This week, the forum's Sustainability workstream

make better, more informed decisions about packaging and sustainability. "Our industry has a responsibility to review the packaging it uses and to ensure that any negative impact arising from its production or disposal is minimised," said Polman.

A pilot scheme was launched in April involving 25 companies - among them Unilever, Tesco, Tetra Pak, Walmart and Coca-Cola - to test the new framework and measurement system, under which phrases such as "carbon-neutral" or "sustainably sourced" must be strictly defined so there is no confusion among consumers.

There were also plans to develop a common global system to measure carbon footprints, said Leahy.

However, change would not be easy, he admitted. "We can grow without carbon, there is such a thing as green growth," he said.

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