

We have climate targets. Why is it still so hard to act?

The target is set. The next sourcing decision is where plans stall. **Here is why, and how to turn your transition plan into a tool the whole business uses.**



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THE PROBLEM

**Targets are set.
Decisions stall.**

The target sits with sustainability. The decisions that deliver it sit with sourcing, operations, finance and innovation.

THE TRAP

**Planning to
2050. Waiting
for perfect data.**

Teams map every step for 25 years and chase supplier data everywhere before deciding anything.

THE SHIFT

**Make the plan a
business tool.**

Carbon and cost together. Test actions now. Improve data where it changes a decision. Update as the business moves.

01 THE GAP

The hard part starts after the target is set.

A lot of companies have done the hard work of measuring emissions and setting climate targets. Many have spent real time and money on a transition plan.

I have seen the next challenge first-hand. We could have clear sustainability ambitions, but turning them into sourcing decisions was much harder. Understanding the climate impact of an option alongside its cost could mean months of spreadsheets, calculations and discussions across teams.

That is the part we still underestimate. Setting the target is one thing. Working out what to change, what it will cost and who needs to act is something else.

Which suppliers should we engage? Which ingredients should we look at? What has the biggest impact? What can we realistically do now?

THE FOUR QUESTIONS EVERY PLAN HAS TO ANSWER

02 OWNERSHIP

The target sits with sustainability. The decisions don't.

The sustainability team may own the target, but it owns very few of the decisions needed to reach it. Those sit across the business, and every one of those teams has its own targets, budgets and commercial realities.

Sourcing

Innovation

Operations

Finance

Sales

A plan only the sustainability team can read stays with the sustainability team. To move, it has to speak the language these teams already decide in: cost, margin, risk and timing.



LAB NOTES

“A spreadsheet with 47 tabs is not a plan. It is a habitat.”

Dr Johnson Lau
Chief Scientific Officer, Unibloom

“Getting board level sign off is a vital first step but building buy-in and capacity into the management teams must quickly follow.”

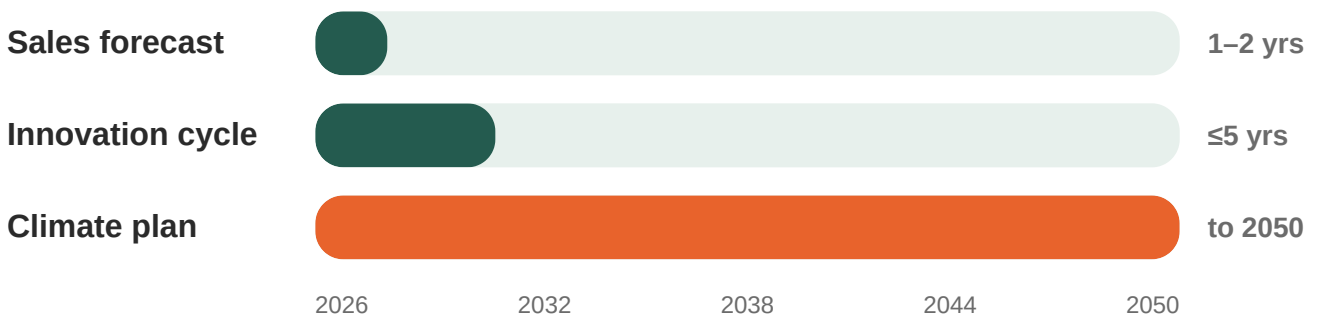
A CLIMATE ADVISER WE SPOKE TO

Leadership can approve the ambition. The organisation still has to deliver it.

03 HORIZON

We are trying to plan too far ahead.

Companies are often expected to map out everything they will do to 2040 or 2050. Compare that with how the rest of the business plans.



Planning horizons compared, 2026–2050. Nobody asks the sales team for a 2050 forecast.

We would never expect sales or innovation to know what the market, technology or supply chain will look like in 15 years. Yet sustainability teams spend months identifying every future initiative, calculating its emissions impact and estimating what a technology might cost years from now.



LAB NOTES

“Our models are very good. They are not ‘predict 2050 to the euro’ good. Nobody’s are.”

Dr Johnson Lau
Chief Scientific Officer, Unibloom

Meanwhile, the business keeps moving. Prices change. Suppliers change. A drought hits a raw material. A customer asks for something different. A new technology becomes viable. A transition plan has to move with that.

04 DATA

Perfect data isn't the starting point.

There is a lot of focus on collecting primary data from suppliers. Better primary data matters, but collecting it takes enormous time and resources. And primary data isn't automatically perfect because it comes from a supplier. Its quality still depends on the methodology, inputs and calculations behind it.

So be pragmatic. Start with what you already have and use it to find where action makes the biggest difference. You won't have perfect data for every option. That's fine. First find which actions look worth pursuing and where the biggest uncertainties are. Then spend your time, and your supplier conversations, getting better data where it could change a decision.



ASK THE SCIENTIST · IS IMPERFECT DATA GOOD ENOUGH?

“For deciding where to look first, usually yes. Know how uncertain a number is, and whether that uncertainty could flip the decision. That's the science part.”

Dr Johnson Lau
Chief Scientific Officer, Unibloom

The point isn't to make decisions with bad data. It's to stop waiting for perfect data everywhere before making any decisions at all.

05

THE SHIFT

Make the transition plan a business tool.

A sustainability team can understand a 50-page climate report. The sourcing team shouldn't have to. Procurement needs more than which option has lower emissions: what it costs, where the biggest opportunities are and which suppliers or materials deserve focus.

	PLAN AS A DOCUMENT	PLAN AS A BUSINESS TOOL
Owner	Sustainability team	Shared by sustainability, sourcing, finance and ops
Horizon	Every initiative mapped to 2050	Decide what to do now, revisit as the business changes
Data	Wait for primary data everywhere	Start with what you have, improve it where it changes a decision
Numbers	Carbon only	Carbon and cost side by side
Update cycle	Finished, filed, redone in a few years	Updated when prices, suppliers or plans change
Reader	Experts	Anyone who makes a sourcing or investment call

Carbon and financial information have to come together. Otherwise sustainability is asking the rest of the business to act without the information they normally use to decide.

A good plan is something you work with, not something you finish. If prices or suppliers change, it changes. If a new idea emerges, you test it. If better supplier data arrives, you replace the assumption. That is how companies already run financial forecasts. Nobody writes a forecast and assumes it holds for 15 years.

06 IN PRACTICE

What it looks like **when it works.**

GOODPOP

Sustainability and sourcing on the same numbers

Both teams worked from the same information and used it to challenge suppliers on emissions as well as cost. The climate target became part of the sourcing conversation.

[Read the GoodPop story →](#)

UNILEVER · UNOX

Knowing where in the value chain to focus

More granular information showed where meaningful reduction opportunities sat, so the team focused its supplier discussions there instead of tackling everything at once.

[Read the Unox story →](#)

And it doesn't stop at sourcing.

FINANCE

Needs to understand the investment.

SALES

May need to explain why a product costs more.

LEADERSHIP

Needs to decide which initiatives get funded.

07 START

How to start **this quarter.**

- 1 Take your baseline and target**
Use the numbers you already have. Don't restart the measurement.
- 2 Add the initiatives already on the table**
Supplier switches, recipe or material changes, packaging, transport. Someone in the business is already discussing them.
- 3 Test them on carbon and cost**
What happens if we change this supplier, ingredient, packaging or route? How much could it cut? What would it cost?
- 4 Find the biggest uncertainties**
Mark where missing data could flip the decision. That's where supplier data is worth chasing.
- 5 Decide, then keep the plan live**
Act on what you can do now. Replace assumptions as better data arrives. Re-run when the business changes.

Five questions for your next leadership meeting

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Can sourcing see carbon and cost for the same option, side by side? | ☐ Which three actions would move our target most this year? |
| ☐ Where is missing data actually blocking a decision? | ☐ Who outside sustainability owns each action? |
| ☐ When did the plan last change because the business did? | |

Start with what you know. **Decide what you can do now.**

Unibloom is the data company for sustainable procurement – affordable, easy to use and delivers data at speed.

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