Seeking to lead industry climate and nature preservation action, the company sets an ambitious and science-based target to reduce its carbon emissions by 40% by 2030 and announces its ambition to deliver net-zero concrete globally by 2050.

Started in 2020
Co-creates the Cement Sustainability Initiative through the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, which unites global, regional and local cement businesses under the goals of understanding, managing, measuring and minimising environmental impacts. This undertaking creates a mindset shift within CEMEX, prompting it to publish goals on sustainability issues such as climate, nature, biodiversity, and health and safety.

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Co-founds the Global Cement and Concrete Association to extend sustainable development across the entire value chain down to the concrete sector.

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Why climate and nature?
Climate change represents a significant challenge for the cement industry, which is responsible for 5-8% of global CO₂ emissions. The industry is energy intensive and its chemical process emits carbon. CEMEX also recognises that nature is a critical ally in the fight against climate change, by building resilience and helping us to adapt to climate impacts. It is also fundamental to implement the correct regulations and carbon pricing mechanisms in key regions, and for CEMEX to address its emissions in accordance with these new regulations.

SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY

Started in 1999
Cocreates the Cement Sustainability Initiative through the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, which unites global, regional and local cement businesses under the goals of understanding, managing, measuring and minimising environmental impacts. This undertaking creates a mindset shift within CEMEX, prompting it to publish goals on sustainability issues such as climate, nature, biodiversity, and health and safety.

Started in 2005
Recognising that environmental regulation varies widely between countries, CEMEX begins development of specific, voluntary global targets, setting long term goals for carbon emissions, air quality and biodiversity management among other sustainability targets.

Started in 2018
Co-founds the Global Cement and Concrete Association to extend sustainable development across the entire value chain down to the concrete sector.

• By the end of 2020, 99% of its cement and aggregate quarries had rehabilitation plans in place, and 97% of the company’s active quarries in high biodiversity value areas had biodiversity action plans (BAPs). CEMEX also has extended its biodiversity strategy with third-party conservation certifications.

• CEMEX expects the low-carbon products market to grow and, in response, launched Vertua low-carbon concrete in 2020, made through an innovative process that reduces the carbon footprint by up to 70%. The remaining emissions are neutralised through offsetting efforts.

• The company’s water stress map, updated in 2019, identifies the more than 1,500 cement, ready-mix concrete, and aggregates sites located in water-stressed zones. CEMEX seeks to develop specific Water Action Plans (WAPs) for each of the mapped locations by 2030, prioritising implementation within the most stressed regions.
For over 20 years, CEMEX has preserved natural areas at the El Carmen Nature Reserve in Mexico and the U.S., which comprises five different ecosystems and is home to diverse flora and fauna. El Carmen is located in a large water basin that helps to address the issue of water stress while its vegetation acts as a carbon sink.

Recognising the clear transition in CO₂ standards within key markets, CEMEX has developed a pro forma that projects the business impacts of internalising the cost of CO₂.

Implementing a successful action plan on nature and climate requires a holistic approach through goal setting, leveraging the best knowledge and advice, and proper planning.

Communicating commitments, actions and progress is key for other companies to follow.

Best practice sharing is critical to mobilising industries and value chains towards net-zero emissions and a nature positive future.

Key Takeaways

“The primary way to build resilience for climate and nature is to first avoid damaging nature.”

CEMEX has worked with BirdLife International to carry out a Biodiversity Proximity Study using the IBAT tool to identify quarries with high conservation value. The findings of this assessment have provided a scientific basis to identify CEMEX’s biodiversity-related priorities for the coming years.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS
In some regions, authorities have been a driver with strict regulations (e.g., carbon pricing mechanisms, EU Emissions Trading System). In the U.S., there is no federal-level CO₂ regulation, resulting in little pressure to act from a regulatory standpoint, although CEMEX is attuned to the Biden administration’s interest in working towards net-zero goals, which would drive corporations to act accordingly.

INVESTOR PRESSURE
Investors are increasingly looking not only at companies’ financial performance, but also commitment to the environment — they are in favour of sustainability criteria and transparent reporting through initiatives such as TCFD and SASB.

As such, CEMEX was the first global player to publish an annual integrated report. In these reports, CEMEX calculates its monetary Net Value to Society using economic, social and environmental data.

SPOTLIGHT ON: HOLISTIC CONSERVATION
For over 20 years, CEMEX has preserved natural areas at the El Carmen Nature Reserve in Mexico and the U.S., which comprises five different ecosystems and is home to diverse flora and fauna. El Carmen is located in a large water basin that helps to address the issue of water stress while its vegetation acts as a carbon sink.

CEMEX’s BAPs and WAPs drive the site-level conservation action needed to preserve biodiversity, particularly in high-risk areas.

Communicating commitments, actions and progress is key for other companies to follow.

Best practice sharing is critical to mobilising industries and value chains towards net-zero emissions and a nature positive future.

SPOTLIGHT ON: ANTICIPATING REGULATORY SHIFTS
Recognising the clear transition in CO₂ standards within key markets, CEMEX has developed a pro forma that projects the business impacts of internalising the cost of CO₂.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
The cement industry’s primary customers are construction operations. Many construction companies have not pressured suppliers to offer carbon-neutral materials — CEMEX has, however, been proactive in offering such products as a means of moving towards sustainable supply chains.

NGO COLLABORATION
NGOs are key partners in accelerating climate and nature action. CEMEX views organisations like Wildlife Habitat Council and BirdLife International as key stakeholders and uses their platforms to communicate progress on their climate and conservation efforts.

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