

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/sustainability-means-availability>

Harrison Ford, vice chair of Conservation International's board of directors, talks about how the organization's most important work is to develop strategies to address evolving challenges in the environment and public engagement. Meanwhile, companies now understand that adopting environmentally friendly practices is crucial for business sustainability, adds Conservation International CEO M. Sanjayan.



Transcript

- Our definition of the work that we need to do, that needs be done shifts from day to day.. We really have found that our most important product is strategic thinking, ways of addressing the issues that continue to crop up, ways to manage the available resources, and to move people to positively contribute to the solutions for the environmental problems that we have.. - I mean, I'd say, look.. We are a relatively modest sized organization, we're small enough to be nimble, but big enough to have an impact at the scale of say, a country, and if you're in that space, you wanna be either the first, or you wanna be the last.. There's value to being both, right? In terms of the cost of entry, and the impact you can have.. You know, a couple of things just in reflection, on sort of the questions you asked about entrepreneurship, and how the business, when we started, and look, I've only been at CI for three years, and I've been the CEO for all of seven months, and it's a day by day enterprise.. So we'll see how that goes.. But I'll say that I've been in conservation for a long time, and the one thing I've noticed with businesses is businesses are doing it because it really is in their own interest now.. Sustainability equals availability.. Companies are no longer doing it because of CSR reasons, right? You're not doing it simply to be a good player or a good actor..

It's well beyond that right now.. So when we started with Starbucks, a company that, if you go into Starbucks, pick up a bag of coffee, look at the back, you'll see our logo on it.. That's a hard thing to do, get your logo on something like, so branded like Starbucks, right? It happened over a period of almost 20 years.. When we started, they had like five percent of their coffee chain in a sustainable supply.. Today, it's essentially a hundred percent, so every drop of coffee that you buy at Starbucks, basically comes from a farm, we're talking 350,000 farmers, in dozens of countries around the world, where you cannot cut a tree down in order to grow coffee.. You have to send your kid to school if you're going to sell coffee to Starbucks, and then a variety of other metrics.. They're including pesticide use, water use, et cetera, et cetera.. Now Starbucks is doing it, partly to be a good social citizen, but they're doing it also because genuinely, there's fundamental issues about land that is available for coffee growing in an era of climate change, in an era of dramatic change.. So it really is in their own interests to be ahead of this, and I think Walmart and all the other companies are doing that, as well.. When CI gets involved in a project, for the most part, we're hopefully trying to be a little disruptive..

We're kind of coming at something and starting to ask a question like, how can we think about this project in an entirely different way, and sort of step back and see if there's something fundamental we can shake that can just tip the whole thing over.. You know, there's not a lot of value in being a player that's just going to do something that everyone else is doing, at least for our organization, on the scale that we would..