

CONTRIBUTION OF AN INDUSTRY TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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I would like to deeply thank the Biopolitics International Organisation, and especially Dr. Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis, for the honour of being invited to this conference which is addressing such an important issue.

Industry is polluting the environment on a local and global scale. Important international treaties – Stockholm 1972, Rio 1992, Oslo 1995 – have concluded that measures must be adopted in order to control ozone layer depletion, global climate change, the destruction of biodiversity, atmospheric pollution, water resources pollution, the use of toxic chemical substances, the depletion of natural energy resources and the deterioration in quality of life.

Industry, as a social unit with structure, organisation and social responsibility, can play an active role in this effort. When an industry systematically controls its polluting substances and monitors waste generation then it can:

- improve profits because of the control of waste
- achieve better value for waste disposal
- be, or try to be, in accordance with the pertinent legal regulations, thus avoiding penalties
- with the right policy, project an improved image to the local community, customers, consumers and shareholders
- channel surplus energy to the local community, with or without profit, as shown in the example that follows

At ELAIS, the excess thermal energy generated during plant operations is used to heat a large educational unit, located exactly opposite our plant, through a network of underground pipelines. The construction of these pipelines was financed by ELAIS and the Municipality of Peireaus. Through this "remote heating" project, we provide heating for 2,000 students on a 24-hour basis.

In the following decades, industry will be judged according to the services it provides in order to protect the environment. The truth is that a lot has been done, and there is optimism and an effort to achieve a cleaner environment. What is ELAIS doing as a company in order to help?

ELAIS does not only aim to be the first in its field, but also to be a pioneer in caring for the environment. The basic principles of ELAIS' concern for the environment are presented in the declaration of the company's policy. As an example of best practices, the following actions aiming at the protection of the environment can be cited:

- ELAIS is investing significantly in new infrastructure projects, i.e. natural gas, cooling towers, etc.
- ELAIS is the first company in the greater Athens area to use natural gas.
- Odorous emissions from the production of our goods are collected in sealed tanks. They are subsequently transferred to biological odour treatment units.
- In order to eliminate noise pollution, special sound-proof units have been installed.
- Materials, such as glass, paper and metal, are collected in special containers and then recycled.
- Certain substances used in production processes are supplied to other industries to be used as raw materials or fuel.
- Liquid waste rich in oils – lecithin – is further processed as fertiliser or animal feed.
- We have installed closed-circuit cooling towers using the municipal water supply system.
- There has been a 25% reduction in the use of drinking water, which is subsequently recycled and re-used in the cleaning of our facilities.
- We have reduced traffic in the area by moving the company's storage buildings to a different location.
- To further reduce traffic, parking spaces for employees and customers have also been created.

- We use environmentally-friendly packaging. Boxes consist of 70% recycled carton, with an aim to reach 100% recycled carton in the future.
- There is constant research on reducing packaging.
- We have redesigned the plastic bottles for our oil products by using PET instead of PVC, with a resulting reduction of 371 tonnes of plastic waste annually.
- We support organisations active in matters of environmental protection, and our employees are also involved in such organisations.
- ELAIS is among the founding members of a recycling and reclamation company.
- We have sensitised our employees to environmental issues by rewarding their efforts and motivation in this field. Through our "Opportunity for Improvement System," our employees also have the opportunity to make their own proposals concerning the environment. In 2000 only, the system recorded more than 80 proposals.
- Personnel receive training in environmental issues at least once a year.
- Targets for improving environmental performance are enforced. This contributes to an improved environmental culture and increased respect for nature.

From the above actions it must be clear that environmental protection is a priority for ELAIS. This interest of ELAIS, though, is not limited to its own personnel, but also extends to customers and consumers in general. Within this framework, environmental awareness programmes, in co-operation with environmental organisations, have been put into effect with great success.

In 1996, ELAIS became the first company in Greece to receive ISO 14001 certification for its environmental management system. In 1998, ELAIS was among the 15 finalists – out of 85 European candidates – for the "European Better Environment Awards for Industry," organised by the European Commission DG XI and UNEP.

The main reason leading ELAIS to the development of an environmental management system is the sense of responsibility to and respect for its customers, the consumer and the whole community. This sense of responsibility has distinguished the company since the day it was founded. The recognition of the importance of the environment is not simply the result of increased public awareness of such issues. It stems from a firm conviction that we have a responsibility to contribute to a better future. This responsibility is a fact. Our own existence depends on it. If the environment is our world then we ought to make it better.

Anthony E. Gortzis, Corporate Relations and Media and Research Director for Unilever (Lever Hellas) since 1998, studied business and economics at the Athens School of Business and Economic Sciences. He also studied law at the University of Athens and pursued graduate studies in business administration and marketing in Greece and the UK. He joined Unilever in 1973, as Product Manager, and has held positions as Marketing Manager, Marketing and Sales Manager and Managing Director with Unilever and ELAIS S.A., a Unilever food company. Since 1994, he has been a Member of the Board of Directors of Greek Advertisers and, since 1996, President of the Hellenic (Greek) Advertisers Association and President of the TV Audience Research Control Committee. He is Member of the WFA Media Committee, ex-officio President of the Hellenic Institute of Marketing, Secretary General of the Hellenic Management Association, and former Member of the Board of WWF Greece. Since June 2000, Mr. Gortzis has been President of the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA). He has several scientific publications on management, marketing, sales and advertising.