This reference handout is based on a live webinar given by Sarah Browne, Customer Marketing Manager. It includes slides from the webinar, along with notes of the spoken text shared during the event.
Today’s consumers are paying closer and closer attention to companies’ environmental and social impact, they expect businesses to take responsibility. That puts the onus on you, and there is an increasing pressure to show, and of course do the right thing.

A recent report by Edelman states that 90% of people want brands and companies to share their experiences more, (and this by the way included ‘open and transparent communication about how products were sourced and made’). But, only 10% think they do it well. That said, people reward brands that share. The study shows there is a strong correlation between brands that share and people’s intent to use, purchase and recommend that brand.

But as we all know, sustainability is a complex topic, and sustainable sourcing is only one element of your strategy. So your challenge, as brand owners and manufacturers, is to bring to life this complex world in a meaningful and simple way that is relevant to your target audience. Not only can this be extremely effective in driving a brand’s purpose and positioning it externally to its customers and consumers, but also internally with your colleagues and employees.
How do you do that?

By sourcing UTZ coffee, cocoa and tea, you are contributing to improving the livelihood of farmers and their families around the world. That is already a good story to tell.

And you don’t have to stop there. There are three more ways you can boost your sustainability story by:

1. Sharing – tell your story through the farmers who grew the coffee, cocoa and tea, direct from where you make a difference.
2. Engaging – get your colleagues on board and take them along with you
3. Being inspired – with our examples and ready to use tools and materials
The first section is about storytelling. It’s about impact.

UTZ’s vision is to make sustainable farming the norm; to make a world in which farmers implement good agricultural practices with care for people and the environment. We want to positively impact the lives of as many coffee, cocoa and tea farmers as possible.

Therefore, measuring this impact is a very important part of our program. We want to be sure we are progressing towards our vision (of making sustainable farming the norm) and making the necessary adjustments along the way.
In our recently launched 2016 Impact report, which combines insights from our own monitoring data with findings from external studies into the impact of UTZ, we see that the benefits for UTZ certified farmers include: increased quality of crops, a higher income, cleaner water and improved soil conservation practices, stable market access, and better working conditions. Or simply put, Better Crop, Better Income, Better Environment, Better Life.

The findings of the report confirm our approach and provide useful and important data that enables us to continuously improve our program.

Additionally, and importantly, the report provides us with a direct link to UTZ farmers who tell us first hand their experiences. This is valuable content for storytelling. What better way to tell your story than direct from where you make a difference.
At UTZ, it all starts with better farming. After all, better farming makes a lot of other things better too: harvests increase, incomes go up, prospects improve and nature is safeguarded.

This cocoa farmer from Cote d’Ivoire says: “A big change is the amount of cocoa we harvest. Now, we get up to 3 tons or even more. Before, we harvested a lot less. That’s because of the field schools where we find out the best ways to do pruning, weeding and harvesting.”
A better income is one of the reasons farmers are satisfied with UTZ.

From our impact studies we see, for example, that in Côte d’Ivoire 50% of UTZ farmers found their income has increased since certification with those who have been in the program longer reporting higher net income over time.
It is not only cocoa farmers in West Africa who benefit from increased income. This tea farmer from Zimbabwe now has more money to pay for her children’s school fees.

‘Because of UTZ certification I have become a lead farmer, I have learnt more about good farming practices and to respect one another. Through tea farming I have more money to pay school fees for my children and I am very grateful for this.”

UTZ certified farmers are trained to be good business people. This enables them to produce more at lower costs while producing better quality harvests. This way farmers are able to invest in their families, a sound business, the people who work there and in their futures.
When it comes to the environment, UTZ has a number of requirements aimed at safeguarding nature, biodiversity and our climate. Farmers are trained to be careful and efficient in the way they use land, water, raw materials and energy.

This farmer was part of our climate care project in Vietnam. He says, “Because of the UTZ project I know about climate change and that we cannot stop it. But we can find good practices to cope with it such as better soil and water management. I now plant shade trees and use much less fertilizers.”
From our studies we also see that life is better for farmers and communities in the UTZ program. For example, 70% of farmers in Brazil reported that they were experiencing benefits from certification such as improved health and safety at work and appropriate facilities, such as lavatories.

While in Cote d’Ivoire, 82% say their living conditions have improved and 92% report positive changes since joining the UTZ program.
This lady is a tea farmer in India. “As part of the UTZ certification I was able to join several trainings that changed both my work and my day-to-day life. The training on gender and leadership was a milestone for us. My husband now supports the work I do in my job and at home. I became a team leader and a trade union leader.”

Thanks to the UTZ program more and more farmers and workers feel healthy, motivated and respected. They get more opportunities to achieve their ambitions and so do their families. Their children go to school and are able to grow up in a safe and healthy environment. In other words, a better future for everyone.

So far we have showed a handful of stories and quotes from farmers that can be used to boost your sustainability story. By using these examples in your communication, you are not only saying that you are taking responsibility but concretely showing the positive impact your sustainable sourcing has, in a personal and simple way.
In Spain, Lidl chooses to highlight the improvement of farmer livelihoods, better agricultural practices and protection of the environment in its consumer magazine.

While Aldi chooses to communicate the UTZ values, inviting consumers to enjoy their products while being part of something bigger.
Balisto in France brings the story of this cocoa farmer to life, focusing on quality and yield improvements as the key message.

You can see they have embedded a video on their website to bring the story directly to consumers.
It is also possible to integrate your sustainable sourcing message on the go as this cafe did in Australia.

Here the focus is on environmental protection.
And finally, social media is a quick and effective way to share your story. Here some personal accounts and fast facts on the reach of the UTZ program.

So you can see how these messages have been incorporated by various partners around the world, all of whom choose specific elements of the UTZ program to highlight in their messaging. We have many more examples that can be found, together with the farmer stories and quotes I have shared, in our resource library.

You can use all the materials free of charge across your communication channels, whether that is on social media, your corporate website or at point of sale.

At the end of the handout, you will find the links to the resource library and our contact details as we would be happy to support you in finding a compelling and accessible way to showcase your positive impact through sustainable sourcing.
Now let’s turn the attention internally, to our teams and colleagues around us.
So if storytelling facilitates and inspires change when you think about your customers and consumers, the same holds true when you want to engage your colleagues and staff.

An Ernst & Young study found that employees are a key driver of sustainability initiatives in many companies. In fact, employees ranked the second most important stakeholder group (behind consumers) when it comes to driving a company’s sustainability strategy.

While the tools and techniques for employee engagement can vary widely, companies that focus on their employees and share their sustainability achievements with them find they enhance employee attraction and retention and strengthen customer relations, among other things.

Employees can become a powerful voice in support of your company’s sustainability message.

So what can you do about it?
Define your goal. Think critically what you would like to achieve with your employees.

Taking some examples that have been developed by our partners, I’d like to give you an idea of how you could take this forward. For example, you want to:

- Explain why your company engages in sustainability practices – for instance this can be done through an online game. It provides a great starting point when explaining why you work with UTZ.
- Or create awareness about and insight into the UTZ program – via literature or an info booth. This is a more passive approach but also allows you to draw on the most relevant aspects of the program that best fit your company values.
- Or maybe you want to create UTZ/sustainability ambassadors – for example via live and interactive sessions.

These are just a few suggestions and of course there are many more options. Given the importance of employee engagement and the growing need for internal communication, we have developed an UTZ quiz to help get your staff talking about sustainability, and in particular sustainable sourcing.
It is an interactive quiz, with questions like the ones you can see here, ranging from what does UTZ mean, to how does UTZ communicate, what is our marketing philosophy.

The aim is to inform and involve your colleagues and help them understand what UTZ means for your brand or company, and how they can communicate about it.

The questions can of course be adapted and modified to meet your specific needs. We have currently a coffee and cocoa quiz available and would be more than happy to talk you through them. The idea is that the quiz can be given either by you or by an UTZ representative.
This is the third and final section.

So far, we have looked to origin countries, at the farmers who grow the UTZ certified coffee, cocoa and tea that you buy and how they can provide you with concrete stories of positive impact to boost your story. We have also considered employees as an important vehicle in your storytelling.
Now you will familiarise with our tools and materials that can further support your sustainability efforts.

We have already touched upon the fact that the importance of sustainable sourcing can be a difficult concept for many to grasp. Our main aim is to simplify this and make it more tangible so we have developed different tools for you to use.
Probably many of you have already visited the better business hub, our online content platform which has a steady flow of information and articles, case studies and communication examples designed to engage and inspire you and your customers.

If not, I invite you to have a look, and if you haven’t already, please sign up for our newsletters to receive the latest updates.

And of course, if you would like your story to feature, don’t hesitate to get in touch!
Additionally, over the past year we have developed a marketing toolkit comprising different materials including farmer stories like the ones I showed earlier, infographics, this one for example shows how your feel good moment (whether that’s a cup of tea, coffee or bar of chocolate), sets in motion a whole chain of events, and ultimately contributes to improving the livelihood of farmers and their families.

We have also created many social media visuals, here highlighting all the good reasons to eat more chocolate, or showing the reach of the UTZ program.

Many of these materials are available in different languages and for different products in the resource library and we will be adding more over the course of the year.
We have themed materials as well – in this case about climate change.
There are several ways in which you can use the materials we provide. Earlier some examples were showed from across a variety of communication channels. You can use our resources as inspiration to create your own materials, or, we frequently use social media and encourage you to share/like/retweet us and engage in the conversation, as is the case with these examples.
To wrap up, these are 3 ways to boost your sustainability story:

1. Share your story. Consumers care: they want to know your story, so share it.

2. Engage your colleagues. Employees matter: they can be cheerleaders for your company’s sustainability efforts. Take them along with you.

3. Be inspired. Whether you are looking for inspiration for your website or appealing visuals for social media, you can find all the inspiration you need on our Better Business Hub and Resource library.
Finally, don’t forget to tune into our webinars... the next one will be in June!

These are the links to get in touch with us:

www.utz.org/better-business-hub
www.utz.org/resource-library/
marketing@utz.org