2025

Xpol Journal

SUSTAINABILITY

From strategy to daily practice
- our SDG focus

FSI
Focus on lowering our carbon footprint

From tradition to innovation
How Pico Bello Hortensia is shaping a sustainable future



Xpol 15 years





INTRODUCTION

Positive sustainable steps

In this 2025 overview on sustainable progress within Xpol and the floriculture chain, we are highlighting practical steps forward and share inspiring examples from everyday operations.

Our ambition is clear: by 2030, 100% of our sourcing will comply with the FSI standard. Having already reached 94%, we are well on track.

A portion of our assortment already consists of 100% sustainable bouquets, so this is not new to us. Achieving full FSI compliance reflects a commitment we are making to ourselves.

Today, sustainability is defined by consistent daily actions. It's no longer about promises, but about tangible results - less talk, more impact. This requires a shared commitment and mindset, both within our organization and across the chain, working closely with growers, customers, and partners such as FSI and MPS.

That's why this edition of our annual sustainability journal focuses on real-life cases. After all, the best way to demonstrate progress is by putting it into practice and sharing those experiences. A big thank you for the contributions and transparancy of the partners that you find in this journal.

We will continue to advance sustainability wherever possible. At the same time, we remain dedicated to creating and developing new bouquets, markets, concepts, and opportunities - bringing joy to consumers with beautiful, long-lasting flowers, produced as sustainably as possible.

As always, we welcome constructive dialogue with our clients to explore more sustainable options, define next steps, and develop a broader understanding of the overall carbon footprint.

Warm regards, and we hope this edition inspires you keep developing sustainability in a positive way.

Tom Vermeer
CEO Xpol B.V.

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‘Even small steps make a real impact’

Coop Switzerland on sustainability in flowers





Paula Uhlmann
Purchasing Product Manager COOP

Andrin Dietziker
Sustainability Project Manager Coop

Buyer Paula Uhlmann and her colleague Andrin Dietziker from the sustainability team at our valued customer Coop Switzerland, are happy to share their experiences and vision.

Which main sustainability targets does Coop Switzerland follow in general, and how does this relate to the product group flowers?

Andrin: “We have set a multi-year target (MYT) called ‘MYT Minimum Standards’, which includes all our 20 critical commodities. Flowers and plants is one of them. We have set a progressive target path from 2021-2026 and will continue to do so for the new period from 2027-2031.

Please note that we have set three sub-targets:
(1) good agricultural practices, traceability, pesticide use,
(2) water use,
(3) working conditions
– and consequently asking for different types of sustainability standards.”

Which demands from final consumers regarding sustainability in flowers do you experience?

Andrin: “For instance the use of pesticides, fair working conditions on farm level, sustainable use of natural resources such as water.”

Paula: “Customers are very focused on sustainable packaging. Equally important is local sourcing, although we are aware that this is only possible for a limited number of flower varieties and seasons.”

From your experience, what have been the main learnings or challenges in managing agrochemical residues within the supply chain, and how have initiatives such as the Pokémon project contributed to addressing them?

Andrin: “The main challenges is to obtain spraying schedules for pesticides if our Guideline on Pesticides has been violated. We have sensitized our suppliers once more again that this is important for us in order to assess the severity of the violation and consequently adjust the defined fines. Additionally, we have introduced a clear process for our suppliers to call for exceptions regarding active ingredients.”

What personally motivates you to work on sustainability topics, and how has your perspective evolved over the years within the industry?

Andrin: “My motivation is derived from doing good for the planet and people/our customers and of course because I graduated in the topic of sustainability. I learned that things are moving, but slowly.”

Paula: “I always act with the mindset that even the smallest steps can make a real impact. Even with limited experience or knowledge, it is possible to drive meaningful progress in sustainability. This is how I approach things in my private life, as well as in my professional role working with cut flowers.”

How do you value the relationship with Xpol, both in general and specifically in the sustainability field?

Paula: “As the lead buyer for cut flowers, I place great importance on strong and reliable supplier relationships. I am very pleased to have Xpol as a partner, with whom we conduct business in a fair and mutually beneficial way, enabling continuous and successful growth. We clearly recognize and appreciate the commitment Xpol demonstrates in advancing sustainability - whether in supply chains, at the level of local producers, or through improvements in packaging. True sustainability is reflected in tangible actions happening behind the scenes, not just in discussions or plans. In this regard, Xpol sets a strong example and takes on a leading role.”

Are there any key learnings or examples of collaboration that stand out to you?

Andrin: “Direct communication about needs (e.g. guidelines) and building a common understanding helps a lot on both sides.”

Paula: “I am impressed by the decades of experience that Xpol brings to this field, and as a relative newcomer, I have a lot to learn from them.” ◁

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From tradition to innovation

How Pico Bello Hortensia is shaping a sustainable future

Pico Bello Hortensia in Bleiswijk is a Dutch grower specializing in cut hydrangeas and a long-term partner for Xpol. The company, covering an area of 10 hectares, is run by Paul Kouwenhoven and his sons Richard, Danny, and Bob, now the second generation of this family of growers. For the interview, we spoke with Bob Kouwenhoven.

Pico Bello has been active in the field of making its supply chain more sustainable for years and goes to great lengths in this regard. We can state that it is one of the frontrunners. Their challenge lies in the combination of a beautiful and ever-improving product combined with cultivation methods that contribute to a better environment. It is great to see how progressive Pico Bello is and remains.

Can you explain some highlights of your sustainability goals?
Bob: “We haven’t specified the sustainability goals exactly. Every day, we are working step by step to become more sustainable and future-proof. We would like to follow the path of organic cultivation.

In 2024, we conducted a great many trials. Over the year 2025, we reduced the use of chemical pesticides to a minimum, and except for a short period at the beginning of the season, we were able to operate entirely organically until the end of 2025. We hadn’t expected that beforehand.

Chemicals are easier, proven, and cheaper. Organic is more complex: it involves more testing and experimentation. Think, for example, of the choice of which insects to use, when, in what quantities, etc. We are fully committed to organic, and it is actually going very well. In our opinion, there is no other way. We are working towards the most optimal balance possible in the use of organic and chemical products to safeguard the growth and quality of our cut hydrangeas.”

What is your drive?
We are young and are putting as much effort as possible into being future-proof. We want to proactively ensure that we are ready, that there is no longer any need for a societal debate, and that the consumer no longer has to ask themselves, ‘Should we still buy a bunch of flowers?’ We want to ensure in advance that people don’t have to have any doubts about that. And a lot of good things are already happening in the supply chain.
Added to that is the fact that older colleagues sometimes view it as a burden, so for us, it is also a way to distinguish ourselves.

How do you experience the collaboration with Xpol when it comes to sustainability?
We are happy with Xpol as a partner. You are keeping the pressure on regarding

sustainability. That is certainly not the case everywhere within the supply chain and our client base. Xpol focuses on retail, where increasingly higher demands are being placed as well. Your pressure helps us to accelerate.

What have you done so far?
- A doubling of the use of biological products from 2023 through 2025
- Separation of all waste materials
- Water recirculation: water in the greenhouse stays in the greenhouse
- Through underground water storage (rain), we can supplement our own water supply during periods of lower rainfall
- All lighting is LED-based
- We have 1,168 of our own solar panels
- We have batteries with a capacity of 2 Megawatts
- We are affiliated with FSI
- We are MPS-A+ and GAP certified
- We supply in single-use crates, so we do not use any packaging material
- We supply in multi-use crates, so we do not use any packaging material



From left to right: Bob, Richard, Paul and Danny Kouwenhoven



'When it comes to sustainability, one of the most important things is to remain flexible'

What is the main focus for the next 3 years?
On our wish list for the next 3 years are:
- Balancing the biological approach versus the chemical one; moving further towards biological
- Geothermal energy. By 2027, the heat network and piping infrastructure will be installed, and starting in 2028, our greenhouse will be heated using geothermal energy instead of fossil fuels, specifically natural gas. This will result in a direct reduction in CO2 emissions.

Can you explain something regarding the investments involved?
It doesn't happen automatically, and you need some courage. But with subsidies, among other things, it is quite manageable. Several government schemes help, so we are happy with that. On the other hand, we also notice that taxes continue to rise, such as taxes on feeding back self-generated electricity into the public grid, CO2 tax, taxes on gas, etc.

What challenges do you face in the development regarding sustainability?
An important and difficult one is the use of biological pesticides: how do we find the biological balance? Towards 2030, we will be increasingly required to use biological pesticide methods, or in other words, chemical products will be banned more and more.

I consider that a positive development, but it is also a challenge. There are situations where we are no longer allowed to use certain chemical agents, but the biological variant has not yet been approved; that sometimes takes as long as 10 years. So the challenge is how to deal with that.

Currently, like many colleagues, we work in a hybrid form, keeping the biological component as large as possible. 100% organic is a great goal, but in my opinion, you need to have something in reserve: if things unexpectedly get out of hand (it remains a living product and sometimes you have pests), you need to be able to reach for a product to 'reset' it. Naturally, we will handle that very carefully. And we also learn from our suppliers in organic horticulture.

Do you experience external pressure when it come to sustainalising?
Even though we feel less pressure from other channels we work with, it is better for us to be in the front line as well. There is also an increasing pressure coming from the Dutch government and the EU.

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Perhaps, when it comes to sustainability, one of the most important things is to remain flexible. And that flexibility lies, among other things, in actively managing a mix of energy sources. Think of CHP (combined heat and power), boiler heating, an electric boiler, geothermal energy, batteries, etc. Depending on availability, seasons, and pricing, you can switch between these to optimally meet your energy needs and create a sustainable mix. ◁

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We are nature, just like this bee.
Every act of care for the natural world
is an act of care for each other.



15

2010-2025

Xpol 15 years

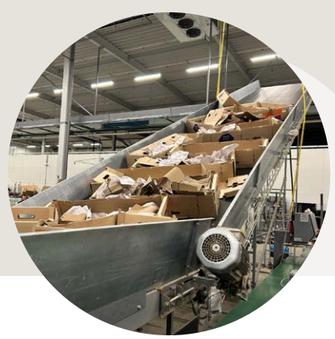
In 2025, we celebrated the anniversary of our founding. We are proud of our Xpol team and their dedication and drive. Long-term thinking and action are part of our DNA, as is our commitment to sustainability, built on a foundation of good working conditions and a positive social environment.

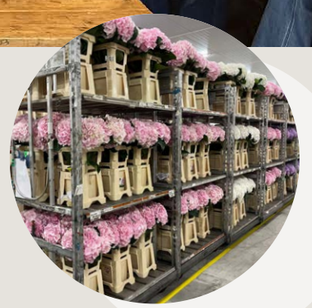












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Jeroen Oudheusden
Executive Officer Floriculture Sustainability Initiative

Focus on lowering our carbon footprint

For me, sustainability is not a goal, it is a way of working. It is about continuously improving how we produce and trade, and being able to demonstrate that with real data.

By Jeroen Oudheusden

When I first got involved in this topic, I saw how fragmented our sector was. There were many standards and many claims, but very little clarity on what actually worked, and not enough data or alignment to really move forward together. Through FSI, I've always tried, in my role, to bring a bit more structure, transparency and direction to that complexity.

I've always felt that floriculture is a special sector. It creates something positive, emotionally and economically, for so many people around the world. At the same time, that also brings responsibility. If we want to remain relevant as a sector, we need to be open about how we operate and show improvements and progress in a credible way.

FSI roadmap and sector development

What I see today is a clear shift. Sustainability is no longer something external or driven only by market requirements. It is increasingly internalized within companies and part of day-to-day business. It is something that CEOs are actively engaged with, not just sustainability teams. That is a very important step, but it also changes the conversation. The challenge is no longer to comply or to do nice-to-have projects, but to keep improving as a sector, step by step.

For me, that is where the real work is in the coming years. Whether it is reducing reliance on Plant Protection Products, bringing wild harvest into structured systems, or using risk

insights to actually improve supply chains, it is all about making things better in a practical and consistent way. The FSI 2030 strategy reflects that. It is less about setting new ambitions, and more about making sure we actually implement and scale what we have started, and embed it into daily business.

Key highlights and milestones
What I personally find quite unique is how we have managed to organize ourselves as a sector. Through FSI, together with our members and the certification standards, we have created a shared foundation for transparency and traceability. That has taken years of collaboration and trust, and it is something I genuinely feel proud of. Because of that foundation, we are now in a position to move forward. We can start building on it and shift towards real impact, supported by tools like the Sustainability Sourcing Scan, Flori Risk Assessment and FloriPEF-CR. These are not just technical tools, they really help us to work differently, more data-driven and more focused on improvement.

Working with Xpol
Working with Xpol is, for me personally, always both inspiring and enjoyable. What stands out is the professionalism in your approach, but also the authenticity behind it. There is a clear drive within your team to keep improving, and that comes through in everything you do. You operate at the top end of the European market, and you can really see that reflected in your mindset and in the clients you work with. That position is well deserved.

What I particularly appreciate is the way we work together. The conversations are always open, constructive and also critical in a positive way. You ask the right questions, challenge where needed, and at the same time bring very concrete ideas on how things can improve. That combination, high standards and a very personal way of working, creates a collaboration where you feel that you are genuinely moving forward together. That is something I value a lot.

Main challenges for the industry
At the same time, I think we sometimes underestimate how far we have already come as a sector. We now have the systems, the data and the alignment to show real progress. That also means we can be a bit more confident and acknowledge what has been achieved. But of course, the work is far from done. The challenge is no longer certification itself, that foundation is there. The challenge is what we do with it. How we measure impact, how we improve, and how we keep doing that consistently across global supply chains. That requires discipline, but also a shared mindset of wanting to improve, step by step.

Connecting the supply chain and storytelling
One thing I do see is that there is still a gap between what is happening in production and how that is communicated further down the chain. We actually have many strong and meaningful stories as a sector, about social impact, environmental improvements, and innovation. But those stories need to be supported by data to be truly credible.

'Trust is built through transparency, and that is something we should continue to invest in as a sector'

For me, that is where FSI plays an important role. By connecting certification, data and trade flows, we can create a more consistent and trustworthy basis. Not to replace storytelling, but to strengthen it and make sure it reflects reality. In the end, trust is built through transparency, and that is something we should continue to invest in as a sector. ◁



FSI 2030

The Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI) is a market-driven initiative that brings together members of the international floriculture sector. Towards 2030, FSI members will continue to build on the progress made on transparency, responsible production and trade, positive impact and improvement in the floriculture supply chain.

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Sustainability in every stem

True sustainability is more than a promise - it's something you can see, feel, and share. From carefully selected seasonal flowers to responsible sourcing across local and global growers, every bouquet tells a story of balance between beauty, people, and nature.

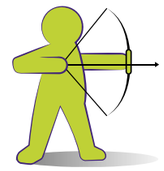
Seasonal by nature

A harmony of global and local sourcing

FSI-compliant flowers grown with care

Together, these choices create bouquets that not only brighten homes, but also contribute to a more responsible floriculture future.

Achievements, positive steps and examples in our supply chain



goal 2030 100%

Why sustainability matters

At Xpol, we believe real progress comes from working together across the chain - aligning growers, partners, and clients to create impact that is both responsible and practical, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sustainability is no longer a future ambition - it is part of how we work every day. Across the floriculture industry, expectations are increasing, from regulations to customer demands. At the same time, many positive steps are already being taken. For us it does not stop here, we will keep continuing optimising where possible.





Alejandra Tapia and Joost Kok, driving forces Xpol sustainalise team



Our progress so far:

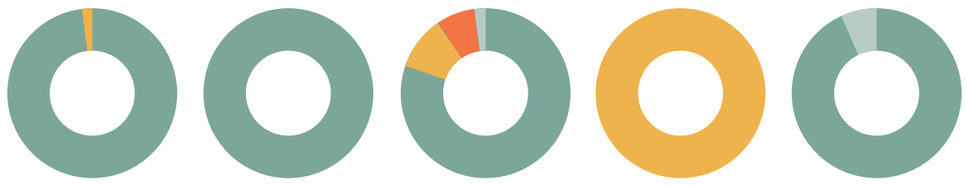
Over the past year, we have taken important steps forward:

- 94% FSI-compliant products (target: 100% by 2030)
- Sourcing from Africa, Europe, Turkey, and South America
- Increased use of sustainable packaging materials
- Strengthened long-term grower partnerships

Our diverse sourcing strategy plays an important role in supporting sustainability. By working with growers across different regions, we are able to:

- Ensure year-round availability while using natural growing conditions *(SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption & Production)*
- Optimize production locations to reduce environmental impact *(SDG 13 – Climate Action)*
- Support local economies and job creation in multiple regions *(SDG 8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth)*

The Xpol top 5 FSI sourcing countries



From **strategy** to **daily practice**

Sustainability becomes tangible through continuous improvements in our operations - contributing directly to SDG 12 (Responsible production) and SDG 13 (Climate action).

We introduced the Xpol boxx several years ago and ship high quanties of flowers with these boxes througout the year, allowing better use of space during transport and reducing the number of shipments needed. At the same time, we keep testing carton pallets, aiming to reduce material impact without compromising quality.



Packaging with purpose

Packaging is a key part of our sustainability journey, contributing to SDG 12 (Responsible consumption & production).

We continue to:

- Increase use of recycled materials (e.g. PP)
- Optimize packaging design and thickness
- Test alternative solutions

The goal is clear: reduce impact while maintaining quality and protection.

Kenya

Quality is increasingly controlled at origin in Kenya, preventing unnecessary transport of products that do not meet standards - reducing waste and improving efficiency.

This progress is driven by strong collaboration, supporting SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals):

- Daily quality reports
- Weekly alignment meetings
- Regular farm visits



Working together

Sustainability is a shared responsibility. By aligning client targets, grower practices, and market expectations, we contribute to SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals.

Together, we create solutions that are both impactful and commercially viable.

Conclusion

Sustainability is a journey of continuous improvement. From logistics and packaging to sourcing and partnerships, every step contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

At Xpol, we turn ambition into action - every day.

Looking ahead

Our goal:

100% FSI-compliant products by 2030

To get there, we will continue to:

- Improve transparency and traceability (SDG 12)
- Support growers in certifications (SDG 8 & 17)
- Develop sustainable product concepts (SDG 12)
- Strengthen collaboration across the chain (SDG 17)

Where we make an impact - our SDG focus

Our work contributes directly to key UN Sustainable Development Goals, which guide our actions across the supply chain.



Nr. 8 Decent work & economic growth

Supporting jobs, fair conditions and long-term partnerships



Nr. 12 Responsible consumption & production

Reducing waste, improving sourcing and developing sustainable products



Nr. 13 Climate action

Optimizing logistics and reducing environmental impact



Nr. 15 Life on land

Promoting biodiversity, responsible farming and ecosystem protection



Nr. 17 Partnerships for the goals

Together, we create solutions that are both impactful and commercially viable

Greenhouse Sustainability

How sustainability reporting helps transforming floriculture

Greenhouse Sustainability is the partner for Xpol calculating our footprint. In collaboration with Greenhouse Sustainability, the footprint for 2023, 2024 and 2025 were calculated; we gained better insight into the supply chain, our own performance and the impact of air transport compared to sea transport. This insight enables us to determine how to further reduce our CO2 emissions.



Katharina Schuster
LCA specialist Greenhouse Sustainability

We spoke with **Katharina Schuster**, LCA specialist at Greenhouse Sustainability.

Can you explain what is Greenhouse Sustainability and your role within the company?
"Greenhouse Sustainability was founded as a consultancy about 10 years ago to answer a vital question for many companies: 'How sustainable is my product really?' We develop footprint tools based on European standards to help companies calculate their company - or product - level footprints, making these analyses accessible and scalable. While our roots lie in the horticulture and agriculture sectors, we have since expanded into others, such as the construction industry. As a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) specialist, I assist clients on their sustainability journeys by providing data-driven insights. My background in mechanical and environmental engineering provides a solid foundation for this work."

What is until now your experience working within the floriculture sector and how sustainability has evolved over time?
"The floriculture sector is a frontrunner compared to other industries, particularly in footprint measurement and the adoption of European calculation standards. Over the last four years, the sector has evolved significantly, driven by new legislation and a push across the entire supply chain. I see continuous growth in both the technical development and the general understanding of environmental footprints."

How do you see the awareness at the consumer side?
"There is currently very little communication regarding the footprint or sustainability of products in shops, which is a major reason why consumer awareness remains low.



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‘Transparency and communication are key’

While a single score that combines all 16 impact categories already exists, it is rarely utilized, and there is currently very little awareness or understanding of it. To truly inform customers, this unified score needs to be featured prominently on products to allow for easy comparison - similar to energy labels for housing. At the moment, the labels that consumers actually see do not capture the total environmental impact.”

How do you see the near future, are we on the right path?
“Increasingly, we are seeing large companies taking significant strides; they are often the ones driving the momentum and creating real impact. IKEA, for example, is requiring all of its suppliers to be transparent about their footprints by 2027. I am optimistic that over the next five years, we will see substantial improvements across all markets.”

Why do companies ask you to analyse their supply chain and make the reports?
“The primary reason is often that reporting has become mandatory. However, social responsibility is also a significant driver; many companies want to understand exactly where their impacts are located and see the value in taking that first step. These insights provide the factual basis needed to make targeted decisions regarding their emissions. While collecting this data is time-consuming - much like when we first started with Xpol - the initial challenge lies in establishing a robust monitoring system. This is especially true for Scope 3 emissions, which require gathering data from partners across the entire supply chain. Once the system is established, the process becomes much smoother, though it remains an essential annual exercise.”

How can we use the outcome of the yearly reports to reduce and improve further as a company?
“Xpol is doing a great deal within its own circle of influence; the company’s current operations - such as packaging, waste management, and vase life-are handled very efficiently. In my opinion, the next challenge for Xpol’s supply chain is to improve data quality, which will directly enhance the accuracy of the footprint results. By gathering more precise information from partners, Xpol can replace existing estimations with primary data. This is where the most significant added value lies, as it provides a clearer path for further improvement.”

How do you see in general how companies in the horticultural sector look towards sustainability and how do you rate the motivation in general?
“Most companies have a positive outlook, yet many remain hesitant due to the investment of time and capital required. Larger growers typically have more capacity to dedicate to footprinting, whereas smaller operations often lack the necessary resources. Many struggle to identify the tangible added value, leading to concerns about market access—specifically whether compliance will eventually become a precondition for supply. I understand these doubts; for footprint improvements to be viable, growers need long-term commitments from retailers to ensure their efforts are rewarded. While there is certainly an environmental motivation, it must be balanced with realistic investment expectations and a clear return on capital.”

Do you think there are new tools to make it easier and faster/cheaper?
“Yes, absolutely. We invest in SAR solutions specifically to make the process faster and more affordable. Although the initial setup is labor-intensive, subsequent years are much simpler, making long-term footprint monitoring a more viable and attractive option for businesses.”

In all supply chains companies do a lot of things also because it is mandatory. But who knows the benefits and efforts we have put in in the end? So who should be responsible or in charge of educating the people/consumers?
“That is a complex question with no easy answer. Ideally, we would see clearer government regulation to define which claims can and cannot be made. In horticulture and agriculture, we at least have clearly defined calculation standards that allow for comparison. At Greenhouse Sustainability, we strive to bring the sector together through shared standards and tools, but we believe that education should be also a shared responsibility led by academic institutions and overarching organizations, such as FSI. ”

How?
“I believe transparency, honesty, and clear communication are key. For instance, growers manage significant energy resources, and there is a great opportunity to present the ‘full picture’ of how these resources are utilized. The ultimate goal remains a universal label that is clear to every consumer. While we are frontrunners, we must look beyond just the footprint; there is still much to be done. We also need to address growers’ concerns regarding data security and how their information is shared. By fostering a culture where we learn from each other, we create opportunities for collective improvement.”

What is your perspective of Xpol also on what we did until today?
“Over the last three years, we have conducted calculations with a focused scope, primarily targeting the segments of the supply chain under Xpol’s direct control. This has provided a solid foundation. I see a great deal of motivation within the company; our strong cooperation and Xpol’s clear commitment are very positive signs for our partnership. Now that the monitoring system is established, the process is much faster due to standardization and better data availability. While we still rely on some estimations, yearly assessments will continue to improve data quality and overall accuracy.”

What do you see as the main challenges in reducing the footprint?
“Scope 3 is the main challenge. Especially when a company is not the producer, it is entirely dependent on information and data coming from the value chain.”

Is there anything else you want to add?
“Yes - while the conversation usually centers on the CO2 footprint, there are other critical impact categories that often go overlooked, such as ecotoxicity, water scarcity, and land use. By utilizing 16 different impact categories, we aim to measure the comprehensive impact of a product. A CO2 footprint alone does not provide the full picture; in the future, assessments must be based on this broader scope.” ◁





For this edition of the Xpol Sustainability Journal, we spoke with Peter Szapary (managing director) about the farm's sustainability journey, challenges, and vision for the future.

Wildfire Flowers on the challenges facing green floriculture

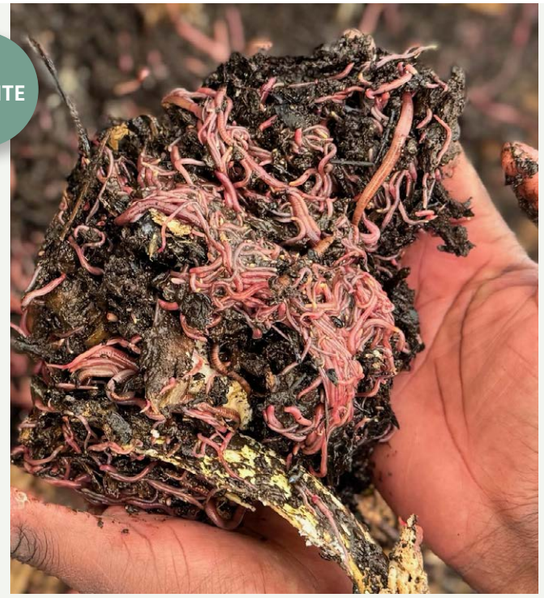
Wildfire Flowers is a family-owned flower farm located on the shores of Lake Naivasha in Kenya's Great Rift Valley. Over the past 26 years, the company has grown into an important part of the Kenyan floriculture industry, employing over 700 people and producing roses and hypericum for markets worldwide.

Driven by a strong commitment to people and the environment, Wildfire Flowers continues investing in regenerative farming, renewable energy, and carbon-neutral production processes to help build a more sustainable future for floriculture.

What are currently the main sustainability focus areas and targets for Wildfire Flowers?
Our focus lies in regenerative farming practices, of which composting and wormiculture, resulting in reduction of use of synthetic fertilizers. Secondly renewable energy (solar) and carbon emission reduction are a focus area. Thirdly, we work in closed-circuit cultivation system on roses, a hydroponics system with 100% recycling of drain water.

Which sustainability projects, improvements, or priorities are you focusing on for the coming years, and what long-term vision do you have as a company?
All the above mentioned, plus reduction of synthetic fertilisers, reduction in water use and biological plant protection.
Our long term vision is to cultivate healthy crops in the most natural way and reducing of negative impacts on the environment.
This is an ongoing process, and we follow and adapt as much as possible to the latest developments in this field.

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Which sustainability actions implemented so far have had the biggest positive impact on the farm or environment?
As one of the few farms in Kenya we are carbon neutral in our production process. This journey has led us to decrease carbon emissions in all processes across the farm; simply by doing things differently and better.

The biggest impacts come from:

- The closed-circuit hydroponics cultivation system in roses.
- Our composting and wormiculture operation, where we process all green farm waste into our own homemade organic fertilizer. This has substantially reduced the application of synthetic fertilisers and has led to yield and quality improvements in all commercial crops.
- In our summer flowers, we follow a schedule of regular crop rotation with regenerative break crops, integration of livestock, and compost application.
- Our renewable energy system (solar) has reduced our power consumption from the national grid and is being currently expanded.

What have been the main challenges in your sustainability journey, and how do you experience increasing expectations from clients, retailers, legislation, and the market?
For us on farm level the sustainability journey has been very positive. Every customer who visits the farm is impressed by our processes and achievements,.

BUT: Unfortunately, markets are not ready to reward any of this in paying more for our far more sustainably produced flowers compared to other farms. The market likes the idea, but it's not rewarded.

I believe that flowers which are produced fully carbon neutral should be rewarded with a premium, but unfortunately they are not. None of our customers are interested in carbon neutrality.

The basic entry into sustainability is most probably the Fairtrade certification. For every flower sold the Farms Fairtrade premium committee receives a contribution. In the past, we as a business also would receive an additional premium for flowers sold under Fairtrade - sustainability and this was recognized by the market. Nowadays the market does no longer reward this, but what is even more challenging is that the price for Fairtrade standard retail roses has not increased since 2016. We are at the same level,

'Flowers produced fully carbon neutral should be rewarded with a premium, unfortunately they are not'

but farm production and all other related cost have increased by close to 50%, eroding our margin. This does not correspond in any way with sustainability, in fact we as a business are achieving better returns for the same product into non-Fairtrade markets. Fairtrades number one focus must be to protect the producer. For me this demonstrates clearly that the market is not supporting sustainability with rewarding the producers accordingly.

In your opinion, which sustainability topics will become most important for the Kenyan flower industry in the coming years?
Use of water, use of pesticides.
However, certifications are becoming more and more rigid and unreasonable regarding pesticides use, with not enough or no consolation with the growers. Again, this comes at the cost of the grower and is not rewarded. I also believe carbon emissions will become an issue, we are ready for that.

How do you value the cooperation with Xpol regarding sustainability and transparency within the supply chain?
We enjoy working with Xpol; it is a very productive partnership.
I believe the value chain is still not fully transparent, and producers are often not sufficiently recognised, rewarded, or listened to. Growers carry most of the investment and risk while remaining price takers. For example, Fairtrade rose prices are at similar levels as in 2016, while production costs have increased significantly, reducing margins dramatically over the years. For smaller family-owned farms, this is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain." The market is killing the cow that is supplying the milk...