

## - CEFS Factsheets -

# Sugar and Corporate Social Responsibility

### 1. THE “CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY” CONCEPT

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) demands that a company conduct its business in a socially acceptable manner and that it be accountable for the impact of its activities on the lives of individuals both within and beyond the company. This requires a company to consider the needs of all of its stakeholders – shareholders, customers, employees, business partners, governments, local communities and the public.

CSR has become a priority for the European Union and is now addressed by a growing number of companies across the world. This response by politicians and industry stems in part from the growing expectations of the EU's public, which today expect more from companies than simply profits.

With its Green Paper on CSR, the European Commission in 2001 triggered a broad debate on all aspects of corporate social responsibility. Public authorities, including international organisations, businesses of any size, social partners, NGOs, other stakeholders and all interested individuals were invited to provide their views on ways of developing a partnership approach to Corporate Social Responsibility.

### 2. CEFS AND CSR

The EU's sugar production provides a livelihood for some 335,000 European farms. Beet cultivation and processing facilities are located in all of the Member States of the European Union except Luxembourg, plus Switzerland and Hungary. These factories support both directly and indirectly almost 300,000 jobs.

The concept of social responsibility aims to encourage companies to commit themselves beyond their strictly legal obligations so as to create a growth dynamic based on responsible practices and enhanced motivation of personnel.

In this respect, the CSR concept can also be considered as a tool for assessing the financial value of companies. In some countries, such as Denmark and France, a listed company on the Stock Exchange must also give shareholders information about its CSR performance.

CEFS fully supports this concept and actively participates in a dialogue with the European social partners<sup>1</sup> in the sugar sector. CEFS, in conjunction with its social partners, forms part of a European social model through a whole series of guarantees relating to working conditions, quality of life and vocational training, going well beyond legal requirements, conducting, already since 1969, a social dialogue on all issues having a social or economic impact on the sugar sector.

For instance, within the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, the social partners in the sugar industry have developed a new tool for training in safety. Produced in eleven

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<sup>1</sup> EFFAT, the European federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism, operates in 35 European countries and represents 120 national trade unions connected with the agri-food industry.

languages, it can already be found in all sugar factories of the different European countries represented within CEFS<sup>2</sup>. Focused on human behaviour, it aims to improve safety in sugar factories appreciably and to reduce industrial accidents to an absolute minimum. Entitled “Active/interactive safety in the sugar factory”, the programme makes use of user-friendly interactive techniques.

Currently, the CSR-framework in the European Sugar industry goes even further and is reflecting on the setting of voluntary minimum standards, specific to our sector, in a number of areas such as human rights, education & training, health & safety, remuneration & working conditions and adaptation to change. The European social partners in the sugar sector will be involved in these works.

The development of a joint platform for reflections as regards social responsibility could thus contribute in time to the work of CEFS in the field of the social dialogue within the context of enlargement or at an economic level, in order to define the position of the sugar industry vis-à-vis third countries.

### 3. SOME USEFUL LINKS

#### **DG Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities**

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en>

#### **CSR Europe**

<http://www.csreurope.org>

#### **European Agency for Health and Safety at Work**

<http://osha.europa.eu/en>



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<sup>2</sup> CEFS represents the sugar producers of 18 Member States of the EU 27.