



## REIMAGINING A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR ALL

The products manufactured by Colgate-Palmolive Company are found in the kitchens and bathrooms of millions of homes across the globe: the Colgate brand is in more homes than any other

This omnipresence, combined with its reputation as one of the world's most trusted companies, provides Colgate-Palmolive with a platform to drive positive environmental change at scale.

It's not a responsibility the organisation is shying away from, as Cathleen Siemen, Sustainability Manager, Europe Division, explains.



### **Colgate-Palmolive has established the target to become net zero carbon in its operations by 2040. What will be key to achieve that goal?**

Through our Colgate brand, we reach more households than any other brand in the world. This reach is our superpower: we have the opportunity to inspire change in millions of homes.

If we succeed in helping people make even small changes, the cumulative effect will have a huge positive impact on the planet.

It's especially important that we inspire change at home, because approximately 90% of Colgate-Palmolive's footprint lies within the usage and end-of-life phase of our products. Raising the efficiency of our supply chains, our sourcing, and our factories is an on-going priority, but because of this footprint, we must take the people who use our products with us on our journey.



For example, Colgate's "Save Water" program to encourage people to turn off the tap while brushing their teeth has helped avoid the use of an estimated 155 billion gallons of water and approximately 8.3 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions since its launch in 2016.

We're exploring all ways to empower people to make more sustainable choices and better understand what they can do to reduce their environmental impact. That could be through using recyclable, compostable and minimal packaging — and reengineering our products and packaging.

**The scope and scale of transformation required combined with the pace at which this transformation must happen has led many to reconsider the role of collaboration. What does collaboration mean for Colgate-Palmolive?**

Collaboration is absolutely vital—it's how we unlock the most innovative solutions that have real impact. Consider Colgate's first-of-its-kind recyclable toothpaste tube. Billions of tubes end up in landfill every year, cosmetics, personal care, food products. What we have created is an opportunity to change that. It represents a huge breakthrough and it wouldn't have been possible without collaboration.

Colgate worked with recycling authorities in North America and Europe to demonstrate that our tubes could be recycled along with other plastic waste.

And we shared this technology, to initiate a global shift. Our ambition is to have all tubes, not just toothpaste tubes, be recycled in practice and at scale.

Collaboration doesn't end once a new product or technology is developed and brought to market. In the case of our recyclable tube, the effort will all be for naught if the material or item isn't accepted by the recycling infrastructure, if that infrastructure doesn't exist, if people don't put the finished item in the correct bin, if packaging manufacturers aren't able to provide the technology at scale. That's why ongoing collaboration across the entire product lifecycle is key in so many aspects of sustainability. And at Colgate, we believe it's our responsibility to lead this collaboration and invite others on our transformational journey.

**You note the importance of providing the information required for consumers to make sustainable choices, yet labels already contain so much information. What can be done to ensure consumers engage with sustainability messaging?**

Packaging is a valuable communication asset: what we say on pack will be seen by millions of people — and any sustainability message we use, we want to create an impact. Sustainability messages need to be prominently displayed and easily understood, but not at the expense of the messages about the product's core function. Balance is important.

For toothpaste, for example, you still want people to quickly recognise why one product is superior to another and what specific capabilities a brand offers, i.e. sensitivity relief or whitening. However, on the packages of toothpaste we market, we include a prominent label inviting people to "Save Water" — and direct them to a URL where they learn how much water they can save by turning off the tap while brushing their teeth. We believe this is the right sustainability message that also compliments the product message.



Sustainability credentials may not be the sole factor in someone's purchasing decision, so it's a balance of not overloading the product or packaging, ensuring the key sustainability message is to the point and aligned to the overall brand, and leveraging the digital space through QR codes, links and websites to provide additional information for those seeking it.

**Recycling infrastructure varies significantly within countries and from country to country. How much influence does Colgate-Palmolive have in helping to create a more standardised waste landscape?**

This is exactly why collaboration is so important—and why it's at the backbone of how we execute our Sustainability & Social Impact Strategy. If we were the only company switching to a recyclable tube, then probably not much would happen. We need to achieve a critical mass of recyclable tubes in order to incentivise the continued development of appropriate infrastructure. That's why Colgate's journey is not over simply because we invented our first-of-its-kind toothpaste tube.

Now, sharing information and collaborating can be challenging. But our need to achieve net zero has elevated collaboration to a whole new level — and has inspired us to share our technology to speed industry's transformation.

Let's consider another example from a different category. The European Union is seeking to unify the design of chargers for electrical devices, rather than the dozens on the market we have today. That has the potential to eliminate so much waste, and chargers are a great example of something that probably isn't the unique selling proposition of your product. You can

still offer different functionality to your consumers, while all using the same charger.

We need to identify more of those examples and simplify, while still differentiating on the product, on quality, on functionality, on the buying experience.

**Colgate-Palmolive has a growing list of environmental awards and accolades; what's the next big challenge you're working to achieve?**

As a marketer by training, I'm interested in exploring the intention-action gap, the difference between what people say they would like to do and what they actually do. Better understanding that will help us to empower people to make more sustainable choices, to live more sustainable lives.

Linked to that is the packaging conundrum. In our category, consumer goods, it's really hard to eliminate packaging entirely. So, how we deliver products in a format that is just as convenient and as safe and healthy as before, but in a more sustainable way.

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Pushing the boundaries of sustainable packaging means making sustainability an integral part of product development, not an after-thought. A great example of that is Colgate Link, our first manual toothbrush with replaceable heads and an aluminium handle.

Not only does that reduce the amount of plastic in the product itself, it also reduces the size of the packaging for subsequent purchases or refills. The replacement heads use 80% less plastic compared to a regular plastic manual toothbrush while not compromising on the user experience or asking people to completely change their habits.

### **What's the most challenging aspect of sustainable transformation?**

Embedding sustainability as a value to motivate people. We want to make sustainability an easy part of people's lives -- and want people to make choices that create long-term change, the benefits of which may not be seen for decades. At the same time, people want to know what's in it for them right now and how this is relevant to them and their life.

### **That's a great question, how do you?**

At Colgate, we believe in the power of 'we.' We need to work together in order to achieve these goals. Over the last decade, we've seen leadership become less hierarchical and more collaborative. Our focus now is on sharing our purpose to reimagine a healthier future for all -- and inspiring people to collaborate and contribute



Cathleen is one of our keynote speakers at this free to join, virtually delivered resource for change-makers.

Join her at 10.50 (GMT) Nov 9th on the main stage discussing:

**Commercial Sustainability:**  
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