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Contributions of the Mexican business sector to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda

Aportaciones del sector empresarial mexicano al cumplimiento de la Agenda 2030

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Abstract

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, global progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been inadequate. Within the business sector, there has been a greater contribution from large and transnational companies, with minimal contributions from small and medium enterprises (SMEs). For this reason, this paper aims to identify effective operational practices of large companies in Mexico that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, which can be applied by Mexican agricultural SMEs. A content analysis of secondary sources was carried out, with the intention of identifying the best practices carried out by companies to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Actions taken by large companies in Mexico to contribute to SDG 1 - No poverty, SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, SDG 10 - Reduction of inequalities, and SDG 12 - Responsible production and consumption, which are some of those proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as having the greatest influence on the agri-food sector, were identified. With this information, actions can be generated through which agri-food SMEs can contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

Keywords: Economic development; Sustainability; Sustainable development; Sustainable Development Goals.

Resumen

Desde la adopción de la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible en 2015, el progreso global hacia el logro de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) ha sido insuficiente. En el sector empresarial, se ha observado una mayor contribución por parte de las grandes empresas y las compañías transnacionales, mientras que la participación de las pequeñas y medianas empresas (pymes) ha sido mínima. Por esta razón, este artículo tiene como objetivo identificar prácticas operativas efectivas de grandes empresas en México que contribuyen al cumplimiento de los ODS y pueden ser aplicadas por pymes agrícolas mexicanas. Se llevó a cabo un análisis de contenido de fuentes secundarias con el fin de identificar las mejores prácticas de las empresas para contribuir al logro de los ODS. Se identificaron las acciones emprendidas por grandes empresas en México para contribuir al ODS 1 – Fin de la pobreza, ODS 2 – Hambre cero, ODS 10 – Reducción de las desigualdades y

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ODS 12 – Producción y consumo responsables, que son algunos de los propuestos por la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura (FAO) como los de mayor influencia en el sector agroalimentario. Con esta información, es posible diseñar acciones a través de las cuales las pymes agroalimentarias puedan contribuir al cumplimiento de los ODS.

Palabras clave: Desarrollo económico; Sostenibilidad; Desarrollo sostenible; Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible.

Introduction

Every society should aspire to have a better quality of life, and for this reason, the actions that go in this direction are called development strategies, which have evolved over time (Fonseca Hernández, 2019). In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a successor framework to the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, establishing targets for member states to implement interventions aimed at improving global human life. The document has 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are the guiding axis that the UN proposes for the design of actions in this global proposal (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a strengthened Global Partnership to facilitate engagement among governments, private sector organizations, civil society groups, UN agencies, and other stakeholders (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Why are companies necessary for SDGs achievement? According to Ancos (2019), there is a direct relationship between SDGs and business operations. SDG achievement depends on action and involvement of the private sector due to the need for scale, the need to change production and consumption models, and the need for innovation. On the other hand, he argues that the future of business also depends on the SDGs. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify actions carried out by some companies in Mexico that have an impact on SDGs achievement, to serve as a guide for smaller companies in their quest to contribute to the achievement of these goals. This is significant because, according to Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) in Mexico 95% of companies are micro enterprises (0 to 10 workers), 4% are small enterprises (11 to 50 workers) and 0.8% are medium enterprises (51 to 259 workers), which represents 99.8% of the national total (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2021).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2021) adopted a new strategic framework in 2021 that examines indicators to which FAO contributes and those with significant implications for food and agriculture systems. The SDGs that have the greatest weight in the agri-food sector challenges, and which will be the SDGs to be analyzed, are the following: a) SDG1 - End of poverty, b) SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, c) SDG 10 - Reduction of inequalities, and d) SDG 12 - Responsible production and consumption.

The concept of development is defined in different ways, for example, López Rodríguez (2003) concludes that the idea of development is complex, since considering only economic growth is not enough to evaluate a country's progress. During the 1940s, economic growth was the main topic of discussion, and the problems of underdevelopment could be overcome through growth. However, Amartya Sen, interviewed by López Rodríguez (2003) mentions that this conception is unsatisfactory and restrictive. Cárdenas Gómez and Michel Nava (2018) present it as the phase of the economic evolution of a country characterized by an increase in the general welfare of its inhabitants. They also mention that development can be understood when there are employment opportunities, satisfaction of at least basic needs, and a positive rate of distribution and redistribution of national wealth.

Thus, development is a multidimensional concept, since it involves various components of human welfare. It is a broader concept than growth and is not necessarily a purely economic concept (Cárdenas Gómez & Michel Nava, 2018). The dimensions that the concept of development can have include the economic component, the social ingredient, the political dimension, the cultural element, and the paradigm of the whole life (Vargas-Hernández, 2008).

Theoretical models examining the determinants and patterns of economic and social development have been developed to inform economic policy formulation at the national level (Rodríguez Peñaloza, 1997). Development theories appeared as a specialty of economic science to answer questions about economic and social inequality between countries. From the beginning, they studied the transformations of the economic structures of societies, as well as the characteristics that block such structural changes that generate underdevelopment (Gutiérrez Garza & González Gaudiano, 2010).

Early economic literature considered that economic development and growth were identical terms. Little attention was paid to the distributional and social effects of per capita income and output growth (Petit Primera, 2013).

For Cárdenas Gómez and Michel Nava (2018) economic development theories can be divided into two categories: economic growth theories and economic development theories.

The first category, economic growth theories, are focused on neoclassical theory, with the work of Keynes and Schumpeter, among others. In this theory, they state that the combination of production factors achieves economic growth. The classical economists of the 18th and early 19th centuries, Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus, were focused on explaining economic growth. For them, the main engine of the economy was capital accumulation (Gutiérrez Garza & González Gaudiano, 2010). On the other hand, for economic development theories, growth is only one element of development, which is more comprehensive, considering not only the economic, but also the social and environmental aspects.

The second category, called socioeconomic development theories, are those known as modernization theory, dependency, globalization, world systems, and sustainable development. Some approaches that have tried to explain economic development are development as growth, underdevelopment as a stage and development as a process of structural change (Rodríguez Peñaloza, 1997). The main assumptions of modernization theory are based on Rostow's economic theory of economic development, which states that, to achieve development, countries must pass through five stages that are inevitable for all countries. These stages are the Traditional Society, the Preconditions for Takeoff, the Self-Sustained Growth, the Road to Maturity and the High Consumption stage (Cárdenas Gómez & Michel Nava, 2018).

Development strategies can be implemented at national, regional, or local scales. It has been thought that country development models have been applied by countries, without considering the particularities of each nation. However, they did not have the expected results given their generalized application without incorporating the necessary adaptations to the context of each country (Fonseca Hernández, 2019).

Modernization theory states that modern societies are more productive, children are better educated, and the poor obtain more benefits, and it is conceived as a process that takes place through phases or stages (Reyes, 2001).

Dependency theory emerged in the 1950s and 1960s because of research by Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). In general, it tries to explain inequalities between developed and underdeveloped countries by differences in economic exchange (Cárdenas Gómez & Michel Nava, 2018). As stated by Vargas-Hernández (2008) dependency theory focuses development on domestic markets, the role of the national industrial sector, the generation of aggregate demand, and wage increases that increase the quality of life (Rodríguez Peñaloza, 1997).

World systems theory indicates that the central unit of analysis are social systems, which can be studied from outside or from within a country (Cárdenas Gómez & Michel Nava, 2018).

The theory of globalization places great emphasis on technological development, through Information and Communication Technologies, as they have revolutionized the way business is conducted and, in general, people's lives. Technology can connect people and companies, leading to significant structural changes in economic patterns (Cárdenas Gómez & Michel Nava, 2018).

The emergence of sustainable development in development theories represented a significant change in the way of analyzing economic growth, social equity and ecological conservation (Gutiérrez Garza & González Gaudiano, 2010).

When we talk about economic development, we refer to an improvement in political, social and environmental variables, where wealth improves welfare levels. Sustainable development becomes feasible when conditions support the welfare of current and future generations, potentially enabling concurrent economic, political, and social advancement (Rodríguez Peñaloza, 1997).

The fundamental contribution of the so-called Ecological Theory, or Theory of Human and Sustainable Development, is that human development should be designed by each society, so it becomes an individual process, not a generic process. The only universal aspect of this theory is to promote economic growth, always caring for the environment (Mora Toscano, 2006).

According to Cortés Mura and Peña Reyes (2015), sustainable development is an integral process that demands commitments and responsibilities from society's actors in economic, political, environmental and social issues. It requires management of natural, human, social, economic and technological resources to provide a better quality of life for the population, while respecting the well-being of future generations.

On the other hand, Mariño Jiménez et al. (2018) state that, in most of the literature, the concept of sustainability is approached as the efficient management of natural resources, preservation of ecosystems, coexistence of man with the environment, that guarantees permanence and satisfaction of needs of future generations. According to his research, the term sustainability is a universal concept, which refers to the economic, environmental and sociocultural dimensions.

In response to widespread concerns regarding poverty, hunger, education deficits, and gender inequality, the United Nations has prioritized the establishment of multilateral frameworks to address these challenges. Over the years, the UN has considered these and other development issues, and has launched several campaigns to address them, without the expected results (UNESCO Etxea, 2002).

The concept of Sustainable Development was first used in the Report "Our Common Future", known as the "Brundtland Report", published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The document states that Sustainable Development meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. From that moment on, the Sustainable Development concept has been a relevant topic for the development and planning of countries (De Jong & Vijge, 2021).

When the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration in the framework of the Millennium Congress in New York City in 2000, the goals and targets set out in the development section were named the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Eight goals were developed, focusing on various social, economic and environmental problems (Halkos & Gkampoura, 2021). Later, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was proclaimed in 2015, with the idea of putting countries on the path to peace, prosperity and inclusive development. For this purpose, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed, which require a series of modifications in the operation and policies of the world society (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The 2030 Agenda proposed by the UN (A/RES/70/1) proposes 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These contain 169 goals that aim to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a Sustainable Development agenda. In addition to this, in July 2017 resolution A/RES/71/313

publishes the SDG indicator framework, which consists of 244 indicators (Calabrese et al., 2021). *Figure 1* shows the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Achieving these goals requires the cooperation and commitment of all parties involved. However, according to the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2020 Report, "global efforts to date have been insufficient to achieve the change we need, jeopardizing the agenda's promise to current and future generations" (United Nations, 2020, p. 2).

Each of the 17 SDGs was developed considering the three main pillars of Sustainable Development: social, economic and environmental. These three dimensions or pillars are known as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), a term coined in the early 1990s (Cai and Choi, 2020).

There is an SDG Index, which was developed to measure a country's performance on the 17 SDGs, giving equal weight to each goal. The index score represents a country's position on the outcome, on a scale ranging from 0 for the worst performance to 100 for the best (Sachs et al., 2021).

Likewise, sustainability reports and progress in achieving the SDGs are commonly published through the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) standard, which presents a series of measures and parameters that allow the company's contribution to the SDGs to be appreciated. In this way, the GRI standards help companies to report their impact on the achievement of these goals (Calabrese et al., 2021).



Figure 1. Sustainable Development Goals Sustainable Development Goals

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC]. (2019).

In general, progress has been made worldwide in achieving the SDGs. However, there are significant disparities in the progress that each country has made, even among countries in the same region. According to the 2020 Sustainable Development Report, Asian countries have made the most progress on the SDGs since their adoption in 2015. Similarly, Asian countries have also responded best to the COVID-19 pandemic (Sachs et al., 2020).

For Halkos and Gkampura (2021), although good progress has been made in achieving the SDGs in certain areas, mainly the economic issue, the world is still not on the right track and there is still a long way to go, especially in social and environmental issues. The COVID-19 pandemic has not made it easy, and new challenges have arisen.

Latin America faces great challenges in the face of the global challenges set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although some improvements can be observed in the socioeconomic aspect, most countries in the region face marked levels of inequality because of factors such as the concentration of income and wealth in a small number of people, heterogeneity in production structures, and limited access to goods and services (Álvarez, 2016).

Although inequality exists throughout the world, it constitutes a particular constraint to reaching the region's potential. The gaps faced are structural: low productivity and poor infrastructure, segregation and lags in the quality of education and health services, persistent gender gaps and territorial and minority inequalities, and a disproportionate impact of climate change on the poorest links of society (United Nations, 2020).

The 2030 Agenda is a useful platform to guide cooperation and policy coordination at the level of the Latin American and Caribbean region. Although there are different national realities, capacities and levels of development, the SDGs are relevant for all countries. With a view to consolidating the SDGs in a context of global changes, forums such as CELAC integrated only by countries of the region, as well as other existing regional forums and mechanisms can contribute to a successful dialogue in support of the 2030 Agenda (Álvarez, 2016).

For the Center for Sustainable Development Goals for Latin America and the Caribbean (CODS), despite the inequalities and problems of the region, the efforts of most countries to report progress at the national level in the achievement of the SDGs cannot be ignored. However, this is insufficient to meet the goals set for 2030. If we maintain this rate of annual progress, it will take more than 50 years to achieve the 17 Goals in the 24 countries of the region (Centro de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible para América Latina y el Caribe [CODS] 2020). This makes evident the magnitude of the amount of work we need and highlights the urgency of accelerating efforts if we really hope to meet the SDGs by 2030.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Mexico, as well as the region, was already facing major challenges for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. Structural problems of low economic growth, inequalities, lack of diversification of

the productive structure, environmental destruction, as well as the fragile functioning of the rule of law made it difficult to achieve the SDGs in the region by 2030. The pandemic has highlighted the problems of the economic model, the shortcomings of the social protection system, the gaps in the welfare system and the challenges of care as a human right, confirming the need to rethink development and formulate comprehensive and inclusive responses for a recovery to sustainable COVID-19 and a post-pandemic world that leaves no one behind, both in the region and in Mexico (United Nations Mexico, 2021).

As a global actor, Mexico actively participated in the definition of the agenda. The country was one of the most active in the consultation forums, participating in and leading the negotiation process. Not only did it present specific proposals to incorporate the principles of equality, social and economic inclusion, and pushed for universality, sustainability and human rights to be the guiding principles of the 2030 Agenda, it also advocated for the adoption of a multidimensional approach to poverty (Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, 2019) that, in addition to considering people's income, would take into account their effective access to other basic rights such as food, education, health, social security and basic services in housing (United Nations Mexico, 2021).

Mexico has made significant progress in the incorporation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda in the country's planning processes, as evidenced by the recent reforms to the legal framework of the Planning Law and its mention of the incorporation of the 2030 Agenda in the design of public plans and programs; the installation of follow-up and monitoring mechanisms, through the Sustainable Development Goals Information System (SIODS); the establishment of the National Council and the Follow-up and Implementation Bodies in the States, and the generation of inter-institutional alliances and agreements aimed at strengthening compliance with the objectives and goals of this Agenda. However, in government management, there is still a need for a Management for Development Results (MfDR), human rights and comprehensiveness approach, in the phases of the public policy cycle (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2019).

Mexico's greatest challenges are concentrated in the reduction of inequalities, inclusive growth and decent work, industry, innovation and infrastructure, the life of terrestrial ecosystems, as well as peace, justice and solid institutions. Among the countries (only surpassing Turkey) and, compared to the region, Mexico ranks below Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia (United Nations Mexico, 2021).

The Mexican government, together with the United Nations Development Program, and the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation launched a pilot platform where it publishes its proposal of indicators for monitoring the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The development of monitoring instruments for the SDGs, both in Mexico and internationally, is limited in capturing the nature of several of the targets established for each of the goals (Trejo Nieto, 2017).

Methodology

This work is part of larger research project, with the purpose of carrying out a compilation of activities carried out by some companies in Mexico that have an impact on the achievement of the SDGs, and their potential application in agricultural SMEs in Mexico. For this stage of the research, the process developed is described in the next paragraphs.

Data was collected through documentary analysis of secondary sources. A content analysis of these sources was conducted to identify the best practices employed by companies in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs outlined in the 2030 Agenda. As an initial source, the awards given by Aim2 Flourish (AIM2Flourish, 2021a). Aim2Flourish is an initiative of the Fowler Center for Business as an agent of World Benefit at the Weatherhead School of Business at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

The Flourish Awards are presented annually to 17 companies from around the world in recognition of their contribution to achieving the SDGs. For a company to be chosen, a team of students and faculty develop their story and post it on the Aim2Flourish website (AIM2Flourish, 2021b). These stories tell of for-profit companies achieving business benefits while generating a benefit for society and the SDGs, which is interesting from the perspective that not only governments, or NGOs, have an obligation to meet the SDGs

The Aim2Flourish page has a story search engine, which, in its advanced search mode, allows filtering by various criteria. As of September 2022, the site had 4,150 stories from around the world.

For the purposes of this research, two search criteria were used:

a) First, stories were chosen that meet the SDGs that were determined for this research, namely: SDG 1 - No Poverty, SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, and SDG 10 - Reducing Inequalities, and SDG 12 - Responsible Production and Consumption. These SDGs were chosen because the FAO considers them to be fundamental pillars for the agri-food industry in the world (FAO, 2021).
b) The second criterion used was to consider the companies located in Mexico, which will allow the case analysis of this research.

Once filtered, the published stories were reviewed. Stories that had relevant information on the practices carried out to comply with the SDGs were selected. With this information, a matrix was prepared to review and compare these practices. From all the stories, those with relevant and evident information were selected. This matrix was constructed using information from each company, arranged in columns: innovation, inspiration, overall impact, business benefit, and social and environmental benefits. In this table, information was compiled for those companies that

comply with the 4 SDGs described in previous paragraphs, of which 23 companies were found.

Additionally, information was obtained from the Global Compact Network Mexico (2021) report, which details the progress of the SDGs in Mexican companies. This material details some examples of companies that comply with each of the SDGs. In this case, as mentioned above, SDGs 1, 2, 10, and 12 were chosen. For each of these SDGs, the material provides example companies and briefly describes the projects that make them comply with this goal, as well as some results as a summary. These companies from the 4 SDGs chosen were also included.

Once the examples of companies that meet one of the SDGs chosen for the research were obtained, the next step was to validate the information obtained in digital resources, through the review of information generated by the company itself, for which each of the websites of them were consulted. The objective of this review was to obtain sustainability reports, or annual results reports, to find sufficient and verifiable information on the company, which would allow, in the second stage of the research, to perform a multiple case analysis.

The data matrix was enriched in such a way that it becomes a tool that allows comparison between companies and their contribution to the SDGs. The database includes, in the rows, each of the 17 SDGs, and in each column, the name of the company whose report has been reviewed and the information on its website. The intersections identify which SDGs were published in the company's most recent Sustainability Reports. In addition, an additional row is included that states which strategies in terms of sustainability each company applies.

The next step in the process was to filter those companies that comply with the 4 SDGs chosen for the research. From this list, 6 companies were obtained that comply with these 4 SDGs.

Once the target companies were identified, the next step was to review their sustainability report or annual report, to extract each of the actions reported by the 6 companies that meet the 4 SDGs chosen. These actions were incorporated into the analysis for each company, where each program that complies with a certain objective is described. A column was included that mentioned which SDG is met, and in another column, the action or program carried out by the company.

This procedure allowed for reviewing the information of companies that meet the selection criteria, extracting the programs and practices that align with the chosen SDGs. In the case of these companies, although they do not meet the 4 SDGs, they contribute to 1, 2 or 3 of them, and the practices or programs could be interesting to apply in Mexican agricultural companies of smaller size and economic capacity.

Results

The companies analyzed implemented the following actions:

SDG 1 - No Poverty

Generally, companies carry out actions to contribute to the achievement of SDG 1 indirectly. A common practice is to donate to organizations whose core business is to help eradicate poverty. These are organizations aimed at helping people in vulnerable situations to have a better opportunity for development, often through training (Alsea, 2021; Beta San Miguel, 2019; Bimbo, 2021; Grupo Gigante, 2020; PetStar, 2019; Soriana, 2021).

Another way in which companies collaborate to eradicate poverty is through employee volunteering. Using different programs, volunteering generally focuses on improving conditions in a community where the company has influence or presence. Improvement of the chosen community can be done by remodeling, education, donations, food and projects aimed at local entrepreneurship. Support for women entrepreneurs has become more important in recent years (Beta San Miguel, 2019; Bimbo, 2021; Grupo Gigante, 2020; Heineken Mexico, 2020; PetStar, 2019; Soriana, 2021).

SDG 2 - Zero Hunger

To contribute to the achievement of SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, companies in Mexico have carried out various actions. Key examples include the following:

One of the most common is food donation. This type of effort can be a direct donation by the company to organizations such as soup kitchens or food banks, but food donation support campaigns are also carried out with customers (Alsea, 2021; Bimbo, 2021; Femsa Proximidad, 2021; Grupo Financiero Banorte, 2020; Grupo Gigante, 2020; Soriana, 2021).

Another interesting action carried out by companies engaged in food production is waste reduction planning. In this way, food can be used to feed people in unfavorable conditions (Alsea, 2021; Bimbo, 2021).

In addition, some companies improve food security by providing nutritional training to the communities where they participate (Grupo Gigante, 2020; Grupo Herdez, 2021; PetStar, 2019; Soriana, 2021).

SDG 10 - Reducing Inequalities

To reduce inequalities, companies promote fairness in their operations through different strategies (Alsea, 2021; América Móvil, 2021; Bimbo, 2021; CEMEX, 2021; Femsa Proximidad, 2021; Heineken Mexico, 2020; PetStar, 2019; Soriana, 2021). Most of these actions are intrinsic to their operating policies, which focus on some of the following points:

- Respect and inclusion of gender diversity, culture, religion, ethnic origin, social condition, sexual orientation.
- Integration of people with disabilities and senior citizens into the workforce.
- Equal working conditions for men and women in the same positions.
- Promotion of ethical and responsible behavior.
- Prevention of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

In addition to policies, companies support actions to reduce inequalities with training for different internal groups (Beta San Miguel, 2019; CEMEX, 2021; Femsa Proximidad, 2021; PetStar, 2019).

In addition to this, some companies also work in alliance with other companies, donation and community development programs (Beta San Miguel, 2019; Femsa Proximidad, 2021; Grupo Gigante, 2020; PetStar, 2019).

SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production

The SDG with the most actions is responsible consumption and production. It is the one that has more public visibility, as this type of actions can be communicated to the public as part of the company's marketing strategy.

Companies engaged in food production usually have healthy food alternatives, focused on their customers' lifestyles (Alsea, 2021; Bimbo, 2021; Heineken Mexico, 2020). They emphasize that there are healthy, organic and sustainable products within their portfolio. They also provide clear information on nutritional issues and portion sizes.

A common action among companies putting special interest in their inputs. On the one hand, companies are reducing environmentally harmful materials in their operations, such as single-use plastics, for example. They are not only reducing the use of these types of inputs, but are going a step further and increasingly, companies are investing in research and development of materials that they design, manufacture and package their products, with a clear tendency to choose materials and packaging from sustainable origin, biodegradable, recyclable, compostable and reusable (Alsea, 2021; Bimbo, 2021; CEMEX, 2021; Femsa Proximidad, 2021; Grupo Gigante, 2020; Grupo Herdez, 2021; Heineken Mexico, 2020; PetStar, 2019; Soriana, 2021).

Some companies extend their internal efforts to their business partners, so they carry out alliances and training with their customers and suppliers to promote the use and reuse of less environmentally harmful materials (América Móvil, 2021; Bimbo, 2021; Femsa Proximidad, 2021; Grupo Gigante, 2020; Grupo Herdez, 2021; Heineken México, 2020; PetStar, 2019; Soriana, 2021).

With all these efforts, companies can positively influence a circular economy, in which there is greater use of the materials used by companies, their customers and their suppliers (Bimbo, 2021; Femsa Proximidad, 2021; Grupo Herdez, 2021; Heineken Mexico, 2020; PetStar, 2019; Soriana, 2021).

Figure 2 shows a compilation of actions found in this research for each of the SDGs 1, 2, 10 and 12.



Figure 2. Summary of actions for each SDG.

Conclusions

Through this study, we identified actions carried out by companies in Mexico, which contribute to achieving progress in the Sustainable Development Goals. These actions can serve as a guide for SMEs in their quest to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Through the compilation of actions, there are indeed actions that companies can take to achieve the SDGs.

Specifically, we found actions that companies carry out for SDG 1 - No poverty, SDG 2 - Zero Hunger, SDG 10 - Reduction of inequalities, and SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production, which are some of those proposed by the FAO as having the greatest influence on the agri-food sector.

Although the companies chosen for this study are not necessarily from the agri-food sector, some of the actions they carry out for the achievement of the SDGs could be applied by other smaller companies.

Some subsequent lines of research include the analysis of other SDGs. In this work, 4 SDGs with influence in the agri-food industry were analyzed. However, there are 13 other SDGs that can be subject to analysis. In addition, work can be carried out with a focus on other industries in which SMEs participate.

With the information generated in this work, it is possible to generate implementation projects within agri-food SMEs in which actions and programs that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs at a general level can be developed.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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