

**Book review**

# Sustainability yearbook 2012: sustainability as one of the key drivers of innovation

**Sustainable Asset Management (Ed.)**

PDF, 127 pp.

Freely available on request at: [www.sam-group.com](http://www.sam-group.com)

SAM (Sustainable Asset Management) is an international investment company with a specific focus on sustainability investments. SAM is a member of Robeco, which was established in 1929 and offers a broad range of investment products and services worldwide. Robeco is a subsidiary of the Rabobank Group, which has the highest credit rating of all privately owned banks, awarded by rating agencies Moody's, Standard & Poor's, Fitch and DBRS. SAM was founded in 1995, is headquartered in Zurich and employs over 100 professionals.

The SAM group offers, next to a multitude of other services, a yearly 'SAM corporate sustainability assessment'. In their foreword, Michael Baldinger, CEO of SAM, and Ted Senko, Global CEO KPMG, write that the 2012 edition of The Sustainability Yearbook marks the beginning of a global alliance between SAM and KPMG, by offering four perspectives on current sustainability topics – increasing the importance of sustainability in the world's fastest growing economies, innovative sustainable solutions, sustainability factors in the chemical industry, and green and social sustainability breakthroughs inside the Royal Philips Electronics. Companies in this yearbook are among the world's sustainability leaders and thus the SAM group likes this yearbook to be a useful tool for readers to gain an insight into one of the major trends of our time.

The book is divided into several chapters, of which four give information on several topics. The chapter 'Sustainability Drivers in Emerging Economies' by KPMG shows the striking economical growth and awareness for sustainability coming from Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa. The conclusion is: "The emerging economies' rate of development and economic growth is extraordinary and unprecedented." Developing nations are facing the cost of widespread environmental pollution, but it is clear their awareness of these choices and their understanding of how to negotiate a way through them more sustainably is growing.

The next chapter is dedicated to 'Innovation Management in the SAM Corporate Sustainability Assessment' and the author concludes: "Because an effective sustainability strategy can help companies create a competitive advantage, it has evolved into an increasingly important driver guiding the innovation process." Beyond that, this chapter also gives detailed information on the background and methodology of the SAM Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA).

Key sustainability issues faced by the chemical industry are thoroughly explained. The chapter 'Sustainability in the Chemical Industry' gives the 'twelve principles of green chemistry'. Economic, environmental and social dimension of sustainability for the sustainability leaders and laggards are compared, concluding that the more traditional sustainability measures are highly scored by both groups, while the data for the innovation management criteria showed a wide gap in average scores between leaders and laggards in sustainability. 'In order for chemical companies to remain competitive, they will need to continue to innovate to realign their product portfolios towards sustainable products and processes.'

After that, the reader will see a lengthy interview with Frans van Houten, President and CEO of Royal Philips Electronics, confirming that the product creation process is the only way to truly achieve breakthroughs.

The next three chapters provide information regarding the Sector Leaders, Sector Movers and Sector Insights. They consist basically of alphabetical listings, with the names of companies and their country of origin. Chapter 7 gives more information about how SAM works: the 2500 largest companies (based on the Dow Jones Global Total Stock Market Index) are invited to participate in SAM's assessment. Of these, 15% from each of the 58 SAM sectors qualify for inclusion on the yearbook.

For each sector, the company with the highest score is named the SAM sector leader. This company is considered to be the one within its sector that is best prepared to seize the opportunities and manage the risks deriving from economic, environmental and social developments.

The company within the top 15% that has achieved the largest proportional improvement is named the SAM sector mover.

In the Annex more information about SAM is summed up.

The SAM Sustainability Yearbook 2012 provides clearly and comprehensively written information on the 58 sectors being the world's sustainability leaders, with 14 of them in the chemical and chemically-related industry.

**Jannelies Smit**

Department of Chemical Engineering and Chemistry  
Eindhoven Technical University  
Den Dolech 2  
Eindhoven 5612 AZ  
The Netherlands  
E-mail: jannelies.smit@tue.nl