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Andrew Hoffman

Turning the Tide: DuPont, Sustainable Seaweed and Pre-Competitive Collaboration

Greg Smith,¹ vice president of R&D technology, admired the glass aquarium in his office at the Wilmington, Delaware headquarters of DuPont de Nemours, Inc. He took a moment to reflect on the company's history with algae as he watched colorful fish glide between the waving green strands.

In 2018, DuPont had launched a partnership with the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life at the New England Aquarium to help advance sustainability in the seaweed extracts industry using credibly developed Better Management Practices (BMPs). The collaboration was a core part of the company's sustainability efforts.

In the following year, new DuPont CEO Marc Doyle announced the company's plans to align nine of its corporate goals with sustainability while committing to the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda.¹ Among other details, Doyle's statement outlined plans to integrate circular economy principles into the company's business models and design 100% of its products using sustainability criteria included in the principles of green chemistry.

The CEO's sustainability declaration came at a critical time. The company was involved in unwinding a major merger and had recently announced plans to divest six of its operations—four of which involved environmentally-oriented products—given their classification as volatile assets.² The company had earlier paid out more than \$300 million to plaintiffs who had filed personal injury lawsuits over the company's involvement in a toxic pollution scandal.³

Amid such struggles, Smith saw the company's leadership in sustainable seaweed as a sound business position and a social positive. He also knew DuPont's competitors had begun to take notice of the benefits

¹ Greg Smith is a pseudonym.

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