

Idai Nature, sustainability as a business key

Idai Nature is a Spanish biotech company founded in 2009 by Carlos Ledó. Throughout its history manufacturing natural solutions for agricultural biocontrol, it managed to adapt to market demands by focusing its efforts on providing farmers with natural and sustainable alternatives. Idai Nature's innovative solutions help farmers to make their crops more profitable in the most sustainable way possible. This increase in profitability is the result of eliminating chemical residues from vegetables, so that farmers can sell their crops in more demanding markets as regards the presence of residual chemicals in the food we eat.

Currently, in response to consumers' and supermarkets' demands, it has launched a FiBL-certified range for biodynamic farming. In fact, many of the products that have been part of the catalog for years have been able to obtain the FiBL certificate, a sign of the company's great commitment to sustainability and the health of the population since its inception.

One of the fundamental pillars of Idai Nature is sustainability. Since its beginnings twelve years ago, its efforts aimed to leaving a better world for the next generations have always gone beyond the formulation and manufacture of natural products to promote an agriculture that is more respectful with our environment, farmers and the population, making sustainability the axis of its business philosophy.

Looking back in time, we can review Idai Nature's trajectory and associate it with milestones that have marked a long road culminating in 2020 with the achievement of the highest award in Europe for sustainability as the 'most sustainable company in Europe in the Product and Service category of the European Business Awards' awarded by the European Commission, considered the highest European recognition in terms of business sustainability.

This award is the result of a series of decisions, often in detriment of profitability and business growth, but which were linked to its DNA, to its mission of being 'green' from the core, that is to say, in its fundamental values.

As a result of this business philosophy, we have sought to apply sustainable excellence to all the processes involved in the research, formulation and manufacture of a product. Idai Nature has an integrated quality and environmental management system based on the UNE-EN ISO 9001:2015 (since 2013) and UNE-EN ISO 14001:2015 (since 2016) standards. This system is certified by *Bureau Veritas*, an independent certifying entity based in Belgium and founded in 1828.

Proving its environmental commitment, Idai Nature is an EMAS company, it has been voluntarily certified since January 2019 in the most demanding environmental management registry in Europe. The EMAS Regulation on *Eco-Management and Audit Scheme* is a Community Regulation that proposes an efficient system to help organizations manage and continuously improve their environmental performance becoming a model of excellence for environmental management. Member organizations periodically report on the workings of this system through an environmental statement verified by independent bodies. These entities are identified with the EMAS logo, which guarantees the reliability of the information provided by the company. Idai Nature's registration number is ES-CV-000068.

The ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and EMAS certificates and the environmental statement can be found on the company's website (www.idainature.com). The statement sets out all the environmental goals and targets that the organization sets for itself every year.

In this sense, social currents are increasingly linked to the protection of the environment and to adopting a commitment to sustainability in their daily actions. An example of this is the growing global concern about the difficulty of recycling and disposing of plastic waste. Currently, there are five floating islands of this material in our oceans with an extension equivalent to that of Spain, France and Germany combined. The difficulty of eliminating or reducing plastic packaging is a very common problem that companies face. Two years ago, Idai Nature decided to hire the only Spanish company that manufactures packaging with at least 30% from post-consumer recycled plastic for its packaging system, thus favoring companies that are committed to circular economy to develop their business.

In addition, more than 7 years ago, Idai Nature adhered voluntarily to SIGFITO, a non-profit organization created with the aim of setting up an agricultural packaging collection system to give this material an appropriate environmental treatment. This enables Idai Nature to contribute to the preservation of the environment and the sustainable development of agriculture. All the company's products and packaging are registered in SIGFITO. This initiative aims to set an example and make it easier for all local farmers to correctly treat this kind of waste, as the company is also a SIGFITO collection point. Any user who wishes to do so can bring their empty and rinsed packaging with the SIGFITO logo.

In 2019, in relation to the necessary reduction of plastic consumption by the general population, reverse osmosis systems were implemented in Idai Nature's facilities in Valencia for all its employees, with the aim of avoiding the consumption of bottled water and single-use plastic containers. In addition, each employee is provided with their own glass bottle for personal use. Another action aimed to a more responsible water consumption and to avoid waste is the reuse of the water used to clean the product formulators as irrigation water for the gardens of the company's facilities.

The environmental impact generated by the carbon footprint at both individual and corporate level is another of Idai Nature's concerns. For this reason, another of the actions that has been implemented at the company since 2014 is the voluntary registration of greenhouse gas emissions in the Carbon Footprint Registry, facilitated by the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge. The main objective in this area is to reduce the Carbon Footprint generated year-on-year. To this end, Idai Nature is carrying out a series of actions aimed to reversing its carbon footprint. For example, in terms of energy consumption, all the electricity consumed in the organization is 100% renewable. This means that it is certified by Renewable Origin Guarantees issued by the Spanish National Commission for Markets and Competition (CNMC), an independent body responsible for preserving, ensuring and promoting the correct functioning, transparency and existence of effective competition and efficient regulation in all markets and productive sectors for the benefit of consumers and users. Another example, aiming to replace the company's fleet with electric vehicles, is the provision of electric car chargers in the company's car park to support the use of these vehicles by its employees. In addition, Idai Nature has encouraged teleworking for all employees who need to do so, in order to reduce CO₂ emissions caused by commuting to the workplace. This measure is also combined with a policy that has been implemented in the company since its inception, which is to encourage the recruitment of staff whose residence is within a radius of 15 km of its facilities, to avoid increasing its carbon footprint. With the same purpose, the installation of photovoltaic panels, which produce energy for self-consumption through solar energy, was one of the largest investments made by the company in 2020, taken out of the budget item allocated to improving corporate sustainability. Annually, about 57,000 kWh are produced, which is equivalent to planting 1,219 trees a year. This installation saves 5,287 liters of oil per year and avoids the emission of 24.38 tons of CO₂.

Idai Nature's exponential growth since its founding through to 2017 highlighted the need to expand its facilities, providing an opportunity to commit to the establishment of a sustainable office building

model from scratch. This bold approach only endorses the consistency displayed by the company throughout its career. For this reason, the decision was made to design the building in accordance with PASSIVHAUS certification standards. Idai Nature is the only company in its sector with facilities with this certification, a construction standard that is characterized by its high energy efficiency, which reduces energy consumption and CO2 emissions to the atmosphere by 80% compared to a conventional building of the same characteristics. These buildings offer excellent thermal comfort and very good air quality throughout the year. Thanks to this innovative approach, it was awarded the international Architectural Design Excellence prize at the *BUILD Sustainable Building Awards*.

This award highlights the company's search for excellence in all its processes, participating in multiple innovation and sustainability-related projects. Collaboration with different universities, technology centers, as well as national and European official organizations is a constant. The most relevant projects in which the company is involved are those linked to the development of Circular Economy.

In this regard, Idai Nature is part of the *Life* program, the only European Union financial instrument exclusively dedicated to the environment. Its general goal for the 2014-2020 period is to contribute to sustainable development and to the achievement of the goals and targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy and relevant EU strategies, as well as to plans in the area of environment and climate. Furthermore, this call is aligned with the objectives established by the *Green Deal*. Within this program, Idai Nature has investigated the possibility of sourcing waste residues from agriculture (vegetable biomass) in order to reuse them as active ingredients for the production of its natural solutions.

In addition, Idai Nature is also part of two projects aimed to promoting circular economy through the use of agricultural by-products, converting them into raw materials for the development of new products. *Greenprotect*, in an already completed project and in the trial phase, has been approved by CDTI as a Research and Development Project, and is cofunded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), through the Multi-regional Operational Program for Intelligent Growth. In this case, Idai Nature has carried out the research and development of new extracts derived from plant by-products, a valuable resource that is currently not being tapped into and is a source of pollution. As well as the Vitinnat project, cofunded by the Ministry of Agriculture and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), aimed to the research and development of vine wood diseases caused by residual by-products due to agricultural activity.

The implementation of the UN's 17 sustainable development goals into its Corporate Social Responsibility strategy in 2019 showed that the actions that have been carried out in the company for years follow the trajectory set by a globally-relevant body such as the UN, with number 2, 'End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture', being particularly relevant for Idai Nature. In this regard, production at the Naturalia ecological farm, owned by the company and where it carries out its product trials, is intended for social purposes, collaborating with associations such as Cáritas, altruistically donating ecological, seasonal and local products. This action has also been adapted with its employees, facilitating access to seasonal fruit and vegetable boxes in order to avoid purchasing imported products as much as possible, thus helping to reduce the carbon footprint.

As can be seen from the above information, Idai Nature has been a benchmark in innovation, both in the establishment of new products and in its participation in new development projects. One of the most controversial issues highlighted during 2020 was the need to look for innovative alternatives to single-use surgical masks, since they are an avoidable waste as long as investment is made in hygienic face masks with materials certified and approved by official bodies. This is one of the latest actions to be carried out by the company. More than 10,000 units of hygienic face masks have been

manufactured, certified in accordance with the UNE0065:2020 Standard, with fabric certified by AITEX, Instituto Tecnológico del Textil, to supply both employees and clients, seeking maximum protection without compromising on sustainability.

In this regard, sustainability is part of Idai Nature's DNA and is present in all its actions and business strategies. It has been part of the company's culture since its origin and is linked to a way of life and understanding of the global economy, being aware that there are limited natural resources that must be preserved if future generations are to enjoy a green and living planet, as we know it today. Idai Nature, born naturally.