



SUPPLY CHAINS MUST GO GREEN

BART COPPELMANS EXPLAINS HOW GEOSPATIAL DATA CAN HELP TO DECARBONISE THE SUPPLY CHAIN

The pressure to decarbonise supply chains is coming directly from environmentally conscious consumers. For most companies, their supply chain is a far bigger source of carbon emissions than their internal operations. Eight global supply chains, in sectors such as food, construction and fashion, are responsible for 50% of the carbon emissions on planet Earth, according to research by the World Economic Forum.

But decarbonising the supply chain is complex and can be expensive – rather than skipping directly to electrifying fleets, companies need to understand where emissions in their supply chains are coming from, and focus on problematic areas in order to achieve the most impact while minimising their costs. The approach also emphasises the need for real-time geospatial data, to monitor parts of the chain that can be addressed today.

The World Economic Forum describes supply-chain decarbonisation as a ‘game changer’ in corporate climate action. The organisation’s research also quashed worries that such action would be costly for businesses and consumers. Contrary to

fears among supply chain professionals that taking action on sustainability would lead to increased prices for consumers, end-consumer costs are likely to rise by 1-4% at most, according to the World Economic Forum’s analysis.

So what steps can businesses take? Estimating emissions is a useful first step, using data such as vehicle types and detailed maps of routes, including gradients. Geospatial data provides real-time visibility of the supply chain, offering an overview of areas that companies can address quickly and accurately. This is both a key business goal for companies hoping to have more control of their supply chains, and a necessary first step for organisations hoping to make them more sustainable.

The vital thing is to understand your current carbon footprint by using data. The next stages are to define targets, and then track the performance over time. Once you know the exact performance of your different modes of transport, you can then optimise emissions by selecting the best-performing ones.

Data drawn directly from vehicles can help you to fully understand your carbon footprint

right across the supply chain, linked with the geospatial context of the location. Once you have that understanding, it’s easier to take the next steps towards decarbonisation, such as innovating suppliers based on their sustainability. Companies can integrate emissions metrics into the way they deal with suppliers, and work with suppliers to address their emissions and track their performance. Companies can also work to design their sourcing strategy with sustainability at its heart.

Truly visible and sustainable supply chains are on the horizon with the smart use of data. But this will require companies to take the steps to understand their impact on the planet, using the geospatial data they collect. Increasingly, it is a business imperative to improve the chain; Gartner predicts that 50% of global product-centric businesses will invest in real-time visibility across their supply chain by 2023. These are the just first steps on a journey towards a responsible supply chain. From that understanding, companies can work towards a cleaner way of working, greeting the climate emergency with a sound strategy at its heart.

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Achieving Net Zero and reducing our carbon footprint is now a key agenda item for governments, organisations and businesses around the world, and with targets set for 2025 and beyond, action and plans need to be set in motion now.

Geospatial data is increasingly being used as a benchmarking tool illustrating the status quo, enabling the analysis of patterns of change over time to better inform decisions and plans. Its power lies in its simplicity and flexibility, but also its ability to be interpreted easily by stakeholders at all levels. This data should be sitting at the heart of the decision-making process, generating insights that drive more targeted and effective policy making.

Tree planting, creating and enhancing green spaces and urban greening initiatives are some of the areas of focus to support the achievement of net zero targets. Trees improve the air we breathe, absorb harmful carbon emissions, increase biodiversity by providing valuable habitats for our wildlife and conserve energy consumption by offering a natural cooling solution to nearby buildings.

Bluesky's National Tree Map™ (NTM) is just one of Bluesky's geospatial data products that can be used to support environmental and carbon reduction initiatives and projects. It is a unique and comprehensive dataset that offers unparalleled access to trees 3 metres and taller in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. The NTM enables users to analyse data of tree location, height and canopy coverage. The data is provided in easy-to-use vector files direct to customer desktops and is compatible with Ordnance Survey products.

The NTM has been created using Bluesky's high-quality, high-resolution aerial photography and height datasets coupled with innovative processing techniques. It is already being

used effectively to support carbon reduction projects locally, regionally and nationally. The NTM is updated on a rolling three-year update programme, so tree canopy change can be assessed and analysed over time.

Bluesky is working with professionals conducting projects in sectors such as forestry, utilities, government, environmental planning, insurance risk assessment and more, not forgetting some of the incredible work that is being carried out by academics up and down the country.



Examples include recent work carried out by Waterford County and City Council to track where canopy cover currently exists to inform new tree planting strategy and the White Rose Forest region where they have discovered that canopy coverage is much higher in some areas than previously realised. The NTM data highlighted that York had 60% more tree canopy cover than anticipated which impacts on accuracy when recording carbon absorption figures. The NTM is the first tool that has enabled those working on the project to see canopy coverage from trees in groups smaller than half a hectare.

Managing and monitoring our trees will be vital as we embark on the next steps of our net zero journey.

By Ralph Coleman, Sales Director, Bluesky International Ltd.

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