

CEMEX's POSITION

The Issue

“Approximately 40% of the world’s energy is used in buildings – more than in transport or industry. Energy used in buildings is the major contributor to climate change, hence, it must be addressed.”¹ CEMEX as one of the world’s largest producers of building materials believes that sustainable construction and sustainable building materials, such as concrete, will play an essential role in developing a more sustainable society. CEMEX is constantly developing its products in order to meet the increasing requirements for more energy-efficient, environmental, and society-friendly buildings and urban solutions.

CEMEX's Position

The move to more sustainable construction is driven by voluntary certification schemes, mandatory standards and legislation, as well as other policy instruments, which encourage the adoption of sustainable practices. Achieving maximum benefits in terms of sustainability will not only require the optimal use of each of these instruments, but also call for them to positively influence and complement each other.

Based on our analysis, we believe that the following recommendations can help make the construction of buildings more sustainable on a large scale.

Voluntary Green Building Certifications, such as LEED or BREEAM

Voluntary certifications play a vital role in the development of the green building market in many countries. In large parts of the world, certifications drive market development and define future trends. Material selection plays an important part in many of these schemes. However, the approach used is often unsystematic and focuses particularly on the production phase of the materials—effectively neglecting the much larger impact that materials have in the use phase of buildings and structures. A thorough cradle-to-grave life-cycle assessment (LCA)² of the project would not only ensure a fairer and more objective evaluation of materials, but also would better align the results of the certification with the true sustainability impact of the project.

¹ WBCSD's Manifesto Energy Efficiency Buildings

² LEED is currently working on a credit that is based on LCA. This approach should be supported.

Obligatory Construction Standards and Norms

Some countries have already adopted green building standards, such as the California Green Building Standards Code in the U.S. This means that sustainability aspects required by voluntary certifications, such as sustainable design, environmental quality, energy or water efficiency requirements, become a legal obligation.³ Local authorities should be encouraged to follow this example as the most straightforward way to ensure that sustainability aspects are considered in newly developed buildings.

General legislation

There are countries in the world in which governments have taken the initiative and committed themselves to achieve specific sustainability goals; an example is the Climate Change Act 2008 in the UK. Based on general commitments, the specific action plans are developed, leading to increased focus on sustainability for specific areas and industries, including the construction market. Such a vision, properly communicated, managed, and introduced into legislation, has an important impact on the development of the green building market.

Looking Forward

We will maintain our commitment to maximize the efficient use of natural resources and deliver products that respond to our customers' growing sustainable expectations. We will continue working with governments and society to promote effective mechanisms that support sustainable building practices, and we will maintain an open channel of communication to disclose our progress.

³ For example, the California Green Building Standards Code is mandatory for all new buildings since January 2011.
