

# Product Safety and Sustainability Go Hand in Hand

*And both of them add to the bottom line.*

By [Nancy Westcott](#) | Feb 01, 2013

While sustainability continues to prove itself a valuable tool in manufacturing facilities, as well as an environmental necessity, accurately defining it has been an elusive task. The triple bottom lines of the economic, the environmental, and the social aspects of sustainability are the fundamental building blocks, but many view them as public relations rhetoric.



Deborah Grubbe offers a rationale that borders on elegant. She is the chair of the AICHE (American Institute of Chemical Engineers) Institute for Sustainability and owner of Operations and Safety Solutions, LLC, a consultancy that specializes in safety and operations troubleshooting and support. Grubbe was trained in the characteristics of safe operations during her 27-year career at

DuPont, where she held corporate director positions in safety, operations, and engineering. She was also a member of the NASA Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel (the panel issues annual reports evaluating NASA's management and safety culture).

"Consider safety, particularly human safety, as the ultimate form of sustainability. If you are seeing sustainability as the protection of the environment, the only reason you would be asked. "Why do we need to have continued innovation? Why do we need to have good stewardship? Why do we need enlightened leadership? It's so the human race can continue to survive, to flourish. And one way to do that is to assure that the human race is as safe and sustainable as possible."

Whether companies are building products in a more sustainable way or building products that help others to be more sustainable, one thing is for sure: While the triple bottom line of sustainability sounds good on paper, an individual company will most often focus on the economic bottom line because that equates to the company's sustainability. A good business professional wants to spend money once and spend it effectively so that shareholders get a good return on their investment. Failing that, the company is in an uncompetitive situation relative to its peers and will not be sustainable itself.