



Is China going to be the next frontrunner in sustainability?

Technology is changing our lives faster than ever and innovation is altering the way the world around us works. But these developments also have made us more aware about the impact our progress has on the environment. The industry is capable of revolutionizing many aspects of progress and now it is facing a real challenge. How can we grow as an industry yet how can we continue to innovate without doing damage to our environment.

Fortunately a lot of industries and OEM's have joined forces to take the necessary steps to ensure that our future will indeed be sustainable. Whether it is the Manufacturing Restricted Substances List (MRSL) for hazardous substances that was initiated by a group of major apparel and footwear brands and retailers joined in the ZDHC foundation or the sustainability roadmaps that a lot of OEM's have defined, all these initiatives are great strides towards creating a better future. At Stahl we believe we need to take our responsibility towards a more sustainable future and fortunately more and more companies and OEM's share these beliefs.

But not only the industries and OEM's need to play their part, governments both global and local need to start working towards a sustainable future and put sustainability on the agenda. Sometimes it starts with small steps, but in China they take have decided to take big strides.

Realizing that by the time we reach the year 2030 over 75% of Chinas population would be living in urban areas; the Chinese government calculated that this migration could be destructive to their rural lands which in return would diminish their food security.

If by 2030 no changes would have been made to the way Chinese people live, consume and produce, it would destroy their lands, food supply, air quality, bio diversity and along with it every hope for a sustainable future.

The first step was to issue tough environmental laws, regulations and standards, so the most important task for achieving greener urbanization would become enforcement.

But if you talk the talk, you need to walk the walk. The government reformed the planning of urban areas by basing the government prices for industrial land on market value, encouraging land-intensive industries to move to smaller, secondary cities.

And by implementing flexible zones, the use of land would be more diverse and less land would be needed eventually leading to more efficient urban development. Renewable energy sources like wind and water energy are slowly but steadily replacing coal and oil as China's prime energy sources. They are far from there yet, but the effort and the speed at which they make progress indicates that if there is a will there is a way.

But one of the biggest challenges China faces is to reduce the impact of the chemical, steel, cement and waste management industries. They are responsible for a large part of the energy consumption, water and air pollution that is inflicted today. Stahl contributes to the improvement of that situation any way we can. We take initiatives with educating industry professionals and students in China, teaching them about creating a transparent supply chain and introducing sustainable solutions. We realize that these are only small steps, but even small steps will eventually have a big impact on a common goal. By introducing our water based solutions and our experience with taking necessary steps towards a sustainable industry, we contribute towards the goal of the Chinese industry to secure a more sustainable future.

Even though China's efforts will take years for their effect to take hold, we believe the steps taken will serve as an example such that even when economic growth is at stake, we can still make decisions that will turn out to be both productive and sustainable. And we will be there to contribute in any way we possibly can.