

Chapter 6

Ireland: Bewley's Coffee

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Introduction

Promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production is one crucial effort to ensure the resources of the Earth are managed efficiently for future development. The continuous growth in the world's population and a surge in consumerism as countries develop are forcing more competition for resources to fulfil the growing needs of humanity. According to the United Nation's latest SDG report ([United Nations, 2022](#)), the reliance on natural resources is rising by over 65% globally from 2000 to 2019. But at the same time, waste and pollution are also increasing exponentially. This suggests high inefficiency in the use of resources would jeopardise future development. As such, there are calls to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation ([Sanyé-Mengual et al., 2019](#)). Sustainable consumption and production (CSP) offer an integrated approach that extends into economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development which help to provide a systemic change to manage resources in a sustained way. One family business: Bewley's Limited, headquartered in Ireland with operations in the United Kingdom, is managing sustainability through relationships, community and environment. Bewley's works hard to ensure its business manages resources and production responsibly and is cautious of its carbon emissions and actively supports others' success.

Products and/or Services Offered by Bewley's

- Grumpy Mule, Eros and BE coffee brands
- Bewley's and Eros tea brands
- Rude Health dairy-free drinks
- Sweetbird syrup and extras

Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Responsible Consumption and Production,
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- One World's bakery and snacks
- Bewley's Café

Background to Bewley's

The history of Bewley's begins in Ireland. In 1835, the Yorkshire-originated father and son, Samuel and Charles Bewley decided to challenge East India Company's monopoly on tea trading by importing tea directly from Canton, China, to Ireland. This risky decision paved the way for a long-standing family venture. Joshua Bewley, brother of Charles, established the China Tea Company in 1840, which later became Bewley's coffee today. After gaining a reputation in coffee and tea trading, Bewley's opened its first café which offered the first in-store roast coffee in Dublin. Joshua was succeeded by his son Ernest Bewley who imported the first Jersey cows into Ireland from Jersey Island, as his motto says, 'I want the best of everything and that's not good enough'. The pursuit of excellence with a unique family atmosphere enabled the business to grow successfully over the years. Victor Bewley took over the business from his father Ernest and made Bewley's a household name in Ireland since 1932. The business endured through generations of family successors. But it was acquired by Patrick (Paddy) Campbell in 1989 who then formed the Campbell Bewley Group with a family member from the Bewley staying on the board of directors. Patrick Bewley was the last direct line to Bewley's family dynasty to be on the board of directors as he passed away on the 26th of December 2021 ([The Irish Times, 2022](#)). Bewley's brand name remains in this newly formed group as it carries *a spirited history of adventure and originality*. Paddy's son, Cól, is currently the Chairman of the group.

Under the leadership of Campbell's family, Bewley's ventured into the international markets by setting up operations in the United States, where it is traded under the following names: Rebecca's Cafe and Java City since 1997, then in 2011 the Bewley's UK. Today, Bewley's is one of the largest coffee roasters in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The business also includes the provision of tea and coffee solutions to the hospitality and service sectors. In the United Kingdom, Bewley's owned a roastery in Meltham, Yorkshire, four distribution centres, and provides close to 260 jobs at an average turnover of £50 million a year. The roastery reached its capacity of 1,200 tonnes in 2018. Bewley's is also the first certified Carbon Neutral Specialty Coffee Roaster in the United Kingdom which it achieved back in 2008. The Guild of Fine Foods has also voted their coffee as 'Best UK Coffee Brand' four years in succession 2013–2017 (Grumpy Mule Coffee, Bewley's Artisanal Coffee brand produced in Yorkshire).

The success of Bewley's is closely linked to the Quaker beliefs of the founding Bewley family. This 'religious' process of decision-making developed more than 350 years ago has attracted interest in management and organisation studies ([Muers & Burton, 2019](#)). The Quakers carry a unique set of ethical and moral priorities. As such, this family firm emphasises the values of community, equality, honesty, fairness and integrity of character, which influences the way business is managed and these beliefs are still exhibited in their business value today:

- We respect people.
- We are enterprising and resourceful.
- We do what we say we will do.
- We make our planet a better place to be.

The business values espoused by Bewley's offer a strong foundation for it being a sustainable family firm. Bewley's is a proud advocate of the power of community where they build strong and genuine relationships with various stakeholders including the planet. Continuing this legacy, the Campbell family led Bewley's in becoming the first Fairtrade-certified coffee in 1996. Bewley's Ireland, which is headquartered in Dublin, became carbon-neutral in 2008, way before sustainability was attracting attention on the global stage. This strategy is nicely aligned with SDG#12.2, which is *to achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources*. In the United Kingdom, Bewley's also spearheaded several initiatives displaying their core value such as donating over £300K over the last three years in Fairtrade Premium and supporting research on the sustainability of coffee cups where the outcomes have been submitted to the Government Enquiry into coffee cup waste. This latter initiative can be linked to SDG#12.5 which aims to *substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse*.

Being a coffee roastery and trading company, Bewley's is aware of the negative impacts its business brings to the environment. From working with growers in developing nations to shipping the beans to a roastery facility located in Yorkshire and then distributing them to customers around the United Kingdom, the business generates an enormous carbon footprint and emissions. As such, Bewley's has constantly looked for ways to mitigate environmental risk and work with partners to make the world a better place. They have also participated in social and well-being programmes by promoting gender empowerment at the farm level, supporting local food banks in Yorkshire, located its new southern UK office to a farm to encourage employees' well-being. Bewley's also formed a team called 'Bewley's for Good' that constantly examines and improves the way they do business with the world. In sum, Bewley's has coupled sustainability into its business strategy as shown in Fig. 1. Based on the sustainability framework focussing on people, sourcing, operations and offer, they track progress against objectives set annually. The family business prioritises three global goals, i.e. SDG#10 Reduced Inequality, SDG#12 Responsible Consumption and Production, and SDG#13 Climate Action.

Aligning the family business with SDG# 12 – Sustainable consumption and production Bewley's has a bold mission to ensure

Everyone whose lives are touched by Bewley's has the chance to thrive.

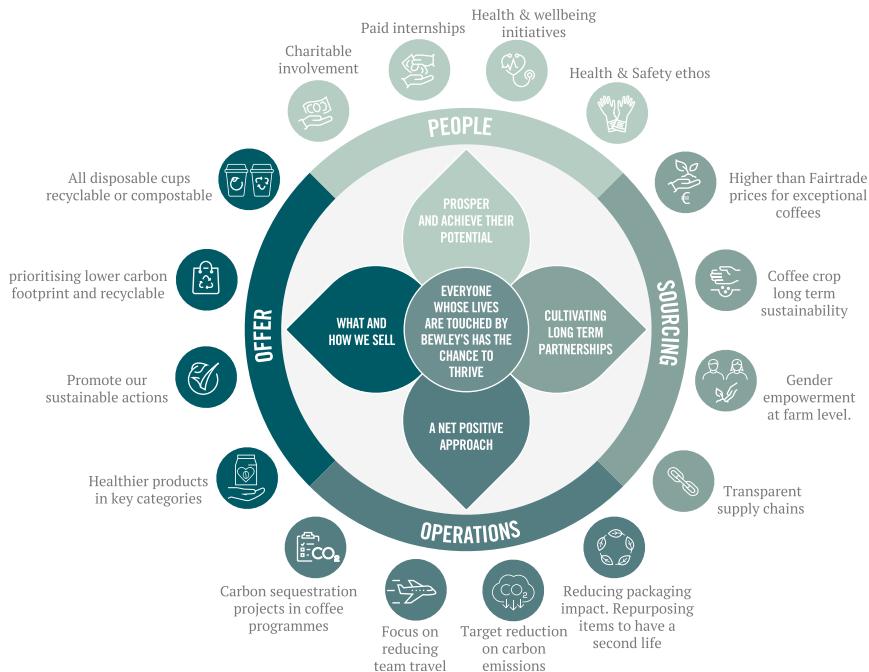


Fig. 1. Bewley's Sustainability-Driven Strategy (Bewley's, 2020).

With this, they have a vision to

...provide a leadership framework that empowers our team to work responsibly today for themselves, our business, our community, and our future world.

To realise the mission and vision, their business position as the leading coffee producer requires a closer look at how they produce and roast coffee. As said by David Turney, the National Account Manager in the United Kingdom:

Our business has a very negative environmental impact. Growing coffee is great but we harvest it and ship it to a roastery 8,000 miles away. Then we roast it in incredibly hot ovens, which uses an awful lot of energy. Then we pack it into something you can't recycle. We ship it off somewhere, who then takes a machine and again uses this incredibly high energy to produce a cup of coffee and heat it and whatever else to serve it to someone into a cup that may not be recyclable. So, every piece of what we do along the line has a negative impact on the planet. The more coffee we sell, the more carbon we produce.

(D. Turney, personal communication, 3rd October 2022)

The critical reflection on the challenges of running a successful coffee trading and roastery business motivates the family business to align its values with good business practices constantly. As such, they have developed several programmes and accomplished significant milestones in ensuring sustainable production and consumption.

Sustainable Production

Bewley's sourced coffee from all around the world so it is crucial to monitor the bean-to-cup journey and consider the impact on profit, people, and the planet, which aligns with the family business values. Back in 2000, Bewley's in the United Kingdom started to support Fairtrade and pay above the Fairtrade minimum price for all the branded coffees. Through this system of certification, Bewley's ensures their coffee beans are produced by farmers and workers who are treated fairly with safe working conditions and fairer pay. Their commitment to the Fairtrade programme continues through the years where Bewley's purchase of Fairtrade coffee has increased by over £1.5 million in the past five years. This aligns with SDG#12.1.1 where the family firm shifted its sourcing policies with a focus on sustainable production. Along with Fairtrade-certified coffee, the company has developed a long-term relationship with farmers at the origin. These relationships enable Bewley's to provide 100% traceable coffee and allow direct trade that benefits the grower communities. Bewley's delivered several meaningful impacts to the grower communities. Socially, they supported the community around Finca Santa Paula in Coban, Guatemala, for many years through the school building, equipment and teaching improvement fund by donating 20p per pack of Guatemala Pocola sold (under the brand Grumpy Mule coffee). They have also worked with the Capucas Cooperative in Honduras to provide a dental clinic for coffee growers in the community. Another project in Northeast Nicaragua where Bewley's donated £9,000 to fund a building that is currently used by a group of women working at a coffee mill to develop energy bars to sell into the local market.

From environmental and economic aspects, Bewley's assisted a group of farmers in Comisyl, a village in the central highlands of Honduras, who have been struggling with an airborne fungal disease specific to coffee which affected the health of coffee trees and yields. This effort is in line with target SDG#12.a: *to support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.* With financial resources from Bewley's, two field-based agronomists were engaged to assist in the development of educational coffee programmes that would help the farmers to improve quality and yields. This initiative bolstered the crop's long-term sustainability by improving local biodiversity and coffee yields, in agreement with SDG#12.2.2 *to ensure the efficient use of natural resources.* Besides the global coffee grower communities, a family business like Bewley's takes pride in its long-term relationship with local suppliers. For instance, one of their milk suppliers has been providing milk since the eighteenth century in Ireland.

Bewley's has a long-term goal to support more farmers moving up the value chain. They have worked to connect some of their farmer partners with consumers. In several Fairtrade Fortnight¹ events, and farmer events at universities and companies in the United Kingdom, Bewley's stresses the importance of minimum pricing and long-term partnerships for the coffee communities. In one of those events, one of their partners from Honduras shared how climate change is affecting coffee growers and the community, low price challenges and the importance of female role models in the communities. Through these initiatives, more voices were given to the grower communities in the supply chain of an important commodity. To address the low commodity price for coffee growers especially female farmers, Bewley's works with Cafe Femenino Foundation in Peru by empowering female coffee growers to grow, market and sell their coffee in their names, creating a unique and premium selling feature in coffee. By paying a premium for every bag of Peru Feminino coffee, women in Peru are supported to claim legal rights to the lands they farm, to take up leadership positions within the co-operative, to receive an ethical price for their crops and earn a wage which is equivalent to the national minimum wage ([Wendel, 2021](#)). In addition, the coffee grower communities are also encouraged to seek certifications on their coffee beans to receive premium and competitive pricing. As a result, more than 92% of coffee roasted in Bewley's roastery is certified Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance and Organic, and many have received all three certifications. Besides coffee, all Bewley's teas are also ethically and responsibly sourced. The ethical sourcing approach provides a competitive advantage to Bewley, where they can uphold the quality and value of their coffee and tea. All these efforts are important to ensure the sustainable production of Bewley's key ingredients.

Sustainable Consumption

One of the main goals in the sustainability framework of Bewley's highlights its enthusiasm to introduce healthier products in key categories ([Bewley's, 2020](#)). As such, Bewley's devoted enormous time and investment to creating new product lines that consider the health benefits of consumers. For example, their 'better for you' range of snacks considers the dietary needs of customers and health-conscious trends in the market. Using certified sustainable palm oil with Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) standards, the range includes brownies and on-the-go bars under 250 calories per bar. Their One World Bakery also offers snacks, muffins and cookies that are Fairtrade-certified. Aligning with the effort to reduce climate impact, Bewley's also introduced Rude Health non-dairy milk alternatives to go with their coffee and tea. With a transparent supply chain through sourcing from long-term partners, Bewley's can leverage these relationships to provide high-quality and healthy product ranges.

¹Fairtrade Fortnight is an annual promotional campaign which aims to increase awareness of Fairtrade products.

In the United Kingdom, about 2.5 billion disposable coffee cups are creating approximately 25,000 tonnes of waste each year (Doward, 2020). Bewley's is aware of the high carbon footprint and challenges of recycling cups and packaging as a coffee and tea producer. As the first coffee company to spearhead research into reusable cups back in 2016, Bewley's has been actively promoting the use of reusable cups in all its distribution channels. They then introduced 100% recyclable and 100% compostable cups the following year, supporting SDG#12.5 by *substantially reducing waste generation*. In 2022, their sales of disposable cups plummet by 30% while sales of reusable cups doubled. Using a similar knowledge set, Bewley's introduced a range of 100% compostable coffee capsules, which used 100% bio-based materials in 2018. The capsules can be used with a range of home coffee machines including Nespresso coffee machines. They are also an active member of an industry body: Paper Cup Recovery and Recycle Group which aim to increase the recycling rates of on-to-go cups. Bewley's has also sponsored the 'Glasgow Cup Movement' that aims to raise consumers' awareness of making more sustainable cup choices. Their innovative effort and commitment to bringing sustainable solutions to the popular coffee culture aligned with SDG#12.5 and support a circular economy.

Packaging is another key focus for their marketing and operations department. One of their ongoing projects is to review coffee packaging with the advancement of materials technology. They aim to have all their packaging 100% recyclable by 2025. During 2019, Bewley's successfully reduced the packaging on coffees by saving 2.5 tonnes per year of waste. They have opted to stock refillable syrups, loose tea and ground coffees in their distribution vehicles to reduce packaging. In their Yorkshire roastery, all the coffee sacks are recycled locally, and the sacks are turned into fibre which is used in carpet underlay and pipe lagging. This is aligned with their priorities to make sure the packaging can be recycled easily in existing infrastructure to reduce the carbon footprint. They are currently working to launch a lower carbon footprint coffee pack that is also recyclable ready. Research and testing are ongoing to find the best recyclable ready and lower carbon footprint films and non-metallised films. The choice of packaging materials is based on whole life cost analysis specifically focussing on carbon footprint. They also offer support to cafes to recycle used coffee grounds as compost. Bewley's collaborates with Bio-Bean in recycling coffee grounds into coffee logs which can be burnt to heat a home. These initiatives support a circular economy and align with SDG#12.4.

Net Positive Consumption

As mentioned earlier, Bewley's is aware of the large amount of carbon emitted and consumed in their business operations. They have been calculating their carbon footprint since 2007, looking at every aspect of the business. Bewley's has implemented several projects to reduce and offset its carbon emissions. For example, Bewley's was impressed with the work of one of their coffee partners in Honduras where a solar-powered drying facility was built for their cooperative.

Thus, Bewley's invested in this initiative to offset its carbon emissions and is in line with target SDG#12.a as it allows a developing country like Honduras to strengthen renewable energy-generating capacity. The efficient use of energy also happened in the United Kingdom where their roastery located in Yorkshire has installed solar panels, decreasing Bewley's carbon emission. The facility allows them to supply renewable energy to the national grid thus generating additional revenue for the roastery.

Bewley's also purchased carbon credits to plant native trees for carbon sequestration and integrated open canopy farming within the Pico Pijol rainforest national park. This cohesive approach to farming brings benefits in several ways. From an ecological perspective, it expands the coverage of forests thus protecting forest habitats and improving wildlife and habitat levels. For the farmers, this farming method tripled their yields with better fertilisation levels and lowers the risk of coffee plant diseases, supporting SDG#12.2 for efficient use of natural resources. The carbon purchase made by Bewley's also generated additional revenues for the farmers. This project comprises 20 farms that can offset about 7,000 metric tonnes of CO₂ through the 171 hectares of forest buffer used to capture carbon ([Bewley, 2020](#)). At the same time, 68 hectares of coffee have been planted in the same area. Closer to home at its Yorkshire roastery, Bewley's funded a project called Peak Partners by donating 20p for every pack of its Grumpy Mule Dark Peak coffee sold to the Peak District National Park ([Peak District Foundation, 2022](#)). The project involves restoring old peatlands by putting moisture back into them, which includes diverting streams back into old peatlands so the land can keep the carbon again. This is an impactful project in the United Kingdom as the country's peatlands store about 3.2 billion tonnes of carbon ([The Wildlife Trusts, 2022](#)). Giving new life to the peatlands in the Peak district would support the country to achieve the net-zero goal. As a result of these initiatives, Bewley's has offset its scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions in the last 10 years.

Though the business has a global presence with multiple operations around the world, they have been able to reduce team travel using technology as a platform to connect and collaborate. Bewley's has also increased the percentage of hybrid or electric company cars from 35% to over 72% from 2020 to 2022. To reduce their waste and their carbon footprint, Bewley's works with local food banks close to their offices and roastery by donating short-dated stock through 'Bewley's for Good' team where this initiative supports SDG#12.3 to reduce food waste. They are also actively involved in several recycling programmes such as improving the rate at which water filters were recycled in their offices and roastery to give every used item a second life, aligning with SDG#12.5. Currently, there is an ongoing project reviewing the efficiency of coffee machines supplied by Bewley's with new technology.

Reflect and Bounce Back

Bewley's is a family business that started with a risky decision back in 1835 and has grown into a responsible and sustainable international corporation. As mentioned by David:

Cól, our chairman put the values of the company and the history on how it was formed on the top of his agenda when he considered how Bewley's continues to move forward.

(D. Turney, personal communication, 3rd October 2022)

Hence, the business has spearheaded many key initiatives to pursue the sustainability-oriented strategy as outlined in the way they produce and consume. Nevertheless, the work is not complete. In their latest sustainability report ([Bewley's, 2022](#)), Bewley's is determined to move the sustainability agenda with the yearly publication of a sustainability report, aligning with the SDG#12.6 target: *to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle*. To ensure continuity in progressing the business by offering more value to all stakeholders, Bewley's continues to develop future leaders through their Management Development Leadership Programme. The programme will empower and support these upcoming leaders to fulfil their potential. There is also an increasing role played by project groups such as 'Bewley's for Good' which focusses on embedding a sustainable business strategy in day-to-day operations. Collaborations with external partners remain the most effective and important approach. Bewley's has started working with one of its main customers in the United Kingdom by co-funding an academy for young coffee growers in Planadas, Colombia, to ensure sustainability in the supply chain focussing on SDG#12.3.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the retail, hospitality and higher education sector, which are the most important market segments for Bewley's. The logistics crisis due to prolonged lockdowns in some countries also affected their supply chain. Bewley's used the period to reflect on their business processes from a sustainability and innovative angle. As a result, they managed to reduce their carbon emissions by upgrading to energy-saving equipment, downsizing the regional distribution hub by working with partners and changing their product strategy by producing bigger packs of coffee to reduce packaging and cost. The prudent yet environmentally conscious way to bounce back again reflects their core business values.

Bewley's is in the process of aligning its business targets with the SDGs, particularly SDG#10, 12 and 13 ([Bewley's, 2022](#)). As observed in the earlier sections, they have implemented many sustainability-driven initiatives and achieved meaningful milestones in the business. Moving forward, the business needs to design specific metrics to measure the impacts of its work against these SDG goals and indicators. By demonstrating contributions that are real and sustainable for the long term, Bewley's would enjoy a good reputation, achieve operational efficiency and effectiveness, and eventually business longevity which is imperative

for a family business that aims to continue its legacy after operating for more than 150 years.

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