

MAINTAINING RELIABLE DRUG DELIVERY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

Henryk Badack of Vetter considers how a holistic approach to sustainability can enable CDMOs to implement efficient operations strategically – while introducing initiatives that address environmental, economic and social elements.

The rapid evolution of advanced biologics is reshaping expectations for drug delivery – and with it, the operational standards that CDMOs must meet. The need for robust aseptic processes, reliable scale-up and high-quality production has never been greater. These are areas where a specialised CDMO partner can materially benefit its biopharma customers and, ultimately, patients by reducing risk and time-to-market for drug development programmes. This alone represents a meaningful contribution to faster and safer patient access. When combined with a strategic commitment to sustainability, these capabilities gain an additional layer of resilience and long-term reliability.

Sustainability enables CDMOs to address the implicit demands associated with complexity without shifting their core focus away from their customers' development, manufacturing and packaging needs. Seasoned outsourcing partners already

understand how to mitigate risk through proven processes, quality management systems and cross-functional expertise – from clinical to commercial scale and beyond. However, when pharmaceutical service providers make consistent and strategic investments in sustainability, they foster improved trust and reliability throughout the system.

THE SUSTAINABILITY GENE: STRATEGY IN PRACTICE

For experienced manufacturing partners, sustainability is a corporate responsibility. It should be rooted into a company's DNA as a critical part of its business strategy. A holistic approach to sustainability can allow CDMOs to implement efficient operations strategically throughout the company – with a focus on introducing initiatives that address environmental, economic and social elements.

“WHEN PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS MAKE CONSISTENT AND STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS IN SUSTAINABILITY, THEY FOSTER IMPROVED TRUST AND RELIABILITY THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM.”



Figure 1: PV cells can be used to generate a significant portion of a facility's electricity requirements.

“STRATEGIC FINANCIAL INVESTMENT INTO SUSTAINABLE EFFORTS WILL IMPROVE A SERVICE PROVIDER’S PARTNERSHIPS OVER TIME, AS WELL AS ITS OWN LONGEVITY AND FUTURE GROWTH.”

Positive results, however, do not appear overnight; effective sustainability strategies require long-term dedication to creating and building up viable initiatives and programmes. The impact of these strategic investments can be tracked over time with measurable actions and commitments. For example, the adoption of renewable energy sources at service provider facilities can have a big impact on sustainability. Using climate-friendly energy – such as photovoltaics (PV) and biomethane – for pharmaceutical production can lead to drastic reductions in carbon utility emissions without risking drug delivery reliability (Figure 1). Energy efficiency initiatives that are both reasonable and measurable can contribute to the achievement of ambitious goals, all while avoiding compromising product quality or patient safety in their execution.

Sustainable operations, however, cannot have a one-dimensional focus. They need to be all-encompassing. A seasoned outsourcing partner’s effective and comprehensive approach should include a commitment to supporting employee wellbeing through social sustainability efforts. Offering enhanced employee benefits – such as free supplementary health insurance, mental health and fitness initiatives, and mobility programmes (for example, bike leasing and public transport subsidies to encourage use of sustainable transportation) – supports a healthier, more resilient workforce, which is an essential pillar of sustainable operations.

“SUSTAINABILITY HAS MOVED FROM A VOLUNTARY INITIATIVE TO A CORE EXPECTATION FOR CDMOs.”

Another element of corporate responsibility is a commitment to support biopharma customers in achieving their Scope 3 sustainability goals through these initiatives. Strategic financial investment into sustainable efforts will improve a service provider’s partnerships over time, as well as its own longevity and future growth.

PROOF OF CONCEPT: THE IMPACT OF SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

For many manufacturing partners, determining the quality of their sustainability efforts can be difficult to navigate. How can a company confirm that they are on the right track with their sustainability strategy? Third-party validation from international campaigns can provide much needed reassurance. For example, external sustainability ratings (such as EcoVadis) and science-based climate target validations (such as the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi)) provide transparent confirmation that sustainability strategies are both credible and aligned with global standards (Figure 2).

The SBTi validation process features a thorough analysis of emissions calculation methodology to confirm the accuracy and feasibility of the sustainability strategy. These recognitions reaffirm the real impact of effective sustainability strategy and operations based on their objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and alignment with the Paris Agreement to achieve net zero emissions.

Sustainability has moved from a voluntary initiative to a core expectation for CDMOs. Aiming to reach net zero emissions in the next several decades is widely expected. Exploration into climate-friendly materials and increasing recycling rates supports the achievement of this goal.

In addition, pharmaceutical waste remains a challenging issue in the industry. Investment in waste separation and recycling efforts can alleviate the amount



Figure 2: EcoVadis ratings demonstrate a company’s commitment to sustainability.

“PATIENT SAFETY AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE MUST DRIVE EVERY SUSTAINABILITY DECISION.”

of total waste that a service provider produces at its facilities. Another vital sustainability consideration for outsourcing partners is the evaluation of alternative packaging materials with customers to find approaches that work best for them – for example, paper-based or mono-material secondary packaging.

Patient safety and regulatory compliance must drive every sustainability decision. No longer a moral obligation but a quality expectation, sustainable operations can help CDMOs to win new business and foster long-lasting relationships.

SUSTAINABILITY: THE KEY TO RELIABLE DRUG DELIVERY

Sustainability in drug delivery, and in the biopharmaceutical industry as a whole, is not about choosing between climate protection and reliable operations. It is about doing both, and doing them well, to best serve customers and their patients around the world. Continuous strategic investment in sustainability builds trust with customers, in addition to providing direction for navigating risks and adjusting processes to meet evolving needs. Throughout sustainable operations, CDMOs need to be dedicated to

supporting reliability and resilience in drug delivery services with a holistic customer centric approach to address the growing demands of advanced injectables.

Clear benchmarks and long-term partnerships enable continuous progress and ensure that sustainability efforts remain measurable, credible and aligned with future industry needs. In the face of a shifting global market due to increasing complexity, sustainability will continue to help CDMOs sustain trustworthy services.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Vetter is a family-owned CDMO with headquarters in Ravensburg, Germany, and production facilities in Germany, Austria and the US. Vetter also has sales locations in the Asia-Pacific markets of Japan, China, South Korea and Singapore. Around the world, pharma and biotech companies benefit from its decades of experience, high-quality, modern technologies, reliability and commitment of its 7,300 employees.

In close collaboration with its customers, Vetter helps to enable the global supply of essential medicines. Vetter provides support from drug product development through clinical and commercial filling to a wide range of assembly and packaging services for vials, syringes and cartridges, developing prefilled drug delivery systems together

with its customers to continuously improve patient safety, comfort and compliance. Vetter takes responsibility for sustainable practices and operates as a socially and ethically responsible corporate citizen. It is a member of the UN Global Compact and has Science Based Target initiative and received platinum ranking from EcoVadis.



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Henryk Badack is a Managing Director at Vetter. Prior to that, he was Senior Vice President Technical Services. Mr Badack has over 20 years of experience in the pharma industry, having joined Vetter in 2003 as a Project Manager for validation and qualification projects. He later held positions of increasing importance at Sandoz in 2007–2008, before returning to Vetter in 2009.

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