

# Ride on national momentum to tackle climate change

By Myriam Akhoun and Amy Ho

**I**T is getting harder for the private sector to deny the effects of climate change, as challenges from disrupted supply chains to rising insurances costs, to labour challenges, continually put business owners under pressure. As a country highly reliant on global trade, Singapore is not insulated from climate change. For instance, extreme weather events may lead to volatile global food prices and disruptions to business supply chains, impacting food imports and business activities.

For businesses, it is no longer a question of why action is needed. Now, it is an urgent matter of how they can devise strategies to reduce climate-related risks and find competitive advantage in a warming, carbon-constrained world. A 2020 Engie Impact survey found that 60 per cent of companies in the Asia-Pacific still do not have decarbonisation targets, and those that do face a range of obstacles in meeting them.

Navigating the journey to meet decarbonisation objectives can be complex with a dynamic environment to circumnavigate. The Singapore Green Plan 2030 provides a broad framework for companies to align their actions and targets. Among organisations rising to the call, the National University of Singapore (NUS), a leading global university, is using its knowledge and expertise to illustrate the various levers organisations can use to achieve their decarbonisation goals.

NUS defined its own Sustainability and Climate Action Plan 2030, aligned with Singapore's decarbonisation priorities and plans. Working in partnership with Engie Impact, NUS has not only defined a detailed decarbonisation road map that serves as a blueprint to inspire and guide other organisations, it has also set an ambitious goal for itself: achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Here are five ways NUS is putting its decarbonisation plan into action, in line with the key targets outlined in the Singapore Green Plan 2030:

1. Firstly, NUS will deploy more renewable energy solutions from both on-campus and off-campus sources. Installing on-site renewable energy solutions through solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on rooftops and unconventional surfaces, complemented with the procurement of green energy produced outside the campus. Such efforts echo Singapore's initiatives to quadruple solar energy deployment by 2025 and tap green energy sources from the Asean region.

2. It is envisaged that the fleet of internal shuttle buses serving the campus will transit to electric buses – achieving 50 per cent electrification of its fleet by 2024 and doubling to 100 per cent electrification by 2026.

3. NUS will further enhance its energy efficiency and energy-saving initiatives. Through green retrofitting and operation excellence, the university will be implementing a campus-wide

thermostat policy for air conditioners, introducing green chilled water clusters to replace old ones, and scaling its Green Labs programme. These initiatives will not only enable NUS to minimise electricity consumption while maximising cost savings, but also support the GreenGov.SG objectives to reduce its energy use by 10 per cent from its 2020 level.

4. Next, the university plans to plant 50,000 additional trees by 2025 and 90,000 trees by 2030 to help absorb and trap some of the carbon emissions driving global heating. By setting aside land for green spaces, organisations like NUS can contribute to Singapore's goal to plant one million more trees between 2020 and 2030.

5. NUS has also committed to investing in green innovation by strengthening its research and development capabilities and creating a test bed for clean energy technologies, including low-carbon hydrogen and unconventional solar power. This will contribute to the Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2025 Plan which promotes the development of new sustainability solutions such as carbon capture, utilisation and storage, low-carbon hydrogen, energy efficient materials, and solutions for the circular economy, among others.

Tackling climate change is a journey – every step matters, no matter how small. Over time, they add up to a movement that is contagious, compounding, and impactful. As the private sector draws inspiration from examples set by the public

sector, more organisations, including higher education institutions and private enterprises, can learn how to execute their vision by taking a leaf out of NUS' green playbook.

Each organisation's net-zero transformations are likely to be unique, as they will require their own combination of levers to be deployed at the right pace and scale to successfully decarbonise and meet the operational and financial realities of their business.

To kick-start the journey, organisations must start with data collection and emission assessments, understand how the organisation contributes to carbon emissions to tailor a proactive plan to curb these emissions, set targets, identify opportunities, and prioritise areas directly within their control. With these steps in place, organisations can develop an actionable road map that connects initiatives with the nation's decarbonisation goals.

This journey isn't an easy one. But it gets easier. If the private sector maximises emerging opportunities, they may generate enough momentum to keep the green movement going. The hope is that these collective efforts will blaze a trail for companies to follow suit as more private organisations take ownership in helping to realise Singapore's vision of a greener future.

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