



## GreenNEWS #16

### **Six sustainability myths in manufacturing – and what to do instead**

In manufacturing, sustainability is often discussed in extremes. Some people treat it as a paperwork exercise. Others see it as a cost that “nice companies” can afford, but SMEs cannot. Both views block progress – and they miss the point. For most manufacturing firms, sustainability is simply a practical way to reduce loss, control risk, and respond to customer expectations with confidence. Let’s challenge six common myths and replace them with actions you can start this quarter.

#### **Myth 1: Sustainability is mainly about reporting**

Reporting is the output, not the work. The real work is understanding where your company loses money and where it is exposed. Start with two lists: biggest losses (scrap, rework, downtime, energy waste) and biggest exposures (energy prices, key materials, supplier reliability, customer requirements). Pick three priorities and track them every month.

#### **Myth 2: You need big investments to make a difference**

Many improvements come from better control, not new machines. A simple 30-day “no-investment sprint” can deliver surprising results: fix compressed air leaks, adjust pressure settings, reduce idle time, standardise start-up and shutdown routines, review setpoints, and strengthen preventive maintenance to reduce scrap. Small actions, fast feedback.

#### **Myth 3: Green always means higher cost**

Often “green” just means “less loss.” Translate sustainability into numbers your teams already respect: cost of scrap per week, hours spent on rework, cost of unplanned stops, energy per unit. When people see the money and the stability benefits, the topic stops sounding like a slogan.

#### **Myth 4: Only large corporations can handle this**

SMEs can move faster because they have fewer layers. You don’t need a perfect system to start. Choose one product line or one process, define a clear goal, appoint one owner who can make decisions, and use one simple dashboard with 5–10 metrics. Scale only after you see results.

**Myth 5: We can't act until we have perfect data**

Waiting for perfect data is a trap. You can improve a lot using the information you already have. Start with what is easiest to measure and hardest to argue with: material use, scrap, rework, and energy per unit. Then look at purchasing: which materials and components drive the biggest cost and the biggest risk? Even a rough ranking is enough to choose where to focus. You don't need a perfect footprint to make smarter decisions, you need a clear target and basic discipline.

**Myth 6: It's the sustainability manager's job**

In manufacturing, results come from production, maintenance, quality, and purchasing. Make ownership simple: production tracks scrap and energy per unit; maintenance reduces leaks, downtime and instability; quality reduces defect drivers and rework; purchasing improves material choices and supplier reliability. Sustainability becomes real when it has owners, routines, and targets.

If you want a practical starting point, choose the myth you hear most often in your company. Then pick one small change you can test in the next four weeks – and measure the result. Real progress is rarely dramatic. It is usually a sequence of practical decisions that reduce waste and increase control.