

An Exploration of Measures of Social Sustainability and their Application to Supply Chain Decisions

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Abstract

Sustainability recognizes the interdependence of ecological, social, and economic systems – the three pillars of sustainability. The definition of corporate social responsibility (CSR) often advocates ethical behavior with respect to these systems. As more corporations commit to sustainability and CSR policies, there is increasing pressure to consider social impacts throughout the supply chain. This paper reviews metrics, indicators, and frameworks of social impacts and initiatives relative to their ability to evaluate the social sustainability of supply chains. Then, the relationship between business decision-making and social sustainability is explored with attention initially focused on directly impacting national level measures. A general strategy for considering measures of social sustainability is proposed, and a variety of indicators of CSR are described. Several of these indicators are then employed in an example to demonstrate how they may be applied to supply chain decision-making.

Keywords: Sustainability; Corporate social responsibility; Supply chain; Decision-making