

OPINIONATED

CLARE DUBOIS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Doing your bit

Collectively, we need to realise that action is needed now to protect the planet and future generations. Every business, no matter how small, can help to make a difference



E **VERY BUSINESS CAN TAKE A PROFOUND ROLE** in tackling climate change. You can help lead the shift away from unconscious consumption and towards conscious restoration of the natural world. Wake up, recognise that business as usual is over and become a leader of the new.

How? Embed ecological restoration into the heart of your company. Recognise that the era of taking from nature without thought belongs to a past that our children no longer have time for. Look into their eyes and tell them that you are going to do everything to protect them from what's coming – and then make that a reality. No amount of profit is worth making at their expense. The wealth knowingly created through the destruction of ecosystems now needs to be repaid.

Who are you going to be – follower or leader? The one who dares to say it like it is and runs a different kind of company, or the one who stays faithful to the old? For this world that we have taken for granted and are now losing, stand up and lead.

Start by facing reality. Our world is fast approaching 500 parts per million (ppm) of atmospheric carbon dioxide; the safe upper limit was considered to be 350ppm. Despite increasing recognition that large-scale reforestation uses nature's own mechanisms to lock down carbon and stabilise the climate, deforestation rates are increasing – meaning excess CO₂ is now acidifying our oceans, leaving 80 per cent of coral dead or dying.

More than 90 per cent of the big fish in our seas have already gone, and thousands of species are going extinct every year. The world we grew up in is lost forever, and the behaviours we normalised to create this loss also need to become a thing of the past. We need to create a new normal – all of us. No one left out. It's hugely exciting.

We need to take a two-pronged approach. The first: reduce, reuse, protect, treat everything as sacred and waste nothing. The second: revere, restore, regenerate and replenish. Stop mindless destruction, and start conscious restoration. TreeSisters, the global women-led reforestation charity I founded in 2012, can help you with step two – we can grow you a forest and help you embed restoration into your world.

Your business could cultivate a fast-growing tropical forest that sequesters carbon three times faster than temperate forests, and mangrove forests that sequester 30 per cent on top of that. Without tropical forests, we will lose our temperate climate – and we are losing them at an unthinkable rate.

Imagine growing forests in Brazil, Cameroon, Kenya, Mozambique, Madagascar, India, Nepal and Indonesia. Think about how it would feel to unify your team, or your customer base, around a shared goal of measurable ecological restoration. Consider the leadership that you could bring to your sector when you make a real, generous and appropriate gesture for the planet. Contemplate the impact you could have on your customer base as an educator turning inspiration into action. Could you create a whole new way of doing business by adding the dimension of deep planetary care? Wouldn't that be a profound relief for everyone?

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► **CLARE DUBOIS** is Founding CEO of TreeSisters. To find out more about its Grow Your Own Forest campaign, visit www.treesisters.org. Views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of FSB.

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