Future-Fit Materials Playbook

A practical guide to scaling safer, more sustainable, and more circular materials within companies, across value networks, and through markets and policy

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MEMBER RELEASE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report was developed by the Scaling Future-Fit Materials Innovation Working Group, which included the following companies as participants and Brand Sponsors: Braskem, Eastman, Estée Lauder, IFF, P&G, and Target.

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About this Playbook

This playbooks is the first work product of the **Scaling Future-Fit Materials Innovation Working Group**, a collaboration between Sustainable Brands and Sustainable Chemistry that brings together companies working to advance a future in which all chemicals, materials, and products are safe, sustainable, and circular across their full lifecycle from creation through use, reuse, and end of life. The group convenes brand owners, retailers, manufacturers, suppliers, and material innovators to share insights, demonstrate leadership, and define actionable next steps for transforming the materials economy. Its mission is to accelerate wide-scale market adoption of safer, low-carbon, and circular materials and ingredients.

This playbook is designed as a **practical guide to scaling safer, more sustainable, and more circular materials** within companies, across value networks, and through markets and policy.

The playbook is written for **cross-functional leaders** working to scale safer and more sustainable materials within consumer-goods value chains particularly teams in sustainability, innovation and R&D, procurement, finance, marketing and brand, and product stewardship inside brands and retailers. It is equally relevant for **suppliers**, **manufacturers**, and **materials innovators** seeking clearer demand signals and shared evaluation frameworks to accelerate commercialization and adoption.

To maximize relevance of the Playbook across different priorities and operating contexts, we offer an intentionally broad definition of future-fit materials that includes considerations of performance, climate, nature, circularity, transparency, and social equity. However, the Playbook places particular **emphasis on the transition away from hazardous substances** toward safer alternatives. The rationale for this choice is explained in the first section.

Version 1.0 is a **Member Release intended for pilot use** by Change Chemistry and Sustainable Brands members. Future versions will be updated based on member feedback.

Project Leaders

Sustainable Brands® is a purpose-driven platform and community that helps companies integrate sustainability into core business strategy. SB convenes cross-functional leaders across brand, marketing, innovation, and strategy, and provides practical tools, research, case studies, and peer learning.

Change Chemistry is a network of over 100 companies—along the full value chain and across multiple sectors—collaborating to drive market transformation toward safer, more sustainable chemistry through its community learning, value chain collaboration, policy engagement, and market alignment programs.

Sponsors

The following companies have supported the Scaling Future-Fit Materials Innovation Working Group as participants and sponsors: Braskem, Eastman, Estée Lauder, IFF, P&G, and Target.

Preface

The transition to safer, more sustainable materials is no longer a future aspiration; it is a present business imperative. Across industries, leaders are facing converging pressures from customers, investors, regulators, and civil society to rethink the material foundations of the products and services they bring to market. At the same time, scientific advances, new business models, and emerging forms of collaboration are making it increasingly possible to move beyond incremental improvement toward systemic change.

This playbook was developed to help leaders navigate that transition with greater clarity and confidence. It reflects a shared belief that scaling future-fit materials is not only a technical challenge, but also an organizational, financial, and market-shaping one. Progress depends on better alignment within companies, stronger coordination across value chains, and more enabling policy environments. Within organizations that change begins with practitioners championing sustainability. For them, the challenge is not simply understanding why change matters; it is determining how to make that change real within the complexity of existing products, processes, supply chains, performance requirements, and business systems.

Sustainable Brands and Change Chemistry created this resource to support cross-functional decision-makers who are working to turn ambition into action. We hope it helps companies to identify where they are stuck, understand what is required to move forward, and see how collaboration can accelerate progress that no single actor can achieve alone. Version 1.0 is a Member Release intended for pilot use by Change Chemistry and Sustainable Brands members, and we welcome your feedback on how it can be improved.

The path ahead will not be simple. But the opportunity is significant: to build material systems that are safer for people, better for the planet, and more resilient for business. We offer this playbook as a practical guide and an invitation—to learn, to act, and to help shape the next generation of the materials economy together.

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Executive Summary

A playbook for engaging in the transition to future-fit materials.

Advanced chemicals and materials are essential to modern life. Modern society, and the products and services that underpin our quality of life, is built on advanced chemicals and materials. From healthcare, food, and housing to mobility, communications, and clean energy, chemistry sits at the foundation of nearly every value chain in the global economy. As the global population grows and emerging economies adopt higher standards of living, demand for these products will only accelerate.

Many legacy chemicals and materials are not fit for continued use. of Today's materials economy is built on more than 350,000 chemicals designed primarily for immediate cost and performance, often without significant focus on the potential broader social, environmental, and economic impacts of their widespread use over time. This model is no longer fit for emerging environmental, health, and regulatory realities.

The transition to future-fit chemicals and materials is already underway. Meeting tomorrow's demand responsibly requires a deliberate shift toward materials that are demonstrably safer and more sustainable across their full life cycles, while continuing to perform reliably and at competitive cost. From a technical perspective, the principles and practices needed to design these future-fit materials are well established, and many solutions have already being invented, tested, and brought to market.

Barriers to the transition are overwhelmingly market-based. The greatest barriers to adoption and use of future-fit materials are commercial, organizational, financial, and regulatory. Across the market, barriers include cost premiums, performance concerns, substitution risk, incumbency lock-in, data gaps, capital constraints, incentive misalignment, and other market distortions. Within companies, barriers exist across functions like R&D, procurement, sustainability, finance, marketing, and executive leadership, with internal misalignment often as limiting as external market constraints.

Companies cannot address these barriers alone. This means the transition cannot be achieved through isolated action or internal optimization. It requires coordinated change across three interconnected domains: within companies, across value networks, and through enabling market and policy conditions. Breaking down internal silos is as critical as aligning incentives across supply chains and engaging constructively with regulators.

The Playbook supports strategic participation in the transition to future-fit materials. It offers practical guidance, frameworks, and real-world examples of how companies are overcoming barriers to innovation and adoption through pre-competitive collaboration, new business and financing models, true-cost and value-based decision-making, and targeted policy engagement. It is built to help organizations move faster — together — toward material systems that are fit for the future, while continuing to deliver the products society depends on.

The following page provides the “Playbook at a Glance.”

Playbook at a Glance Version 1.0 (Member Release)

The table below provides a summary of potential actions included in the playbook. This list of action is **neither comprehensive nor prescriptive**, but rather provides a range of tangible, practical pathways for consideration. Actual actions will necessarily vary by company and context.

1 **Measure, Disclose & Set Targets**	 COMPANY	• Build cross-functional teams; educate stakeholders; articulate the business case • Adopt a strong chemicals/materials policy and RSL/MRSL • Inventory and disclose chemical footprint and time-bound phase-out roadmaps
	 NETWORK	• Align definitions, targets, and metrics across suppliers and customers • Harmonize RSLs/MRSLs across suppliers and customers • Empower buyers, sellers, and investors to talk about future-fit materials
	 POLICY	• Support harmonized global hazard classifications • Support disclosure mandates, supply-chain transparency, and public registries • Advocate for targeted chemical phase-out timelines
2 **Design & Assess**	 COMPANY	• Embed Safe and Sustainable by Design (SSbD) into stage-gate processes • Conduct rigorous alternatives assessments • Factor externalities into ROI calculations
	 NETWORK	• Standardize and communicate specs to help suppliers scale • Share hazard and performance data • Share assessment, testing, and R&D costs through appropriate collaboration
	 POLICY	• Advocate for harmonized assessment criteria • Co-develop standard assessment methodologies and disclosure formats • Support regulatory recognition and incentivization of safer alternatives
3 **Contract & Fund**	 COMPANY	• Commit to demand through public targets and integrated sourcing plans • Finance transition costs internally • Adjust procurement incentives to reward verified safer chemistries
	 NETWORK	• Participate in offtake agreements; pool demand across industries • Participate in collaborative market development • Make shared infrastructure investments
	 POLICY	• Support and utilize blended finance mechanisms • Advocate for transition tax credits • Enable public procurement preferences
4 **Collaborate & Shape Markets**	 COMPANY	• Identify pre-competitive opportunities • Designate executive sponsors for cross-industry work • Translate shared learning into internal practice
	 NETWORK	• Collaborate to address shared challenges (data, assessment, infrastructure) • Use competitive value-chain partnerships to scale specific materials • Build cross-industry demand coalitions
	 POLICY	• Advocate for coordinated public-private market-shaping • Contribute to and participate in standardized frameworks • Support international harmonization