

Mutualism and Cooperation

SSQ and Sustainable Development

Maybe you've heard that SSQ is actively involved in sustainable development. But just what is sustainable development? This expression seems to be all the rage at the moment, but it is often used improperly and to excess.

Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (*Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Brundtland Commission, Our Common Future, 1988*).

According to World Bank sources: "People concerned about sustainable development suggest that meeting the needs of the future depends on how well we balance social, economic, and environmental objectives-or needs-when making decisions today." (*World Bank Web site, 2006*).

When applied to the economy, the concept of sustainable development "integrates three dimensions: an economic dimension (efficiency, profitability), a social dimension (social responsibility) and an environmental dimension (environmental responsibility)" (*World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987*). The way a company applies this concept depends on the balance it strikes between these three dimensions.

How does SSQ Financial Group see itself in terms of sustainable development? Considering the three dimensions mentioned above, the answer to this question is a simple one. From an economic point of view, SSQ fully meets its profitability requirements, and its financial results are testament to its efficiency. SSQ places great importance on making efficient use of its workforce by creating a stimulating work environment and acknowledging the realities faced by its employees.

On a social level, given the mutual character of SSQ, it is not surprising that it is a strong believer in sustainable development. SSQ's core values and significant social commitment to community development are firm indicators of its sense of social responsibility. In fact, the notion of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) is closely linked to the concept of sustainable development. "Implementing a CSR strategy involves making a commitment to social and environmental responsibility initiatives, which will have an impact on areas such as human resources management, business practices and community development". [Translation] (*RéSo – Réformistes et Solidaires Web site, 2006*). Incidentally, in 2006, SSQ adopted a policy on making socially responsible investments.

Environmentally speaking, SSQ has shown its commitment in a number of ways. These include recycling paper and computer hardware, encouraging employees and their families to use public transport, planting trees, participating in an initiative to collect and re-use second-hand bicycles, and adopting an internal policy promoting the use of renewable resources and non-toxic, non-polluting substances in relation to its printing operations.