



Co-funded by
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Confiserie Rabbel GmbH

Case study





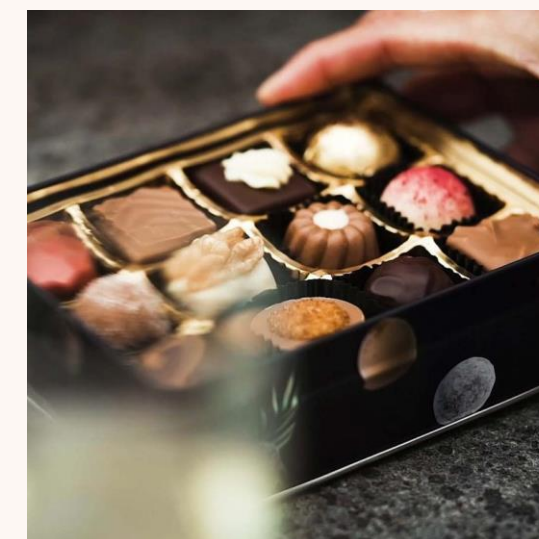
VIDEO

Context

Type and size of SME: rural, family-run SME in the food manufacturing sector

Rural setting: Located in Westerkappeln, Germany (rural area in North Rhine-Westphalia)

- Rabbel is a medium-sized **food manufacturer** specializing in handcrafted confectionery such as pralines and macarons.
- The company employs approximately **200 staff members**.
- Founded in 1907, Confiserie Rabbel is a **fourth-generation family-owned business**.



Context

Sustainability at Confiserie Rabbel

- Comprehensive ESG strategy with measures in the areas of environmental protection, social responsibility, and corporate governance.
- Focus lies on measurable emissions reductions, resource-efficient production, fair working conditions, and values-driven corporate leadership.
- 2022, Rabbel published its first declaration under the German Sustainability Code (DNK) to communicate its ESG activities and establish a framework for sustainability management.

ESG Challenge / Opportunity

Rabbel sees **sustainability as a core part of its identity**, not just a compliance issue.

Key ESG actions are driven by internal values, regional responsibility, and a long-term business perspective — rather than external pressure.



What did they do?

Measures taken by Confiserie Rabbel GmbH along the three ESG pillars

Environmental Measures

Packaging & Material Use

- Use of minimalist packaging to **reduce material consumption**.
- Implementation of **reusable packaging solutions** (e.g. gift tins, felt items).
- Preference for **eco-friendly cartons** and outer packaging for shipping and sales.

Resource-Conscious Production

- Digitization of internal processes to **reduce paper usage**.
- **Systematic recycling** of paper and cardboard through internal collection and return systems.
- **Reduced use of water, cleaning agents, and disinfectants in production**.
- Development and production of organic and vegan products to support sustainable agriculture.

Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

- Operation of a large-scale **photovoltaic system** for in-house electricity generation.
- Use of heat pumps for energy-efficient heating and cooling of production facilities.
- **Thermal insulation** of buildings to minimize heating and cooling demands.
- Use of LED lighting and natural daylight to **reduce electricity consumption**.
- **Recovery and reuse of waste heat** from cooling and air conditioning systems for hot water generation and chocolate melting.

What did they do?

Measures taken by Confiserie Rabbel GmbH along the three ESG pillars

Social Measures

Employee-Centered Corporate Culture

- Flat hierarchies and transparent communication structures
- **Regular dialogue formats** to involve employees in decision-making
- **Internal suggestion system** for active participation and improvement

Modern Human Resources Development

- **Training and continuing education** through in-person and digital formats
- Personal development through **individual coaching opportunities**
- Creation of tailored development pathways and **support in personal matters**
- Promotion of age-diverse and intercultural teams, with a focus on **strengthening diversity** in everyday operations

Social Engagement & Societal Responsibility

- **Educational partnerships with schools** and training institutions to support young talent
- **Support for local social organizations** (e.g. food banks, integration projects)
- Active involvement in regional **CSR and sustainability networks**

What did they do?

Measures taken by Confiserie Rabbel GmbH along the three ESG pillars

Governance Measures

Strategic Integration of Sustainability

- Sustainability is an integral part of the **corporate strategy**
- The management holds direct responsibility for sustainability matters
- The sustainability strategy is reviewed and further developed annually

Sustainability Reporting & Transparency

- Alignment with the German Sustainability Code (DNK)
- Preparation and publication of a **DNK-compliant sustainability report**

Stakeholder Involvement & Internal Communication

- Regular exchange on sustainability topics via various internal communication channels
- **Active employee involvement** in defining goals and developing measures (bottom-up approach)

What changed?

Impact of ESG implementation and reporting

Environmental

- **Energy self-sufficiency** achieved
- Over **900 tons of CO₂ emissions saved** by 2021 through green energy, heat recovery, insulation, LED lighting, and optimized resource use
- **100 % recycling** of over 50 tons of paper and cardboard per year
- **Sustainable packaging** introduced: reusable, recyclable, and reduced to the essential minimum

Social

- Increased **diversity and inclusion**: Employees from over 10 nations, including the long-term integration of refugees.
- More than 90 % female workforce, with active promotion of women in leadership roles.
- Implementation of family-friendly working hours and a positive, **inclusive work culture**.
- Participation in **youth education** and health initiatives.



Governance

- Clear assignment of **ESG responsibilities**
- DNK reporting has led to increased **internal awareness, structured communication, and transparent documentation** of sustainability progress
- **Procurement of certified organic and fair-trade ingredients**
- Regular internal communication

ESG in Action: People, Skills, Tools

ESG Competences and Roles

Who did what?

Rabbel pursues an **internal ESG approach** in which the **executive management** and **employees** jointly drive sustainability efforts.

- Executive Management holds direct responsibility for ESG strategy, coordination, and annual review (Role: ESG Leader)
- Employees and team leaders actively contribute to developing and implementing sustainability measures through dialogue and feedback formats (Roles: ESG Analyst & Optimizer)

Relevant ESG Competences used

1.E.1 – Ethical and sustainable thinking

1.S.4 – Understanding and promoting inclusion and diversity

4.S.5 – Stakeholder engagement and communication

1.E.6 – Knowledge of resource, waste, and water management

ESG in Action: People, Skills, Tools

Tools and methods

Strategy tools used

The company has voluntarily chosen the German Sustainability Code (DNK) as its standard for reporting non-financial performance. It is based on 20 criteria and selected performance indicators. No additional tools are currently in use.

KPIs used

The company's key performance indicators in the area of **resource use relate to water, gas, and electricity consumption** as well as **CO₂ emissions**.

Data collection methods

Data is collected partly manually and partly automatically via existing measuring devices and software in the field of photovoltaics.

How progress was tracked

Progress is assessed through the annual update of the sustainability strategy. Regular internal coordination and bottom-up input from employees support goal achievement.

Reporting standards followed

Reporting is based on the German Sustainability Code (DNK): <https://www.deutscher-nachhaltigkeitskodex.de/en/>

Leading with Purpose, Rooted in Place

How One SME Made ESG Work

Making it work locally

Adapting ESG to Our Rural Reality

Confiserie Rabbel has successfully adapted ESG principles to the rural context by aligning its sustainability efforts with the specific opportunities and challenges of its regional environment:

✓ **Promoting workforce diversity in a limited labor market**

By integrating refugees and international employees from over 10 countries, Rabbel addresses local labor shortages and actively fosters inclusion in a rural setting.

✓ **Offering flexible, family-friendly working conditions**

Flexible working hours and an inclusive work culture support employees in rural areas where infrastructure and mobility options may be limited.

✓ **Strengthening regional identity through local sourcing**

By prioritizing regional raw materials, the company supports local agriculture and shortens supply chains

✓ **Achieving energy self-sufficiency with renewable energy**

Rabbel uses large rooftop photovoltaic systems to cover its energy needs — an efficient use of space in rural areas and a model for energy autonomy.

✓ **Engaging in community development initiatives**

Through partnerships with local schools and health projects, the company contributes to the well-being and future prospects of the rural community.

REFLECT

- What specific sustainability practices from Confiserie Rabbel stand out as particularly effective or transferable?
- How does their approach to reporting (e.g. using the DNK) compare with your current reporting framework?
- Which environmental or social actions did you find most relevant to your own sector or business model?
- Could a simplified or scaled version of these practices be implemented in your company?
- What would be a realistic first step to initiate or improve ESG activities in your business?
- Are there opportunities to collaborate locally (e.g. with other SMEs, chambers, initiatives) as Rabbel does in its region?
- How might your company contribute to broader sustainability goals in your local community?