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Cleantech Innovation Ecosystems Produce Social and Economic Benefits and Tackle Climate Change

BY LUCY CHATBURN AND BIANCA DRAGOMIR

Countries in many parts of the world are already experiencing the effects of climate change. Heat waves pose risks to human health, and food supply chains are threatened by droughts, flooding, and storms. These effects are forecast to increase over the coming years. Effective cleantech innovation ecosystems produce and scale the technologies and solutions we need to slow climate change and combat the effects on vulnerable populations globally, bringing economic benefits in the process.

Mitigation is Global, Adaptation is Local

Cleantech Group modeled the effects of climate change on eight low- and middle-income countries across four continents across different climate scenarios. In the strong mitigation scenario, the countries faced a lower risk of climate hazards. Türkiye was one of the countries: the chart below shows how Istanbul's risk of heatwaves increases from low to medium in the high emissions scenario, and water stress increases from medium to high. Since the countries experiencing the worst effects of climate change are not always the biggest emitters, continued mitigation efforts depend on global collaboration. Climate hazards impact multiple sectors, including risks to human health and food supply chains. Australia's agricultural sector is grappling with adverse effects on crops from both flooding and drought, depending on the season. Heatwaves have been linked to higher instances of heart attacks, as well as heat-related illnesses such as heatstroke. Outcomes like loss of infrastructure will reduce access to healthcare and sanitation, and crop failure will lead to loss of income for farmers.



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ABOUT LUCY CHATBURN

Lucy Chatburn is a Principal at Cleantech Group and has played key roles in large-scale ecosystem development and innovation engagement programs.





Local Ecosystems Can Produce Innovation with Global Potential

Deploying climate adaptation and resilience solutions helps avoid losses, with long-term GDP improvements as well as impact on human lives and livelihoods. Producing, scaling, and exporting those solutions leads to economic growth as well as climate impact. Placebased cleantech ecosystems produce and scale a steady stream of start-ups that work to mitigate or tackle the effects of climate change. Cleantech ecosystems and clusters may grow out of established innovation centers, or legacy industries that need to decarbonize, or around city and regional challenges, including climate change effects.

Ecosystems are shaped by strategic priorities and local resources. For example, South Africa intends to develop ex-coal mining areas into cleantech innovation hubs; in the face of increasing water stress, Morocco is directing resources into supporting home-grown water technologies. Spain is building on its existing automotive industry to drive the largest electromobility cluster in Southern Europe.

Climate change effects are moving fast up the list of strategic priorities, with countries from India to Chile innovating their way out of food security risks. EF Polymer, founded in Rajasthan, produces a polymer that helps crops to retain water, reducing irrigation needs and soil degradation. PolyNatural, from Chile, reduces food waste through a natural food coating which extends shelf life. Innovations such as these, which have applications in many countries, have the potential to scale globally for massive climate and social impact as well as economic growth.

ARTICLE



Building a Start-up Solves One Problem: Building an Ecosystem Solves Many Problems

Effective cleantech ecosystems and clusters provide the connective tissue for systemic innovation, turning individual successes into a steady stream of innovation, and supporting that innovation to market through investment, business support, and connection to customers and global networks. This forms a "virtuous circle" of positive economic growth, resulting in increased investment and more jobs. Research by the European Commission found that start-ups located within clusters (local, sector-thematic ecosystems) grow 20% faster than the market average.



Around the globe, mission-driven entrepreneurs are producing exciting innovations to solve tomorrow's problems. Cleantech ecosystems catalyze innovation at speed and scale. Intentionally strengthening emerging cleantech ecosystems to build on their unique strengths and opportunities can create a ripple effect and rapidly increase the amount of innovation they bring to market, with remarkable climate, social, and economic rewards.



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