Short Summary talk Arjen Boekhold at ISEAL Global Sustainability Standards Symposium 18 June 2019: Nothing will be perfect. But doing nothing is never an option!

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> Fools ignore complexity. 
> Pragmatists suffer it. 
> Some can avoid it. 
> Geniuses remove it. 
> Alan Perlis

We live in a world where most goods and commodities are traded in a system whereby millions of producers and workers make these, and a handful of companies handle and change these goods into final products for the consumer market, where billions of consumers have no clue where their products come from. This system leads to very unequal relations, with severe consequences as poverty, deforestation and exploitation.

We all know that this system is complex whereby geopolitical, economic, environmental, cultural and many other forces play important roles. However this complexity should not withhold us from taking action. Actually it is even filled with opportunities. Certifications and standards have a key role to play as connecting factor between different stakeholders. Let us being the geniuses cutting through this complexity.

Every stakeholder has a role to play, and most countries, industries and other stakeholders have committed themselves to the Global Development Goals. So why are we together not having more and better impact? We have to dare to mention the Elephant in the room: Why is there still so much deforestation, child labour and poverty, also in certified supply chains? Because we try to solve them with the same system which created these problems. If you only have a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

Tony’s Chocolonely started as a small chocolate company with a huge mission; it exists to end modern slavery, poverty and child labour the cocoa industry. During my 7 years at Tony’s Chocolonely, I was responsible for designing and implementing our roadmap for change, with a clear and ambitious mission. At the same time we never hesitated to start taking small and concrete steps.

**CRAZY ABOUT CHOCOLATE, SERIOUS ABOUT PEOPLE**

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For example, every company has to source its commodities according to these 5 principles, including traceability, long term relations and a price which makes a living income possible. At this moment, most of these principles are only voluntarily in most standards. I think that has to change. Furthermore we should starting making public the true costs of making any product incl. the environmental and societal damage. Standards could play a great role in making this happen.

Certifications should not assist companies anymore to ticking boxes or minimalizing risks according the principles of compliance, but instead stimulate companies to solve societal problems and contribute to society. Partnerships are about equal relations, not following the interests of one party. Standard setting organizations have to become more self-confident and assertive in the relation with their partners.

But no-one can create change alone and voluntary standards and commitments cannot bring the structural change we had hoped for independently. Governments have a key role to play; from consumer countries, which should protect the interests of producers in international supply chains much better through more stringent regulation and creating a level field for companies, to the producer countries which have to abide to their own laws better.

And indeed, nothing will be perfect, but let nothing stop us from taking action. It is up to us; do we keep following the same direction because everybody else is doing so? Or do we go forward and dare to be innovative, take risk and make impact? Let’s change the system together; it’s time for action!

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