

# Ideas and analysis from Oxfam America's policy experts » Blog Archive » Businesses speak out about extreme weather and climate resilience on Capitol Hill

March 27th, 2012 | by Heather Coleman

At the tail end of one of the most **dramatic spring heat waves** in US history, businesses from across sectors addressed a bipartisan audience on Capitol Hill to discuss escalating risks to their global supply chain resulting from shifting climate patterns and severe weather events. The forum comes at a time when more companies are identifying climate change as a risk that needs to be managed and an opportunity for new market investment.

Greg Douglas, Director of Business Development for Earth Networks, a company specializing in weather and environmental observation (they're best known for their "WeatherBug" app), highlighted the need for data and information to help local industries around the world anticipate and respond to changing weather patterns. Governments are turning to companies like Earth Networks to provide the systems necessary to collect and disseminate new weather and climate observation information and to help support disaster risk management in communities.

Earth Networks recently joined the Partnership for Resilience and Environmental Preparedness (PREP) a group of companies that have joined together to promote practices and economic growth that help both vulnerable communities and business adapt to the impacts of climate change, and to promote public policies that facilitate efforts to prepare for and respond to the consequences of a changing climate. The companies currently engaged in PREP include: Calvert Investments, Earth Networks, Entergy, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Levi Strauss & Co, Starbucks, and Swiss Re.



The forum was cosponsored by BICEP—Business for Innovative Climate and Energy Policy. BICEP is an advocacy coalition of businesses committed to working with policy makers to pass meaningful energy and climate legislation.

Anna Walker, Senior Manager of Worldwide Government Affairs at **Levi Strauss & Co.** and Claude Fontheim, CEO of Fontheim International LLC, representing **Limited Brands**, highlighted the impacts of extreme weather events and climate change on cotton supply chains. Both retailers rely heavily on cotton to produce clothing like blue jeans and lingerie and are concerned about price volatility in the global cotton market, volatility which is at least partially driven by extreme weather events in vulnerable cotton producing regions. Some of the countries, such as Vietnam and Cambodia, where companies like Levi Strauss and Limited Brands manufacture their products, are also "hotspots for climate migration" and other climate-related impacts such as flooding and disease.

These companies are not just waiting around for government support to take action, although they are calling for strengthened public investment in climate resilience. Levi Strauss, for example, has launched the new **Water< Less collection** in 2011, which reduces the water used in the product finishing process for jeans from an average of 42 liters per pair to as little as 1.5 liters for some

products. PREP is also developing guidance for companies on risk management throughout the corporate value chain. This guidance will be the first of its kind to advise companies from multiple industries on how to manage climate risks in a way that simultaneously builds community preparedness.

Bennett Freeman, Senior vice President of Sustainability and Research Policy at Calvert Investments, concluded the event by noting the risk to investors regarding the costs of physical damage associated with climate change, estimates at around \$4 trillion by 2030 according to a recent [Mercer analysis](#), and the potential benefit to investments in technologies and services that improve climate resilience.