

**SSPICE IT! – Sustainability Skills Program for
International Catering operators and
Entrepreneurs through Integrated Training**

Submodule n°19: Prioritizing and Organizing

THEMATIC AREA	Researching Innovative and Sustainable Practices	
SUB AREA OF REFERENCE	<i>Digital and soft skills</i>	
HOURS	4	
LEARNING OBJECTIVES		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying and Understand Sustainable Practices and gain a comprehensive understanding of sustainability concepts and their application in the food and catering sector 2. Identifying methods of researching, implementing and maintaining innovative and sustainable practices 3. Practical Application by applying scientific knowledge and critical thinking skills to propose innovative and sustainable solutions 4. Learners will gain an appreciation for the significance of collaboration and how to engage with mentors and peers effectively in the food and catering sector 5. Learners will comprehend the role and potential of digital technologies and tools within the food and catering sector. 6. Learners will develop skills and knowledge and gain practical tools and techniques in defining priorities, developing action plans, to effectively manage their work. 7. Learners will develop the skills and knowledge necessary for setting meaningful and actionable goals in the food and catering sector. 		
LEARNING ACTIVITIES		
Theoretical	Practical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reading ✓ Case studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mapping the main innovative and sustainable practices by exploring the methodologies and analysing contemporary implementation 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Practical application of innovative and sustainable practices ✓ Evaluating the impact of innovative and sustainable practices into food and catering sector
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SUBMODULE 19: Prioritizing and Organizing

1. Defining Priorities and Action Plans & Setting Long-, Medium-, and Short-Term Goals

1.1 Techniques for Defining Priorities

Having insufficient time to accomplish all your desired tasks is a universally recognized challenge. When each item on your agenda appears crucial (or if someone you're accountable to perceives it that way), it becomes necessary to employ prioritization methods. These techniques assist in streamlining and overcoming the challenges of a crowded to-do list.

1.1.1 Priority Matrix

This matrix uses importance as its y-axis value and urgency as its x-axis value. Each task is evaluated based on its urgency and importance and then each task is placed in the correct quadrant based on the user's evaluation.

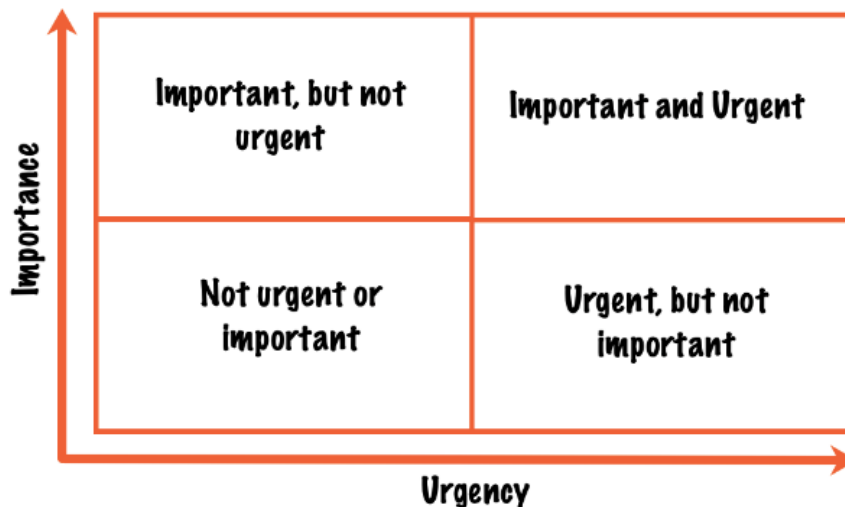


Figure 1 - Source: <https://zapier.com/blog/how-to-prioritize/>

The matrix is interpreted as follows:

1. Important and urgent tasks are your top priorities.
2. Important but not urgent tasks are lower priorities—things you should schedule for later.
3. Urgent but not important tasks are good candidates for delegation.
4. Not urgent or important tasks are things you probably just shouldn't do.

Bear in mind that the x- and y-axis values in the Matrix can be substituted for any values that make sense for you, such as Effort-Impact, Value-Cost etc.

1.1.2 MoSCoW

The capital of Russia gave its name in a simple prioritization technique where the user is invited to assign every task on their to-do list to one of four categories:

- **M – Must Do:** M tasks are things you absolutely have to do.
- **S – Should Do:** S tasks are things you should do, but they're a lower priority than M tasks.
- **C – Could Do:** C tasks are nice-to-dos. You'd like to do them, but if you don't it's probably not a big deal.
- **W – Won't Do:** W tasks are things that just aren't worth doing.



Figure 2 - Source: <https://www.projectcubicle.com/what-is-moscow-analysis-and-moscow-method/>

To employ this approach, review your list of tasks and categorize each one using the MoSCoW method. Subsequently, arrange the list according to these categories. Your "Must Do" (M) tasks should occupy the highest position, followed by "Should Do" (S) tasks, and then "Could Do" (C) tasks. Tasks marked as "Won't Do" (W) should be removed. By consistently tackling your tasks from the top to the bottom

of the list, you can ensure that you focus on the tasks with the highest priority at all times.

1.1.3 Scrum prioritization

If you have 20 to-dos on your list, you assign each an order, numbered 1-20, based on both priority and sequence. Scrum prioritization is a method of prioritization that works really well when you have to take sequence into account.

In Scrum prioritization, you evaluate each task on your list using three criteria:

1. How important is this task?
2. How important is it compared to the other tasks on this list?
3. Is any other task dependent on this task?

After categorizing your tasks by priority, you can begin sequencing the tasks in the order in which you plan to complete them, considering any task dependencies that should impact that order.



Figure 3 - Source: <https://www.scrumstudy.com/article/various-methods-for-user-story-prioritization>

1.1.4 Most Important Task (MIT)

The Most Important Task (MIT) approach of prioritizing is quite straightforward. Start every morning by selecting 1-3 MITs—things that you must complete that day—instead of attempting to prioritize everything on your to-do list. To make sure you're doing something every day to assist you attain your objectives, at least one of your MITs should be connected to them. And although you'll probably accomplish more than just your MITs in a day, choosing your MITs in the beginning and establishing a deadline guarantees that you'll set aside time each day to focus on significant, high-priority projects.

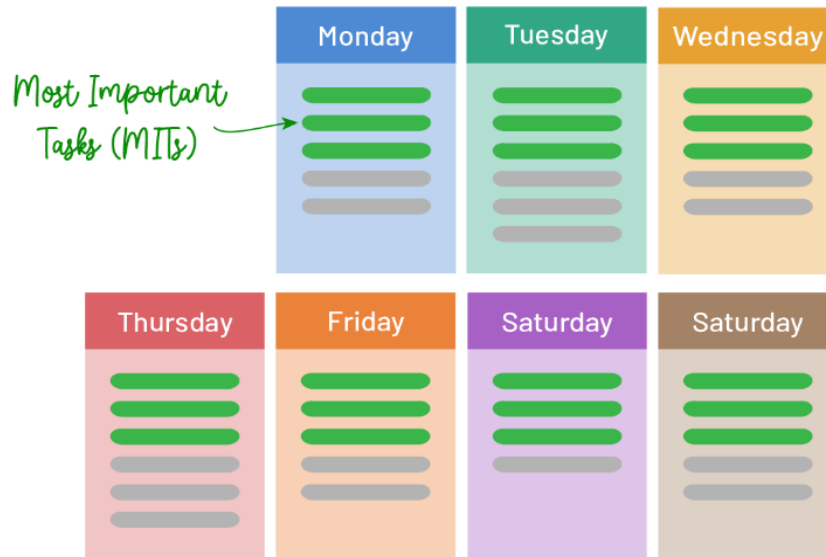


Figure 4 - Source: <https://www.actitime.com/time-management/how-to-prioritize-top-priority-tasks>

1.1.5 1-3-9 method

The 1-3-9 prioritization technique provides you a way to prioritize the less important things you'll surely have to work on while simultaneously encouraging you to concentrate on crucial chores. You are invited to isolate 13 tasks and characterize them as follows:

1. one very important task (important and urgent)
2. three somewhat important tasks (important but not urgent)
3. nine low-importance tasks (urgent but not important)

Work on and finish your task 1 first, then go through your lists of 3 and 9 chores in order of importance. Finally, go through your lists of 9 tasks in order of priority.

Making sure you're constantly working on your most crucial duties is the result of every method on this list and of other prioritization methods that exist for working environments. Therefore, it is irrelevant which technique you employ in the end. It makes no difference if you employ several strategies. It also makes no difference if you combine elements of several strategies to create your own unique approach for your business.

1.2 Developing Action Plans for Collaborative Projects

Step 1: Set a SMART Goal

Begin by defining a SMART goal for your project in the food and catering sector. Ensure that your goal is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART). For instance, a SMART goal could be to launch a new menu with three innovative dishes by the end of the quarter, increasing revenue by 15%.

Step 2: Identify Tasks

Break down your SMART goal into actionable tasks required to achieve it. For example:

Goal: Launch a new menu with three innovative dishes by the end of the quarter.

Tasks:

- Research and develop three unique dish concepts.
- Conduct taste tests and refine recipes based on feedback.
- Source high-quality ingredients from local suppliers.
- Create visually appealing menu design with descriptions.
- Plan a marketing campaign to promote the new menu.

Step 3: Allocate Resources

Determine the resources needed for each task. Assign team members responsible for executing each task. Allocate budget for ingredients, menu design, marketing materials, and any additional requirements. Consider whether any external partners or vendors need to be involved.

Step 4: Prioritize Tasks

Sort the tasks by priority and sequence to guide your team's focus. Identify dependencies among tasks, ensuring that tasks are completed in the right order. For instance, taste tests and recipe refinement should occur before finalizing the menu design.

Step 5: Set Deadlines and Milestones

Assign deadlines to each task and establish milestones to track progress. Create a timeline or Gantt chart to visualize task durations and overlaps. For instance:

- Research and develop dish concepts: Deadline - Week 1
- Conduct taste tests and refine recipes: Deadline - Week 3
- Source ingredients and finalize menu design: Deadline - Week 5
- Launch marketing campaign: Deadline - Week 6
- New menu launch: Milestone - End of Quarter

Step 6: Monitor and Revise

Regularly monitor your team's progress and revise the action plan as needed. Use work management software to track task completion, update deadlines, and address any changes. Stay adaptable to shifting priorities or unforeseen challenges to ensure the project stays on track.

Exercise: Strategic Prioritization & Action Planning in the Food & Catering Industry	
Pre-requisites	/
Time	1 hour
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whiteboard or flip chart & markers Handouts with prioritization methods (optional) Task cards with case scenarios
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Understand different prioritization methods and their application in real-world food industry challenges. 2 Develop an action plan to solve a business problem using structured decision-making. 3 Enhance teamwork and strategic thinking by working in groups.
Instructions	
<p>When possible, this exercise should be done in groups.</p> <p>Step 1: Case Study Analysis (20 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Read the case study of Agricola at the end of this submodule. ✓ Analyze the case and use a prioritization method to organize their tasks and create an action plan. <p>Step 2: Group Discussion (15 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Present your prioritization approach and action plan to another group of students. ✓ Encourage questions and feedback from this group. <p>Examples of Key Questions for Discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How did you decide what was most important? b. Did your prioritization method work well for your scenario? c. What challenges did you face in organizing tasks? <p>Step 3: Reflection and Action Plan (10 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Refine your final action plan based on feedback. 	

- ✓ Bonus Challenge: Another group must select for you one unexpected obstacle (e.g., staff shortage, budget cut) and you have to adjust your plan accordingly :

Step 4: Presentation (10 minutes)

- Groups present their final strategic action plans to the class.
- The class votes on the most effective plan based on feasibility and impact.

Step 5: Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Summarize key learnings:
 - a. How prioritization methods help businesses stay organized and efficient.
 - b. Why flexibility is key in action planning.
 - c. How strategic thinking improves decision-making in high-pressure environments.

Optional Extension: Write your reflections: How would you apply prioritization techniques in your personal or professional life?

1.3 Types of Goals in the Food and Catering Sector

In the dynamic realm of the food and catering sector, the path to success is paved by setting well-defined and strategic goals across various domains. From financial prosperity to impeccable kitchen performance, from exceptional customer service to impactful marketing endeavors, and from fostering a motivated workforce to maintaining stringent sanitation standards, every facet of the business holds potential for enhancement through focused goal setting.

a) Financial Goals:

- Increasing Revenues: Focus on running promotions, introducing new menu items, and scheduling peak times effectively.
- Decreasing Labor Costs: Staff according to customer demand, invest in employee appreciation to reduce turnover, and optimize training to retain existing staff.
- Shake Up the Menu: Analyze menu performance, eliminate underperforming items, and find cost-effective ways to prepare popular dishes.

Tips: Start with small revenue-boosting steps, measure employee productivity, and maintain a balanced menu with profitable items.

b) Kitchen Goals:

- Increasing Food Preparation Speed: Implement technology to track cooking times, optimize workflows, and reduce wait times for orders.

- Decreasing Waste: Train staff to minimize food waste, improve portion control, and optimize inventory management.
- Improving Food Quality: Set goals for consistent food preparation, accurate orders, and using high-quality ingredients.

Tips: Invest in kitchen technology, emphasize training, and regularly monitor food quality metrics to identify areas for improvement.

c) Customer Service Goals:

- Decreasing Wait Times at Restaurants: Implement time tracking systems, optimize kitchen processes, and streamline service workflows.
- Decreasing Delivery Times: Optimize delivery routes, use efficient packaging, and monitor delivery times closely.
- Improving Customer Reception: Train staff in customer interaction, improve greeting protocols, and enhance overall hospitality.

Tips: Regularly review customer feedback, encourage staff training, and create a customer-focused culture.

d) Customer Engagement Goals:

- Improving Google Reviews: Encourage satisfied customers to leave positive reviews, respond to reviews (both positive and negative), and provide exceptional service to enhance reputation.
- Improving SEO (Search Engine Optimization): Optimize your website for search engines, use relevant keywords, and create high-quality content.
- Increasing Social Media Interactions: Post engaging content, respond promptly to comments and messages, and run social media campaigns.

Tips: Develop a consistent online presence, monitor analytics, and adapt strategies based on customer engagement.

e) Employee Goals:

- Reducing Turnover Rate: Enhance employee satisfaction through fair compensation, training opportunities, and a positive work environment.
- Increasing Employee Productivity: Set clear expectations, provide feedback, and offer opportunities for skill development.

Tips: Conduct regular employee surveys, foster open communication, and recognize and reward exceptional performance.

f) Restaurant Sanitation Goals:

- Safe Food Handling and Sanitation: Create daily, weekly, and monthly checklists for sanitation tasks, train employees in proper procedures, and prioritize health code standards.

Tips: Establish a strong sanitation protocol, conduct routine inspections, and ensure all staff members are well-informed about safety measures.

g) Marketing Goals:

- Social Media: Utilize various social media platforms to share news, promotions, and engage with customers. Create a Facebook page, post regularly, and interact with followers.
- Loyalty Program: Implement a loyalty program to encourage repeat business. Offer rewards for frequent visits or spending, fostering customer loyalty.
- Email Lists: Build an email list to send out promotional content, specials, and coupons. Use email marketing to maintain customer engagement.

Tips: Tailor marketing strategies to your target audience, measure the effectiveness of different tactics, and adapt based on customer response.

In order to remain competitive, all restaurants must innovate. Any catering company must have definite, attainable goals in order to succeed. Knowing where to begin and how to make sure that your objectives are attainable can be difficult, though.

2. Operational Decision-Making

2.1. The Agile Methodology in the Kitchen

The methods to achieving operational excellence in the kitchen or at the main hall go by many names and one of them is **agile**. To put it simply, agile refers to being able to both **create and adapt to change despite the challenges**, which may occur in an environment, rapidly (Agile Alliance, n.d.). While Agile is more commonly implemented in Software Development, it can be well **applied to any type of industry**. In the **Agile Manifesto** (The Agile Manifesto Authors, 2019), some of the points are completely industry-neutral.

For example, Principle 12 does not require any adjustments at all:

“At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behaviour accordingly.”

To learn more about Agile Methodology, check the resource [here](#)!

Exercise 2: Assessment Question	
Pre-requisites	/
Time	1 hour

Tools	PC, Smartphone, internet connection, pen and paper.
Objectives	1. Assessing the understanding of previous chapters.
Instructions	
<p>Check some of the Agile Principles below. As you will observe, they refer to software-related issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software." • "Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage" • "Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely." <p>Try to replace the highlighted text with details related to the restaurant and catering industries.</p>	

While some may find it **discouraging** to tailor a methodology used in software development, it indirectly teaches you that **technology is more accessible than we often believe**. This is especially important for the adoption of **high-end technology in restaurants and catering establishments, as adoption is also a matter of behaviour and not just budget or integration**.



Another thing to note is that **strategic decision-makers** usually take **more time** to react to **bigger changes**, which concerns the managerial level of processes. In contrast, operational agility is highly beneficial, because **time is pressing when it comes to the preparation of meals and food-related demand**. Even the expiration date of food is a great example of how **time is of paramount importance**.

2.2. A/B testing

A good example of a practice, which is in accordance with the Agile Methodology is **A/B testing**. The menu engineering practice refers to the **simultaneous testing** of different options, in order to see which the consumers are best reacting to. This is a very helpful practice especially when **trying out new features**, such as a new customer loyalty program.

A/B testing helps you measure the performance of the menu to better understand whether you need to change something, like the composition of

ingredients, to keep or remove a menu item, to adjust the price, feature certain elements and perhaps even create different categories.



Let's assume that the owner of a restaurant called "Green Grain" that prepares vegan rice bowls wants to test whether customers prefer **customizable bowls** or **pre-designed combinations**. For one month they divide their lunch service customers into **two groups**, one for each method. The restaurant asks for **satisfaction feedback** from each group and finds out which approach seems to get the most positive comments. Now, if the restaurant tried **one method at a time applied for every customer for a month, it would take two months to do the testing instead and probably confuse its customers**.

A/B testing teaches us that we can implement different procedures or processes at the same time. What do you think is an **advantage** of implementing tasks simultaneously?

2.3. The importance of task management

To build upon the reference **to A/B testing**, it is easier to adopt a philosophy of **arranging tasks effectively or achieving two different outcomes at the same time**.

An easy example to remember is making tea. When simplified, the tasks look like this:

- a. **Pour water in the kettle (duration 10 seconds)**
- b. **Boil some water (duration 2 minutes)**
- c. **Prepare the teabag (duration 40 seconds)**
- d. **Pour the boiled water into the cup (duration 4 seconds)**

Some tasks depend on other tasks. For example, you cannot **boil the water** without first **pouring the water into the kettle**. However, you can **prepare a teabag, while the water is boiling**. Even if the process of boiling the water was not automatic, you could still use the help of a coworker to run two tasks simultaneously. This highlights one of the advantages of automation, opportunities which technology can offer.

Exercise 3: Assessment Question

Pre-requisites	/
Time	1 hour
Tools	PC, Smartphone, internet connection, pen and paper.
Objectives	1. Assessing the understanding of previous chapters.
Instructions	
Based on the information given above, calculate what is the least time needed to make a delicious cup of tea.	

Solution: **b** depends on **a**, and **d** depends on **b** and **c**. However, **b** and **c** can run at the same time, meaning that the duration of that stage is equal to the duration of the longest task (**2 minutes**). This means that a total of 2 minutes and 14 seconds is the time needed to make a cup of tea.

2.4. Not everything is as simple

Naturally, situations differ and can be extremely difficult to deal with. However, by **breaking down the tasks** into their simplest form, it is possible to find shortcuts and **combine tasks** or **task durations**.

This logic can also help with the conception of sustainable ideas. For example, it is possible to use **bread crumbs** for another product or use **escaping heat** from ovens to boil water for heating during winter.

2.5. Creating flow charts of workflows

A flowchart represents the flow of tasks and how they can be organized to improve efficiency. If you find it **difficult** to review the tasks in the form of **text**, consider flowcharts to be a great **visualization tool**. It is also very helpful for **breaking down tasks** and **organizing** them **into chunks**. In addition, visual representations are often more helpful to remember, which is great for **minimizing any mistakes** resulting in involuntary unsustainable behaviours, like forgetting to turn off a source of energy consumption.

Let's view it in practice! To use the example from before, **making tea** looks like this in a **picture-based flow-chart**:



As one may observe, the teabag is **not in the same sequence** as boiling the water, because it **does not depend** on it.

Exercise 4: Assessment Question	
Pre-requisites	/
Time	1 hour
Tools	PC, Smartphone, internet connection, pen and paper.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing the understanding of previous chapters.
Instructions	
<p>Draw a flowchart displaying the tasks needed to be done to bake an apple pie. Calculate how much time is needed for each task and see if the correct sum matches your original expectations for the whole duration. Invite a colleague to do the same and compare how you have organized the tasks.</p>	

CASE STUDY: Economic Resilience and Adaptation in the Food Sector in Romania

Romania's food sector has experienced significant transformations in recent years, facing both challenges and opportunities related to economic resilience and adaptation. This case study explores how Romania's food industry has responded to economic uncertainties and adapted to changing market dynamics.

What vulnerabilities and **challenges** have we faced in our country? To start with, Romania's food sector has been vulnerable to market fluctuations, particularly in the prices of agricultural commodities like wheat, corn, and sunflower oil. These price variations impact the profitability of local farmers and food producers. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the food supply chain. Lockdowns and restrictions disrupted logistics, leading to temporary shortages and bottlenecks.



Figure 6 - Source: Campus TV

Some resilience **strategies** have been found. To mitigate the risks associated with market volatility, many Romanian food producers have diversified their export markets. By expanding beyond traditional markets like the EU, they've reduced their dependency on a single buyer.

Several businesses have invested in technology to enhance supply chain visibility and efficiency. This includes implementing traceability systems and adopting digital tools for inventory management.

In response to supply chain disruptions during the pandemic, some food retailers in Romania have initiated or expanded their partnerships with local farmers. This shift supports local producers and reduces reliance on international supply chains.



Figure 7 - Local products (Source: Acres Insurance Brokers)

Romania's food sector has increasingly embraced sustainable practices. Farms are adopting eco-friendly agricultural techniques, and businesses are reducing packaging waste and promoting recycling.



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Case Example: Agricola Group



Figure 8 - Source: agricola.ro

Agricola Group, one of Romania's largest agribusiness companies, provides a compelling case of economic resilience and adaptation.

Facing challenges in market volatility and supply chain disruptions, Agricola Group implemented several strategies:

- **Diversification of Exports:** Agricola Group expanded its export markets beyond the EU to countries like China and the Middle East. This diversification shielded them from the impacts of regional market fluctuations.
- **Digital Transformation:** The company invested in state-of-the-art agricultural technology, including precision farming and data analytics. This enhanced efficiency and reduced waste.
- **Local Procurement:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, Agricola Group prioritized local sourcing, collaborating closely with Romanian farmers. This not only supported local producers but also ensured a consistent supply of fresh produce.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** Agricola Group initiated sustainability programs to reduce its environmental footprint. They adopted organic farming practices and implemented circular economy principles in their operations.

Romania's food sector has demonstrated resilience and adaptation in the face of economic uncertainties and disruptions. Strategies such as diversifying export markets, investing in technology, prioritizing local sourcing, and embracing sustainability have contributed to enhanced economic resilience.

The case of Agricola Group illustrates how a comprehensive approach to resilience and adaptation can lead to positive outcomes, not only in terms of business continuity but

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also in fostering sustainable practices and supporting local communities. Romania's food sector continues to evolve, driven by the need for economic resilience and a commitment to sustainability in an ever-changing global market.

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