

## Green HRM: An Innovative Practice for Organisational Sustainability

Dr. Ajit Kumar Kar<sup>1</sup> and Prof. Lopamudra Praharaj<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Manager (L&D), IMFA

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, GIFT

Article Received: 05 October 2017

Article Accepted: 21 October 2017

Article Published: 29 October 2017

### ABSTRACT

Green Human Resource Management (Green HRM) is a contemporary management construct, initially designed and developed because of its potentiality to influence employees' green behaviours. Thus far, the concept has chiefly attracted conceptualization interest, rather than any extensive empirical attention. However, it has begun to gain traction and increased academic interest within the management field, because of its prospective contribution to improving corporate environmental performance, and its implicit influence over employee workplace behaviours. Green HRM has proved to be a promising management approach to address corporate environmental sustainability. Thus, GHRM (Green Human Resource Management) has been becoming a key business strategy for the significant organizations where HR Departments play a dynamic part in going green at the office. The paper mostly focuses on the various Green Human Resource Practices & few initiatives. Lastly, the paper suggests a few prolific HR initiatives for Green organizations.

Keywords: Green Human Resource Management, Environment management, Green initiatives and Paperless office.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the earlier period, sound economic performance of a firm was expected to assure corporate success by companies and its shareholders, however now it is no longer valid; economic and financial outcomes need to be accompanied by minimization of biological footprints and increased attention to environmental and social aspects. We have been witnessing that the majority of the successful companies such as ITC, Wipro, Microsoft, Tata, BP, ONGC, IMFA, etc and many more have started contributing a lot on CSR even before the time when there were no regulations/laws related to CSR. Such companies believe it as their duty and responsibility to give back something good and substantial to the natural environment. We should be thankful for the fact that the owners of businesses are few but the owner of nature is the community and the society in which we live and survive. This gives birth to the Stakeholder's theory. Hence corporates now understand that there has to be Sustainable business, as it will pave path for substantial growth. This brings on the chart, the concept of Intangible and Tangible Cost or Accountable and Non accountable Cost. Thus, Companies are now also taking into account the Intangible Costs / Non accountable which are in the form of 'environmental degradation'. Even though such costs are very hard to estimate, but be rest assured, are pretty significant.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

HR practices are generally implemented with the strategic systems that are in line with the culture and business strategy (Boselie,2001). There are various researchers who support the HRM practices to be effective for promotion of human capital and results in providing to contributors of organizational performance and competitive advantage. (Boselie,2001, Paave and Boselie,2003). In order to implement an effective corporate green management system it is important to promote a great deal of technical and management skills among all employees of the organization (Daily et al 2012; Unnikrishnan and Hegde 2001). Organizations look at development of innovative tools and initiatives of environment management which will significantly impact sustainability of the firm and

promote a competitive management (Hart1997;Linnet al ;2001).Therefore to develop such a framework it becomes ideal to have effective human resource management practices including presentation of strict recruitment strategies (Grolleau et al ,2012), appraisal and reward systems which include environmental awareness and implementation in their evaluation process (Jabbar Et al; 2012) and training and empowerment programmes (Unnikrishnan and Hegde 2007) which will enable the development of new set of skills and competencies amongst the employees of 'pro green' firms. All of these principles with objectives of green management in an organization. It is identified that the greater strength of green human resource policies the greater is the intensity of the adoption of environment management systems (EMS) and policies by the different companies (Bothdanowich et al. 2011).

The economy worldwide is green economy today and organizations are adopting policies and programmes pertaining to green management for protection and preservation of the environment. It is observed that organizations following Green HR policies experience substantial impact on the engagement, commitment, morale, quality of work life and the retention of human capital in the organization.

### **3. CONCEPT AS DEFINED**

The phrase 'Green HR' means – the contribution of HR policies and practices of a corporate agenda for preservation and protection of natural resources. Green human resource refers to using each employee touch point and interface to encourage sustainable practices and add to employee awareness and commitments on the challenges and issues of sustainability. It involves undertaking environment-friendly HR initiatives resulting in lower costs, better employee engagement, greater efficiencies and retention which in turn can help organizations to reduce employee carbon footprints by the likes of car sharing, job-sharing, electronic filing, tele-conferencing and virtual interviews, recycling, online training, telecommuting, energy-efficient office spaces etc. The HR function should become the driver of environmental sustainability within the organization by aligning its practices and policies with sustainability goals reflecting an eco-focus. It engrosses undertaking environment-friendly HR initiatives resulting in: 1) greater efficiencies, and 2) lower costs and better employee engagement and retention.

Thus, Green HR policies and practices can help bring down the attrition rate, and mitigate the problem of layoffs or attrition rate by engaging the employees in zero-waste lunches or food drives, sponsoring local sports team, raising money for disaster relief, serving meals to homeless people or participating in fund raising walks.

Organisations need to explain to their employees on the benefits of 'Going Green' .For example when it comes to cutting costs-replacing lighting fixtures can help decrease the energy consumption by 25 to 30 percent. Secondly it can generate revenue for the organization. Supposing customers can be made to pay up 10% more for products that are green or recycled products or ethical products.

They have to play a proactive role in bringing about noticeable changes in the society by coming up with more Green HR initiatives.

### ***Need of Green HRM***

There has been a rising need for strategic Green HRM – the amalgamation of environmental management into HRM. HR professionals specified that one of the top practices for their organizations is encouraging employees to be more environmentally friendly in the workplace. This means that organizations are encouraging their employees to perform activities such as powering down computers after a few minutes of inactivity, making double-sided photocopies, ensuring blinds are lowered in the summer to conserve energy, using energy-efficient bulbs for desk lamps, donating / discounting used office furniture etc, are few the top environmentally responsible practices. These days companies are implementing EMS (Environmental Management System) a strategic device to gain competitive advantage. The system offers better control of firm's environmental impacts. It includes planning, policy, implementation, commitment, measurement and evaluation, review and improvement of HR systems that fit with organization's culture and long-term goals. From on-boarding to exit of an employee, Green HRM policies can touch on every aspect of an employee's career cycle.

### **4. APPLICATION OF GHRM**

Today organizations are not just marketing themselves as 'Employee friendly' but also as 'Eco friendly' thus to attract in lots of high potential candidatures during recruitment. The survey data in the United Kingdom demonstrates that high-achieving graduates judge the environmental reputation and performance of a company as a standard for decision-making when applying for jobs. Furthermore, using technology for pre-screening, interviews, joining formalities, etc. can put aside lots of paperwork, time and traveling ultimately reducing the carbon footprints for both the job seekers and the employer. The new recruits should have specific induction programmes to ensure they understand and approach the corporate environmental culture in a serious way. Thus, sustainable development challenges and issues must be integrated into the recruitment process.

The use of performance management (PM) in environmental management (EM) presents the challenges and issues of how to measure environmental performance standards across various units of the firm, and obtaining useful data on the environmental performance of managers. Some firms have implemented corporate wide environmental performance standards (which covers waste management, reduction of waste and environmental audits) to gauge environmental performance standards, and developing green information systems and audits so as to gain useful data on managerial environmental performance.

HR systems like e-HR can be introduced to be able to assist management and employees in tracking their own carbon emissions. It is recommended that if the environmental criterions are integrated into the process of staff appraisal by writing such responsibilities into all staff action plans, then a learning culture in EM can be encouraged. In addition the managers can ask employees to fetch specific green thoughts and ideas pertaining to their individual jobs to their performance evaluation meetings. Thus, these thoughts and ideas can be brainstormed collectively to include them into the goals and objectives for the forthcoming year.

The training and development programmes for employees should include social and environmental issues at all levels, from health and safety considerations on the shop floor till strategic sustainability issues at management and board level. It should envelop the full array of social, environmental, economic risks and opportunities involved with the business and the means to make out them. In this program, employees should be informed about the green policies and procedures including the vision and mission statement of the company, the sustainability oriented benefits, company-wide initiatives like reducing greenhouse gases, creating green products etc. Hence, training is a key intervention to manage waste in terms of both prevention and reduction and occurs through organizations training teams to produce a waste analysis of their work areas. An organisation can establish green teams in each department which can help in creating general awareness and specific training.

There is an important method in which employee involvement and participation can be encouraged in an organization that is to look for entrepreneurs in the organization who are ecologically or socially oriented and known as eco-entrepreneurs.

They have the aptitude to systematize existing human, financial and natural resources in a way that can add worth to the company's products or services where it didn't exist before. The employees should be involved in devising environmental strategy, so that they can create and expand the knowledge required to market "green products." Organizations are cheering employees to think of thoughts and ideas to lessen carbon emissions and conserve energy.

GHRM can introduce a variable pay constituent to the compensation system by linking the pay to eco-performance. Work organizations can benefit from rewarding waste reduction practices that teams build up. For example, when implementing a green suggestion a portion of the savings that accrued from its results can be returned back to the team or the employee who suggested the idea.

### ***Go Green HRM techniques***

Many initiatives can be taken to initiate and implement a green system. And, some of which don't cost money to implement, can vary considerably transform how business is conducted. Here are some steps which HRM can take to go green:

1. Conducting an energy audit
2. Conducting annual "Going Green" or "Sustainable Organization" Surveys
3. To go paperless
4. Recycling
5. Reducing commuting - Encouraging carpooling
6. Reducing business travel - Teleconferencing instead of traveling
7. Saving water - Monitoring sinks and toilets for leaks that dissipate water
10. Look into opportunities for implementing alternative energy sources

## **5. EMPLOYEE'S ROLE IN INVOLVING GREEN HR INITIATIVE**

1. It starts with the HR manager who has a knack for identifying and hiring people who are committed to not just customers alone or employees but also to the environment.
2. To encourage employees by rewarding them for reaching environment targets, like reducing waste, or carbon footprints or energy use.
3. Employees can play an important role in incorporating the company's sustainability values into their personal lives-choosing to carpool, bicycle to work or use pollution free vehicles
4. The frontline staff can be asked to monitor and identify ways to reduce energy or water use.
5. Instead of thinking on profit potential, staff can be encouraged to think what the right thing to do is.
6. Engaging employees on beautification of parks and the surroundings and working for fund raising events to support such initiatives.
7. When purchasing from new suppliers, managers should screen the products to ensure they meet their company's environmental policies and practices.
8. Industry –wide efforts by the C.E.O or any other senior member can be made to improve the environmental or social impact of the entire sector.

## **6. TEN SMART WAYS TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES IN GREEN INITIATIVES**

1. How can they be role model?
2. How to start at the top?
3. How to allocate time and money to environmental issues?
4. How to put it into writing?
5. How to build sustainability into day –to –day operations?
6. How to assign the responsibility to someone?
7. How to provide training?
8. How to explain how it affects people around?
9. How to gather Champions of Green Cause?
10. 1 How to let employees figure out how they can make a difference?

### ***Brief Description of these above points***

1. The idea is to practice not just to preach it. So, if we are the first ones to bicycle to work and then sort our lunch waste into garbage, compost and recyclables, then we are definitely doing our bit. Cycling to work is undoubtedly a good aerobics exercise; secondly producing compost out of garbage is good for plants.
2. Firms can signal the importance of environmental and social commitments by ensuring company –wide environmental committees which would include senior staff members. Assigning major projects like environmental auditing to the senior most operations persons.

3. The idea is to provide employees with an opportunity to participate in volunteer projects .By purchasing energy efficient lights and allowing employees flexi –work time.
4. Including the social and environmental goals in the corporate values. Uploading green goals on the company website. Following a code of conduct that supports the green cause .And including the achievement of the green goals in the annual report.
5. Trying to go for a paper less office. Although it's not possible, but at least one can reduce the use of paper by printing less and relying more on sending messages through the electronic mode. Alertness helps. Turning off lights and electronic equipment when not in use.
6. Creating a new role dedicated to sustainability or building the duties into an existing position in areas like health and safety or human resources.
7. All new employees on their orientation day should be taught about the company's green goals and their importance. Training employees on matters like waste management, health and safety, and sustainable procurement which are job specific.
8. Certain employees may view it as an extra burden on them but they can be explained, how it can affect them. Firstly the finance officers can be shown how cost-effective it is to use energy efficient equipment. Secondly the sales people can be how volunteering with a local community group will improve customer loyalty.
9. Gathering and engaging employees at different levels of hierarchy in the company who are passionate about the firm's environmental or social concerns and encouraging to establish 'Green Team' that reports to a senior staff.
10. Allowing employees to experiment with ideas like raising money for disaster relief, serving meals to the under privileged and participating in fund raising activities And at the same time encouraging employees to suggest ways and means of saving energy or reducing waste in their everyday life.

## **7. HIGH-RISES OR VERTICAL FOREST RISES**

Tim De Chant in his article titled “Can We Stop Drawing Trees on Sky scrapers” argues that Milan's Bosco Verticale, a 27 storey vertical forest designed by architect Stefano Boeri, was the only green sky scraper that actually came to fruition. The pair of towers, measuring 262 and 357 feet, are already planted with over 900 trees.

According to Boeri Studio, This is a kind of biological architecture that refuses to adopt a strictly technological and mechanical approach to environmental sustainability. Apart from the saplings, there are some 5000 shrubs and

11,000 floral plants that adorn the balcony of each apartment, they create a micro climate of sorts and at the same time oxygenate the area. And they are watered with apartment's waste water.

### *There are other Green success stories as well*

This is a story that was carried by BBC Radio .Architect Ian Simpson talked about his penthouse apartment on Beetham Tower.

The most outstanding feature of his apartment is the olive grove that he calls his 'garden'. A grove of 27 mature olive trees imported from Italy were installed before the completion of the building and are thriving despite their unusual location. To quote Mr. Simpson "What we've tried to create is almost Mediterranean space. The whole thing is so arranged so that it gets the sun all day. So it's very tranquil, very peaceful space "To quote him further "When I designed this building I knew that it could give me this wonderful space, with the height and the light that I wouldn't get anywhere else."

## **8.OBSERVING GREEN OFFICE WEEK**

In Britain a "Green Office Week "is observed every year in May, ever since its inception in 2009. During this week there is a different focus each day on some aspect of environment protection.

1. On Monday the focus is on Energy which means looking at ways and means by which to reduce the consumption of energy.
2. On Tuesday the focus is on Transport in which employees consider how to reduce environmental impact through better transportation.
3. On Wednesday the focus is on waste which translates into 3 R's -----Reduce, Re-Use, Recycle.
4. On Thursday the focus is on purchasing which means examining the importance of purchasing Chains and the use of environmentally friendly products.
5. On Friday the focus is on Innovation which means brainstorming employees for developing more sustainable working practices.

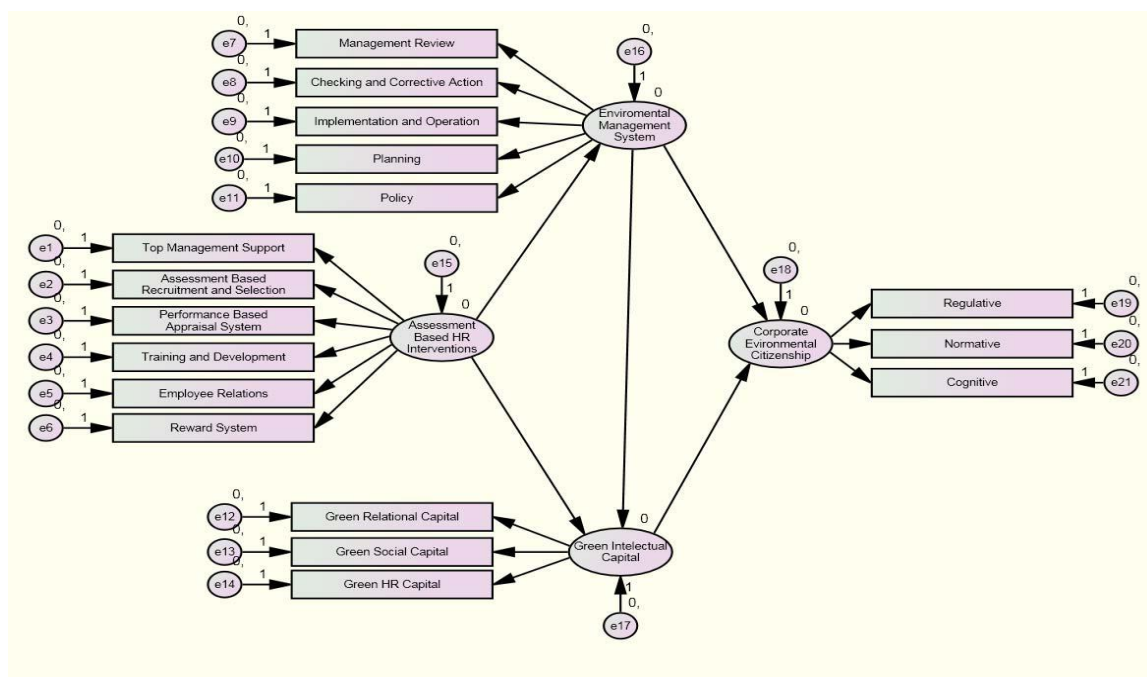
In India too "Green Office Week" is observed by none other than Microsoft Inc. Ever year in January, Microsoft observes "Green Office Week", which includes four days of presentations on everyday actions Microsoft employees could take to contribute to the company's sustainability efforts.

Presentation topics include how employees can go paperless, save electricity, proper disposal of waste and water conservation. While some of the problems plague people worldwide, there are some issues which are particularly relevant in the Indian context. For e.g, in 2013 the peak shortage in electricity generation was predicted to be around 10.6% as per the statistics provided by the Central electricity Authority. With demand exceeding supply, saving electricity is of crucial importance in India.

Therefore becoming energy efficient not only puts less pressure on the electricity grid but also the power saved can be evenly distributed in areas where there is a dire need of it. Participating in such energy saving activities at the corporate level by the employees is indeed a big step in this direction. If it is emulated by each and every industrial house, then this could revolutionize the concept and bring about great changes in the way we think about energy consumption and conservation.

It would be worthwhile to quote (Daily and Huang, 2001) in this context:” In the environmental literature, the concept of green management for sustainable development has various definitions all of which generally, seek to explain the need for balance between industrial growth for wealthy creation and safeguarding the natural environment so that the future generation may thrive.”

### 9. A RESEARCH MODEL FOR IMPLEMENTING GREEN HRM



Source: Strategic Green HRM: A proposed model that supports Corporate Environmental Citizenship

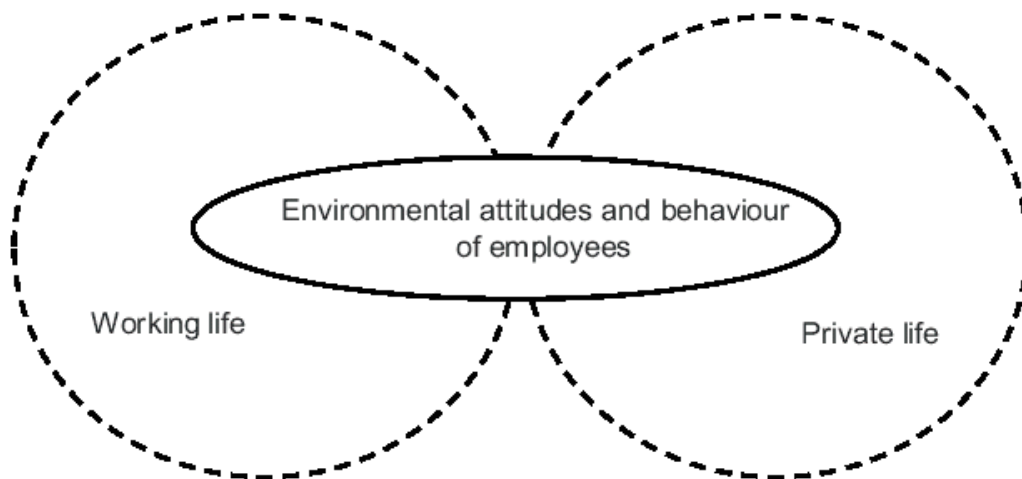
We may quote the words of Wehrmeyer, what he stated in the mid-nineties: "If a company is to adopt an environmentally –aware approach to its activities, the employees are the key to success or failure.”

“Green HR policies focus on collective and individual capabilities to bring about green behaviour. Collective capabilities are mainly discussed in relation to cultural characteristics of the company that are considered significant in restraining or advancing the corporate greening process. Building on the assumption that culture can be managed at all, Green HR policies are aimed at promoting an environmental corporate culture(Crane,1995;Fernandez,Junquera and Ordiz,2003;Harris and Crane, 2002).



Many argue that it's not only at the workplace that employees should practice Green HRM. Practicing at work and home can be cultivated and implemented for furthering this movement.

#### 10. THE MODEL BELOW SHOWS HOW IT CAN BE ACHIEVED



Source: Viola Muster and Ulf Schrader (2001)  
Green Work life Balance: A new Perspective for Green HRM

For Green HRM activities to be fully successful organizations need to set up activities that inculcate environment friendly behaviour at the workplace and private life.

#### 11. CONCLUSION

The prospect of Green HRM appears promising for all the stakeholders of HRM. All onward thinking firms in the planet are seriously taking green management initiatives and programme. Thus, this has turn out to be a vital factor like never before. The inventiveness requires a high level of management and technical skills in employees, since the organization has to expand on innovation-focused ecological initiatives and programmes that have important managerial implications. It is the necessity of the 21st Century.

With people becoming more and more environmentally aware, businesses are starting to integrate green initiatives into their daily work environment. Eco –friendly HR initiatives resulting in greater efficiencies, lower costs and creating an atmosphere of better employee engagement, which in turn helps organizations to operate in an environmentally sustainable fashion. Thus, socially responsible and sustainable service sector organisations need to employ green HRM practices to reap the benefits by attracting and retaining good employees. Green HRM policies will encourage the sustainable use of resources within business enterprises to promote the cause of environmentalism and in the process, create improved employee morale and satisfaction.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Bebbington, J. (2001). Sustainable development: A review of the international development, business and accounting literature. *Accounting Forum*, 25, 128–157.10.1111/accf.2001.25.issue-2.
- [2] Denis, D. J., Hanouna, P., & Sarin, A. (2006). Is there a dark side to incentive compensation? *Journal of Corporate Finance*, 12,467–488.10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2005.08.006
- [3] Dutta, S. (2012). Greening people: A strategic dimension. *ZENITH: International Journal of Business Economics & Management Research*, 2, 143–148.
- [4] Epstein, M., & Roy, M. (1997). Using ISO 14000 for improved organizational learning and environmental management. *Environmental Quality Management*, 7, 21–30.10.1002/(ISSN)1520-6483.
- [5] Florida, R., & Davison, D. (2001). Gaining from Green Management: Environmental management systems inside and outside the factory. *California Management Review*, 43, 64–84.10.2307/41166089.
- [6] Forman, M., & Jorgensen, S. (2001). The social shaping of participation of employees in environmental work within enterprises—Experiences from a Danish context. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 13, 71–90.
- [7] Gupta, A. (2008). Earth on fire: Implications for corporate responsibility. *American Journal of Business*, 23, 3–4.
- [8] Hart, S. (1997). Beyond greening: Strategies for a sustainable world. *Harvard Business Review*, 75, 66–76.
- [9] Huselid, M. (1995). The impact of human resource management practices on turnover, productivity, and corporate financial performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38, 635–672.10.2307/256741.
- [10] Jabbour, C. J. C., Santos, F. C. A., & Nagano, M. S. (2010). Contributions of HRM throughout the stages of environmental management: Methodological triangulation applied to companies in Brazil. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21, 1049–1089.10.1080/09585191003783512.
- [11] Mampra, M. (2013, January 6–9). Green HRM: Does it help to build a competitive service sector? A study. In *Proceedings of tenth AIMS International Conference on Management* (pp. 1273–1281). Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/126544005/green-HRM-competitive-service-sector-pdf>
- [12] [www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.1203371/file/Green-HRMpdf](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.1203371/file/Green-HRMpdf).

- [13] [www.ipedr.com/vol10/16-E10014.pdf](http://www.ipedr.com/vol10/16-E10014.pdf).
- [14] [connection.ebscohost.com/.../strategic-green-hrm-proposed models](http://connection.ebscohost.com/.../strategic-green-hrm-proposed-models).
- [15] [www.slideshare.net/green-hrm-delivering-high-performances-hr-style](http://www.slideshare.net/green-hrm-delivering-high-performances-hr-style)
- [16] [www.hampp-ejournals.de/hampp-verlg-services/get?file=/rci/zfp](http://www.hampp-ejournals.de/hampp-verlg-services/get?file=/rci/zfp)
- [17] [www.asmgrouppublication.incon13-hr-006.pdf](http://www.asmgrouppublication.incon13-hr-006.pdf)
- [18] [www.isca.in/rjrs/archive/iscsi/38.ISCA-ISC-2011-18CLM.com.03.pdf](http://www.isca.in/rjrs/archive/iscsi/38.ISCA-ISC-2011-18CLM.com.03.pdf)
- [19] Strategic Green HRM: A propose model that supports Corporate Environmental Citizenship Viola Muster and Ulf Schader 2001.
- [20] [www.ucu.org.uk/media/powerpoint/m/middlesexuni\\_green hrm ppt](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/powerpoint/m/middlesexuni_green_hrm_ppt)
- [21] <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/business-ethics-environment-evolution-green-hrm-gaurav-jain>
- [22] Li, Jianting, and Yingpeng Zhang. "Design and accomplishment of the real-time tracking system of agricultural products logistics process." E-Product E-Service and E-Entertainment (ICEEE), 2010 International Conference on. IEEE, 2010.
- [23] Lei, Hua. "GPRS-based remote vehicle monitoring system'." Telecommunications Information: network and communication,(2)(2007): 16-18.
- [24] [https://engineering.purdue.edu/oatsgroup/docs/paper\\_hawkins\\_1.pdf](https://engineering.purdue.edu/oatsgroup/docs/paper_hawkins_1.pdf)
- [25] Askey, Jeff C., et al. "Automated logistics processing of GIS data for agricultural harvest equipment." 2013
- [26] Kansas City, Missouri, July 21-July 24, 2013. American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers, 2013.