



National
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Australian
Agricultural
Sustainability
Framework



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Industry sustainability plans informed by the AASF

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The Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework gratefully acknowledges the contributions AgriFutures Australia.

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AgriFutures Australia (AgriFutures) is a Rural Research and Development Corporation focused on growing the long-term prosperity of Australian rural industries, primarily through research, innovation and leadership. AgriFutures is using the Framework to support the development of industry specific sustainability plans for five of their ‘levied industries’ in response to global market and trade conditions.

Background:

Sustainability is an important factor in the long-term prosperity of Australian rural industries. Australian agriculture is, like all sectors, seeing increased scrutiny regarding sustainable production and practices, from domestic and global consumers, customers and particularly export markets. Although these pressures are being faced across the board, smaller rural industries are not resourced or funded in the same way as larger levied industries and so may find it hard to develop their own industry sustainability frameworks or plans from scratch.

AgriFutures saw an opportunity, as a pilot program, to engage and support the development of industry sustainability plans for five of their ‘levied industries’ through leveraging existing industry frameworks, including the AASF. Rather than starting from scratch, the AASF provided a foundation for these industries to start thinking about the broad suite of topics that are considered important in developing these plans.

Approach to using the Framework:

AgriFutures initially ran education sessions using AASF resources to support industry members to gain a foundational, agriculture-wide understanding of sustainability priorities and topics. Then, the industries used the Framework principles and other production system, industry-specific sustainability frameworks to develop a list of 30 sustainability topics (their ‘topic universe’) to be considered for inclusion in the sustainability plans.

Each of the five industries then prioritised a smaller number of focus topics (generally 7-15) for consideration in their sustainability plan. To identify gaps in their performance against these topics, the industries referred to the Framework criteria to provide examples of specific activities that may support that AASF principle or topic from the topic universe. For example, if a certain criterion was not currently being considered by an industry it became a prompter to consider including actions to address that criteria in the industry sustainability plan.



Image supplied by AgriFutures.

Using the AASF alongside other sustainability frameworks:

The AASF was one of several sustainability frameworks used by each industry. For example, some industries referred to the Horticulture Sustainability Framework for a more detailed understanding of horticulture-specific sustainability opportunities and metrics. When the indicators (specific measurable states) are released for the Framework principles, the AASF will be able to support industries in a similar manner.

By combining the AASF's whole-of-sector view of agricultural sustainability with the industry-specific frameworks, the 'levied industries' could have confidence that their plans were being developed through a comprehensive and well-informed process.

Lessons to share:

- **Understanding resource capability:** AgriFutures recognised that the five levied industries have resource constraints and would not be able to effectively take instant action against all sustainability topics identified. This reinforced the importance of a clear and defensible topic prioritisation process. The industries were encouraged to consider how many topics they could practically and realistically address in the timeframes set out in the initial sustainability plans, given their individual level of resourcing and time availabilities.
- **Planning for long-term prosperity:** AgriFutures observed that this project gave industry members the opportunity to shift their focus from day-to-day operations to more strategic planning to support long-term prosperity in areas in which they need to evolve to meet domestic and global market expectations.

Intended use of the Framework in the future:

The five industries are at different stages of the development and finalisation of their sustainability plans. Their alignment activities with the Framework as part of this process are still ongoing. Although, they intend to use the Framework to continue to inform and guide the structure of the final sustainability plans. This may include demonstrating and communicating the industries' contribution to agriculture sector-wide sustainability and leveraging the indicators that the AASF is in the process of drafting.



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