

# Beyond a framework

## The evolution of the AASF

**Angela Schuster**  
**AASF Project Manager**



National  
Farmers  
Federation

Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry



# The pressures agriculture faces

## Non-technical trade and market access

Alignment with global frameworks like the SDGs and TNFD is required to **help support** Australia's sustainability claims in international markets.

## Increasing demands for ESG data and sustainability reporting

A cross-sectoral nationally consistent approach that **reduces duplication** and **eases reporting** burden for all supply chain actors is necessary.

## The need for principles-based, outcomes-focused solutions

A **principles-based approach** to sustainability **focused on** real-world **outcomes** is needed to avoid prescriptive rules.

## Finance sector's emerging expectations

The agricultural industry needs to **meet emerging requirements** for sustainable finance that **supports investment** in nature-positive agriculture.

## Skepticism and distrust in unverifiable processes

Australia's sustainability claims must be **real, measurable and consistently demonstrated** to **build trust** across markets and stakeholders.

## Confusion, inconsistency and constant change

**Clear** and **consistent** sustainability definitions, indicators and reporting are essential to **reduce confusion, duplication and fragmentation**.

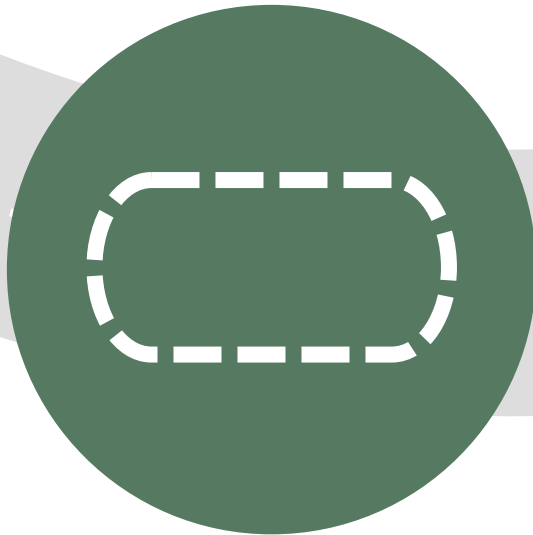
# Development started in 2020

Research showed **growing pressure** to demonstrate sustainability in agriculture – credibly, consistently and without duplication and **not using certification**

Provides a common, unifying language for sustainability in Australian agriculture



Grant fund to develop “biodiversity certification program”



Developed as a voluntary, principles-based framework drawing on international and domestic expectations





# ...and evolved through stakeholder input and research 2021-2025

Four years + stakeholder consultation, pilot testing and technical design funded by DAFF



Developed collaboratively with industry bodies, government, supply chains, finance, research and sustainability voices



Continues to be informed by domestic frameworks, global sustainability standards



We now have a national sustainability framework (AASF), draft indicators, data ecosystem concept and roadmap, engaged stakeholders... and ... momentum and interest



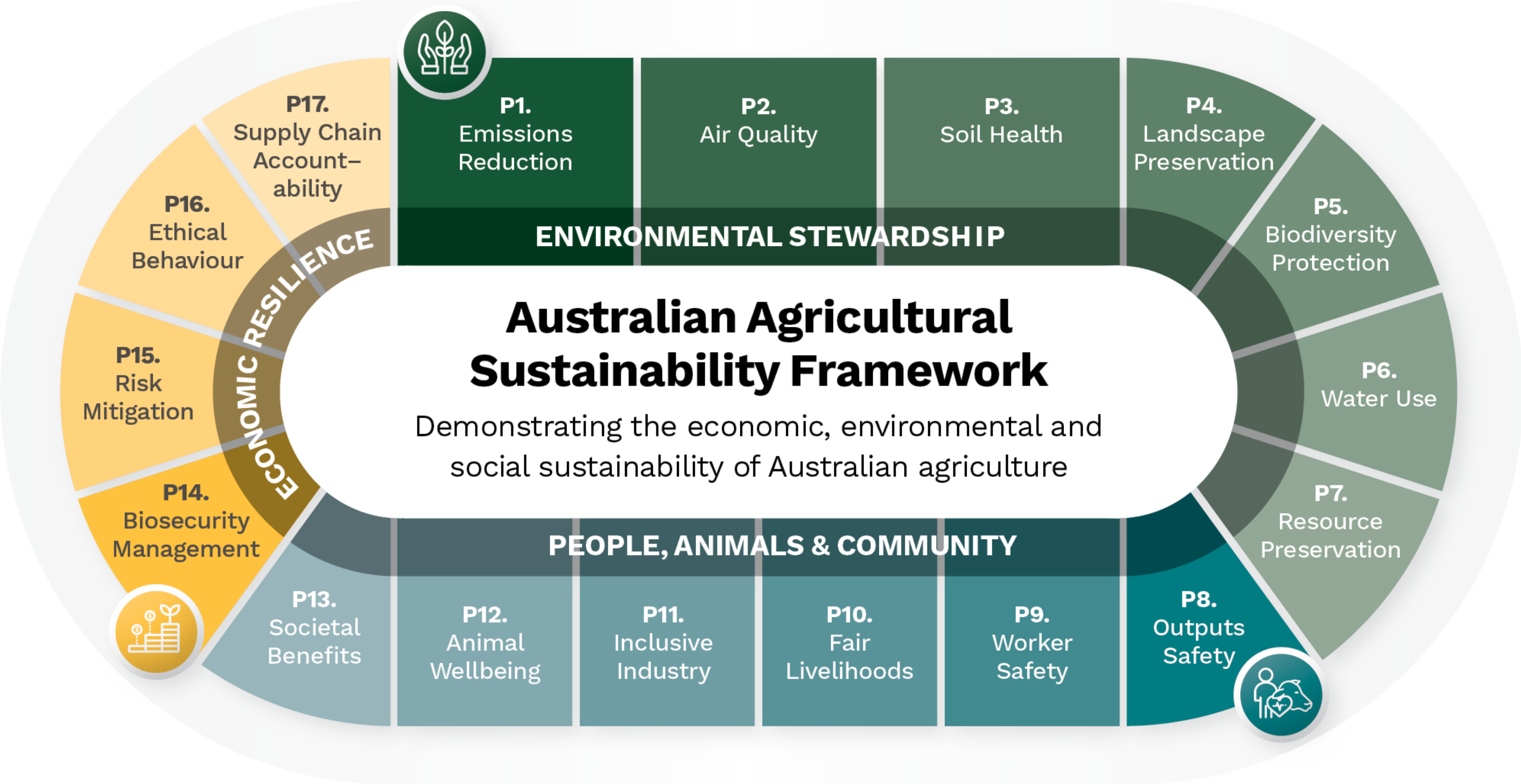
National  
Farmers  
Federation

Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework

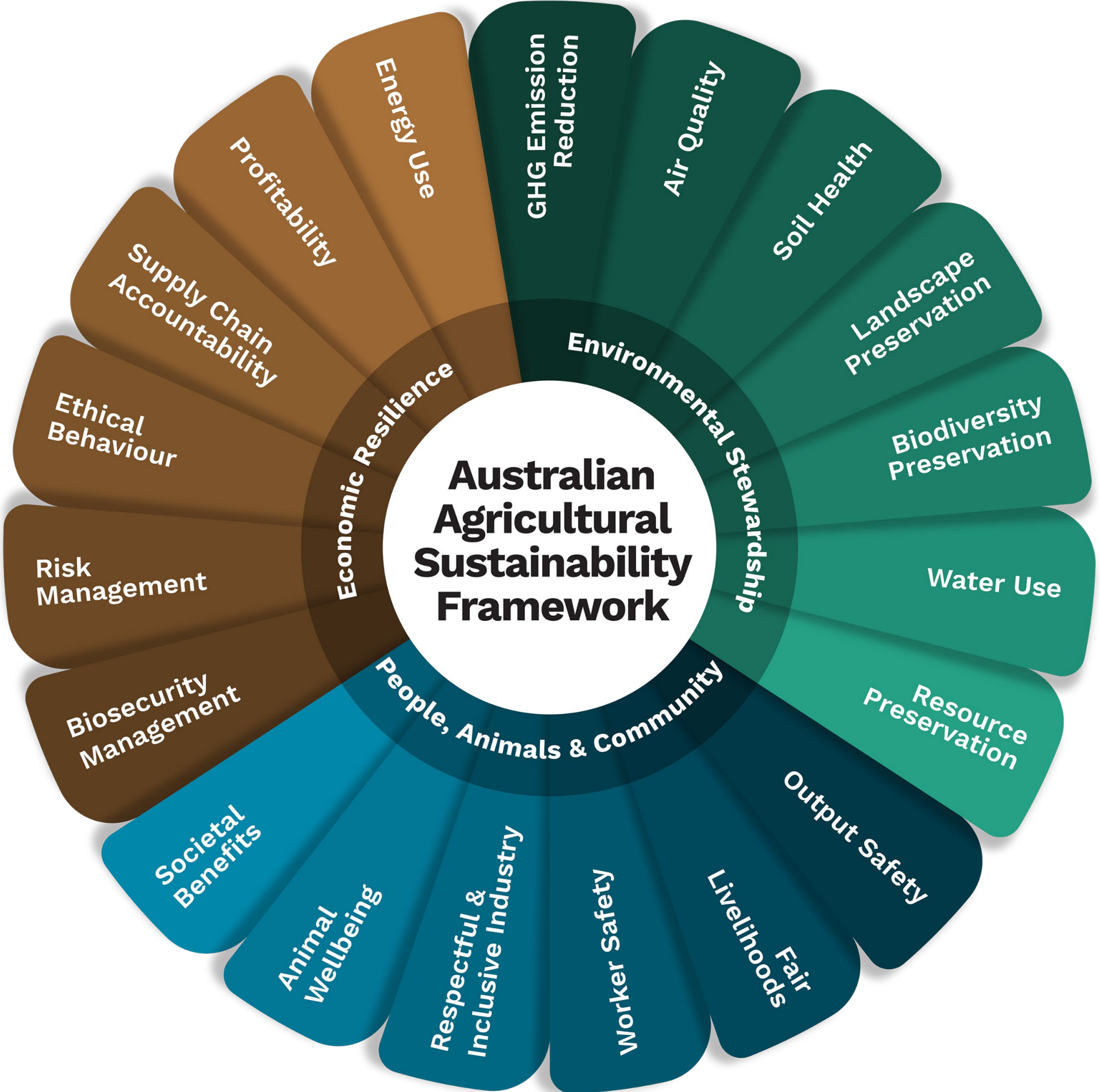


Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

# The Framework



# The Framework





# Overarching principles

## HARMONISATION

**Does not** seek to replace, duplicate or direct existing frameworks and schemes, nor create undue burden.

## ALIGNMENT

**Does not** create an alternative sustainability scheme, compliance program or certification scheme.

## COORDINATION

**Does** foster coordination and collaboration to tackle shared, difficult challenges.

## OUTCOMES

**Does** seek to create outcomes-based Principles and Criteria supported by broad, Indicators.

## CLARITY

**Does** bring coherence, confidence and clarity to agricultural sustainability efforts.



National  
Farmers  
Federation

Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework

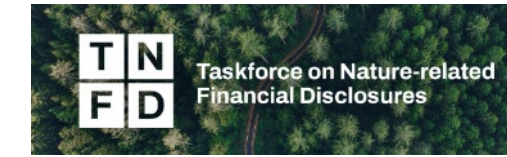


Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

# Development considerations

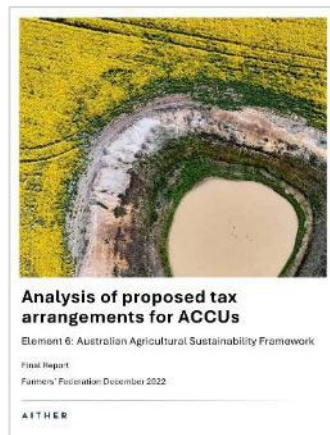
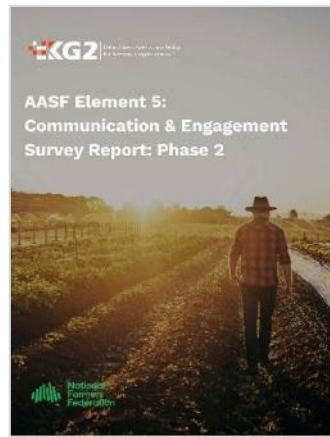
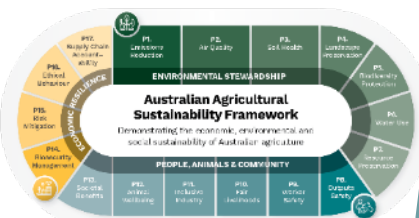
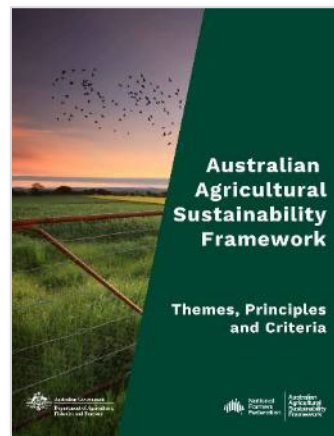
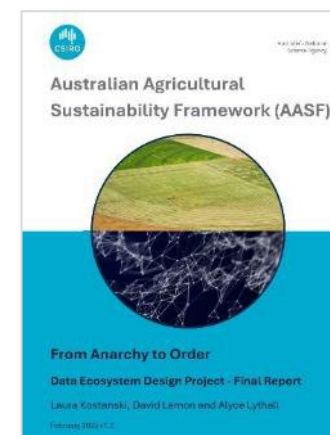
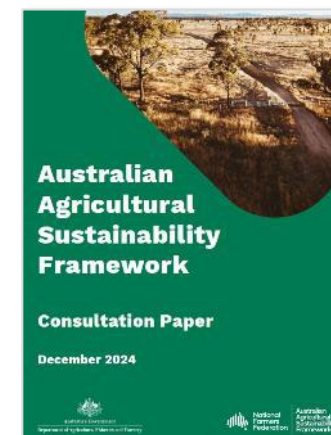
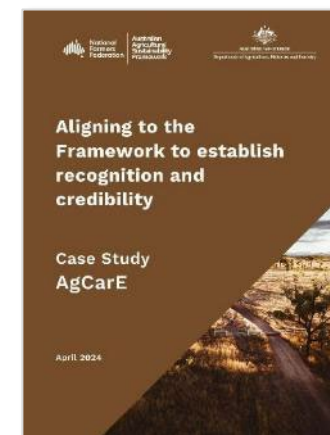
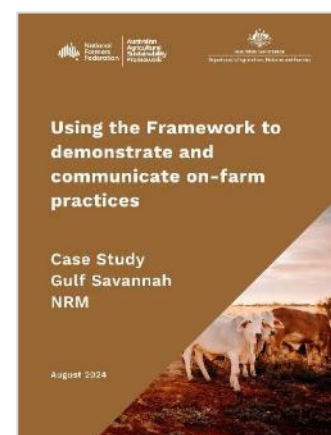
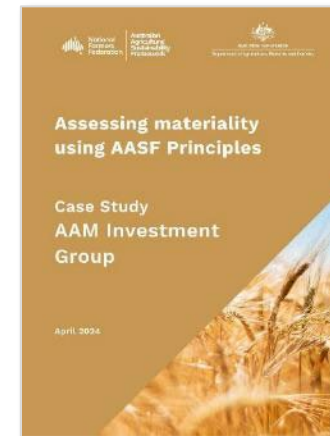
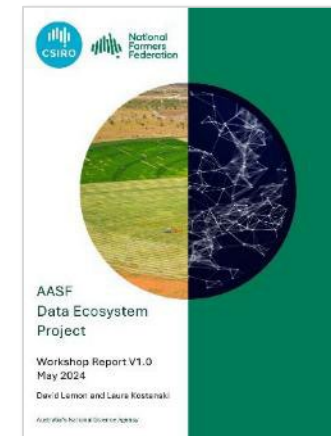
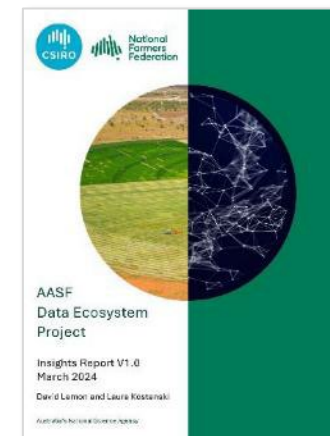
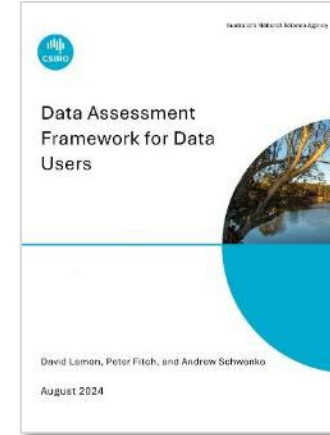
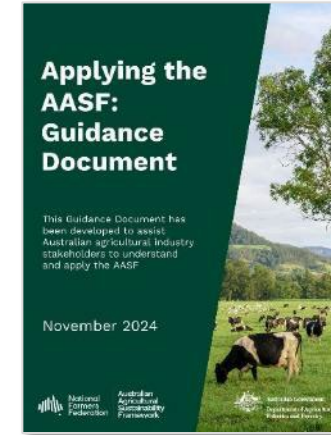
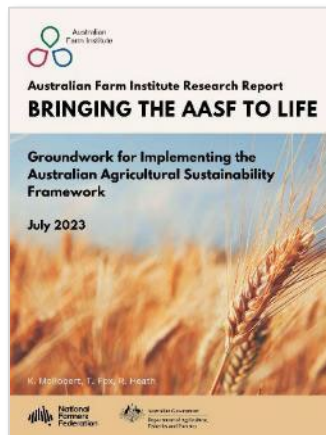
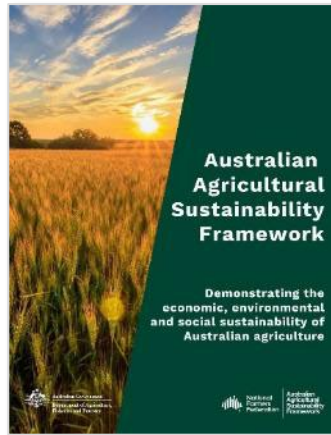
The AASF has been **aligned to**:

- **domestic initiatives** – like beef, cotton, and dairy frameworks; and
- **international initiatives** like the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Reporting Initiative.



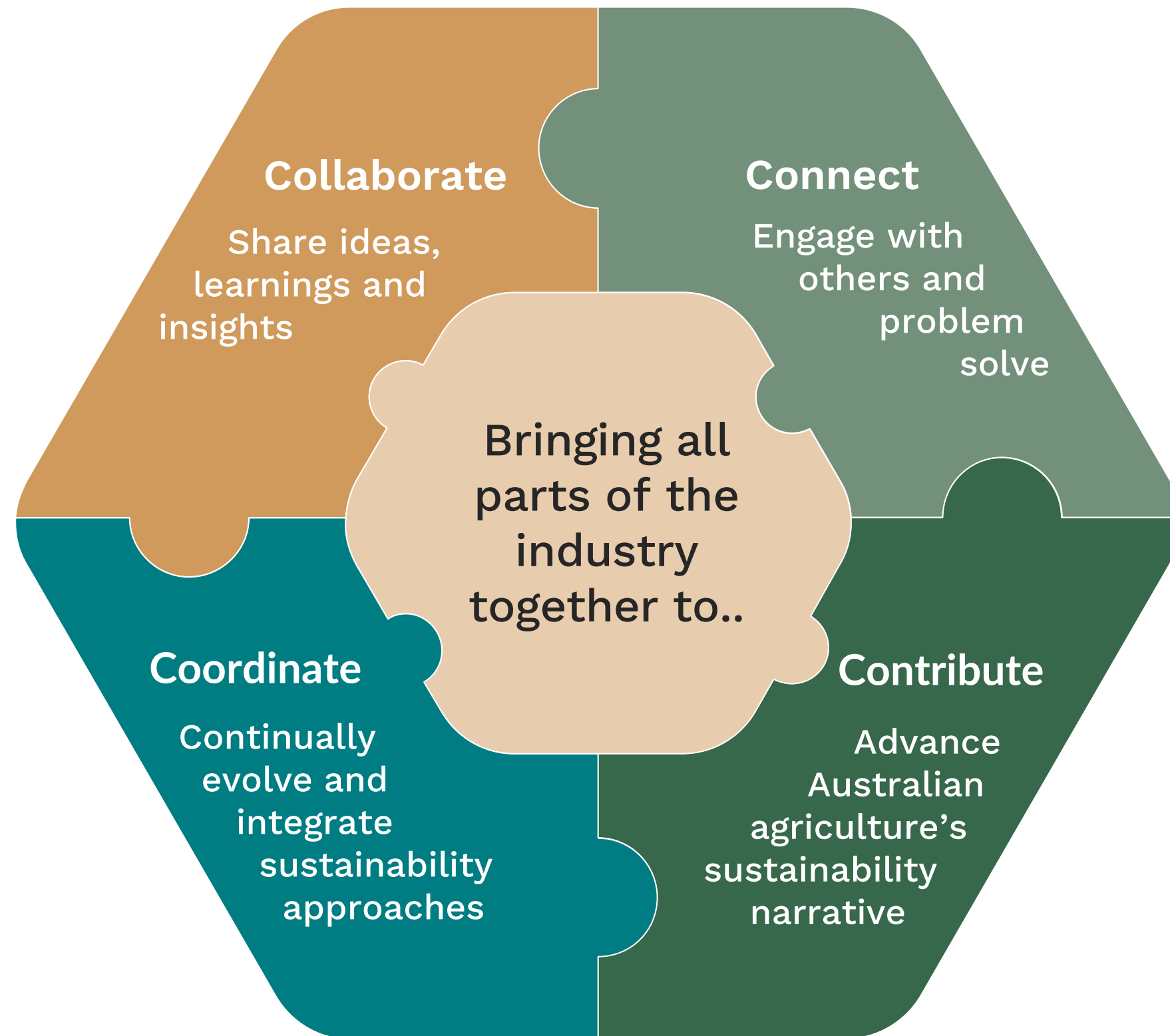


# The outputs under the project

[illegible]



# Community of Practice

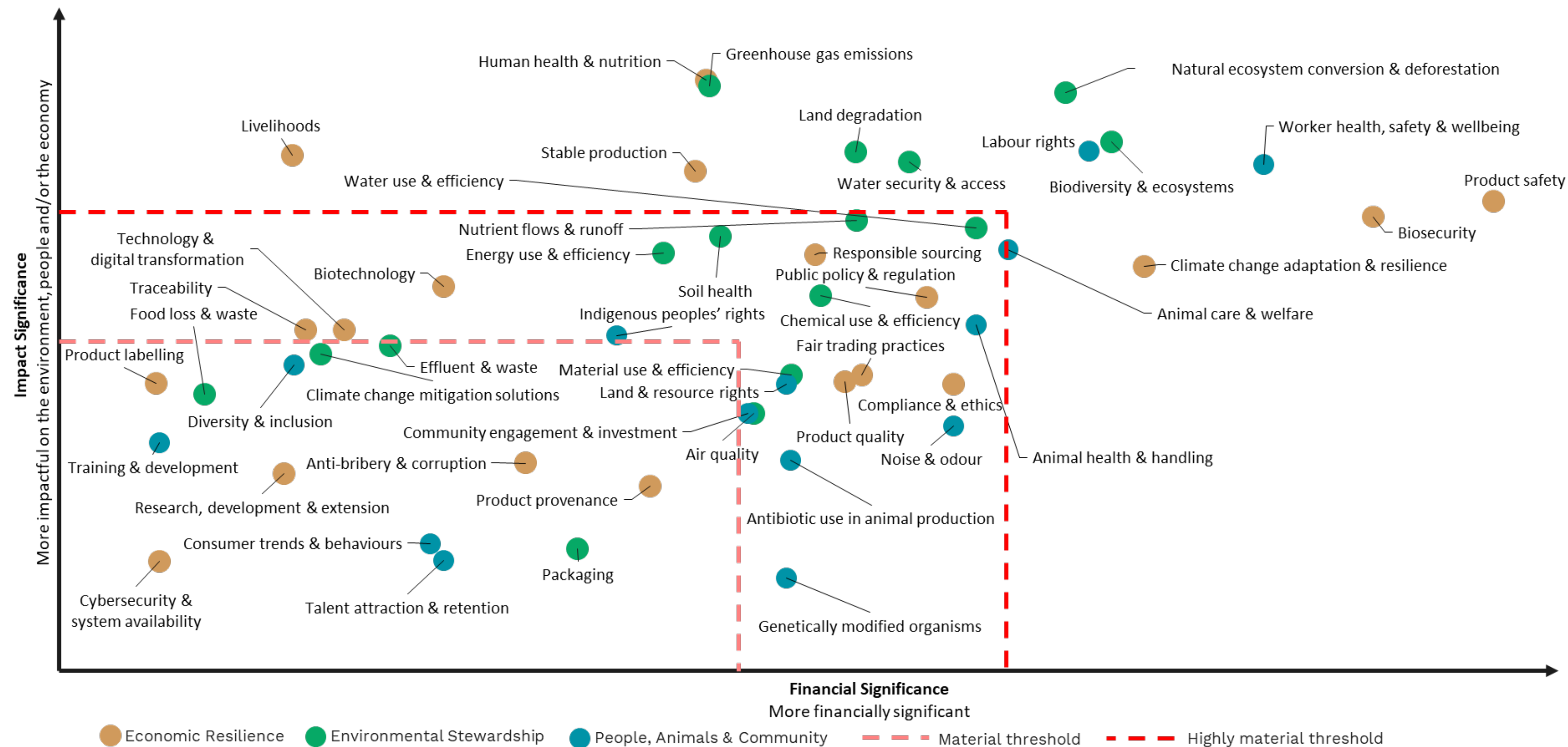


More than 430 stakeholders participate in the Community of Practice.

Feedback is provided through online sessions, small stakeholder focus groups, larger events and an online hub.

Independent evaluation has shown the COP to be highly valued by stakeholders.

# Materiality assessment





# AASF Data ecosystem



The sustainability data landscape is anarchic...



# The challenge ahead ... and solution



National  
Farmers  
Federation

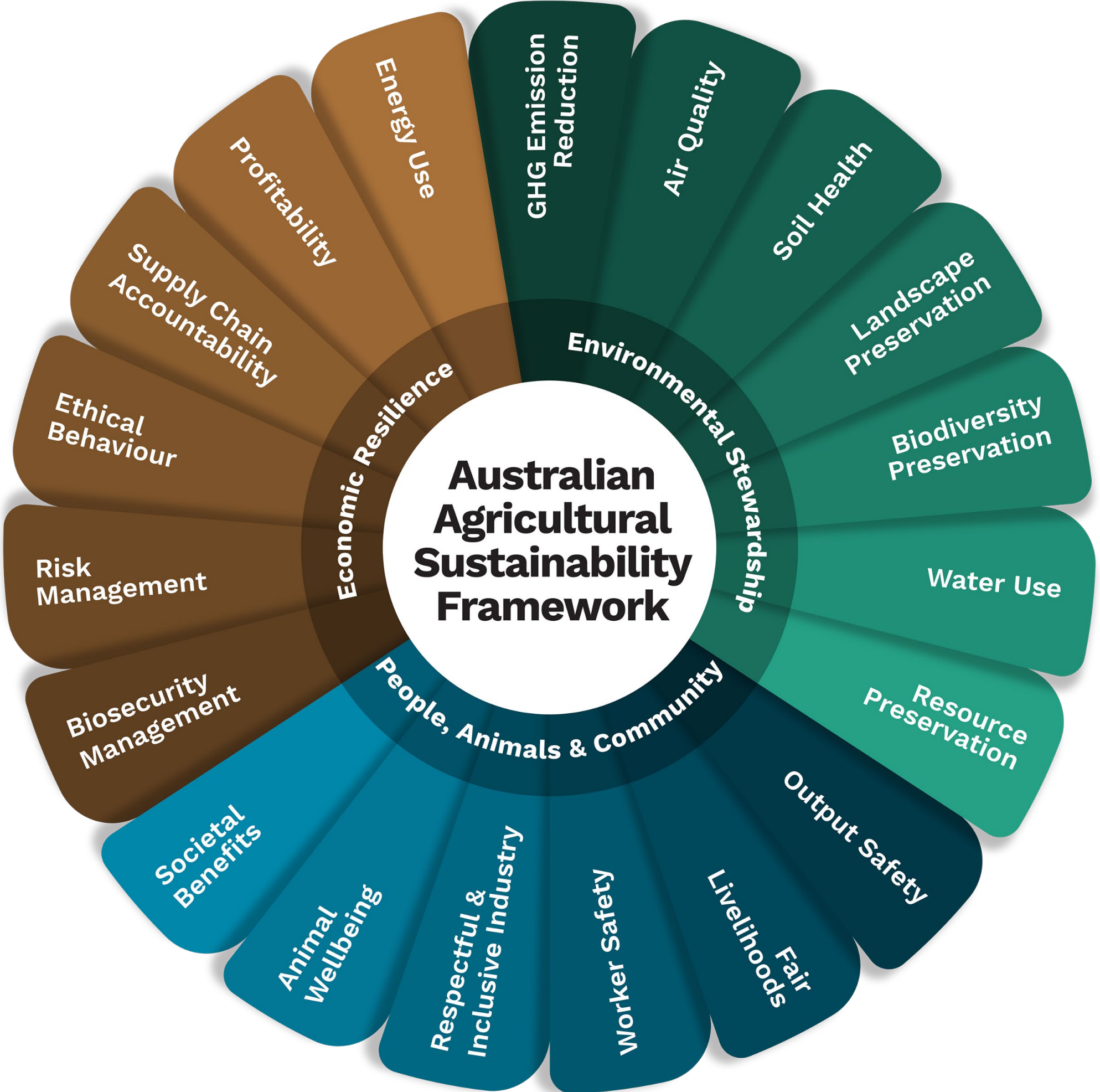
Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry



# The Framework





# What more needs to be achieved beyond a Framework?

**Strengthen Australia's global reputation** as a leader in sustainable agriculture, ensuring **market access** and **trade** opportunities.

Provide **clear and credible industry sustainability indicators** that enhance market access and competitiveness.

Enable informed decision-making by enabling **harmonised sustainability reporting** that **reduces duplication** and compliance burdens.

Facilitate **cross-commodity collaboration** on sustainability, reduce duplication and demonstrate Australia's commitment to global markets.

**Foster a collaborative approach** that integrates industry, supply chains and policy makers to drive investment and innovation in sustainability.



National  
Farmers  
Federation

Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

# What's needed to achieve this?

(because a framework is a document...)

## COORDINATION

From  
framework to  
unified force

Stakeholders are calling for a coordinating mechanism that can **reduce duplication, connect initiatives and create a shared reference point** for sustainability across **programs, commodities and jurisdictions.**

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Trust requires  
accountable  
structures

Stakeholders have expressed a strong desire for an approach to sustainability that is trustworthy, science-based and **governed independently of single interests.** A coordinating mechanism provides the legitimacy and governance structure to build and maintain trust.

## INTEGRITY

One national  
story, built on  
trust

Australia's sustainability story relies on there being a credible national approach that ensures what's reported is **consistent, coordinated, trusted** and backed by transparent and shared governance.

## OUTCOMES

From high-level  
intent to real-  
world impact

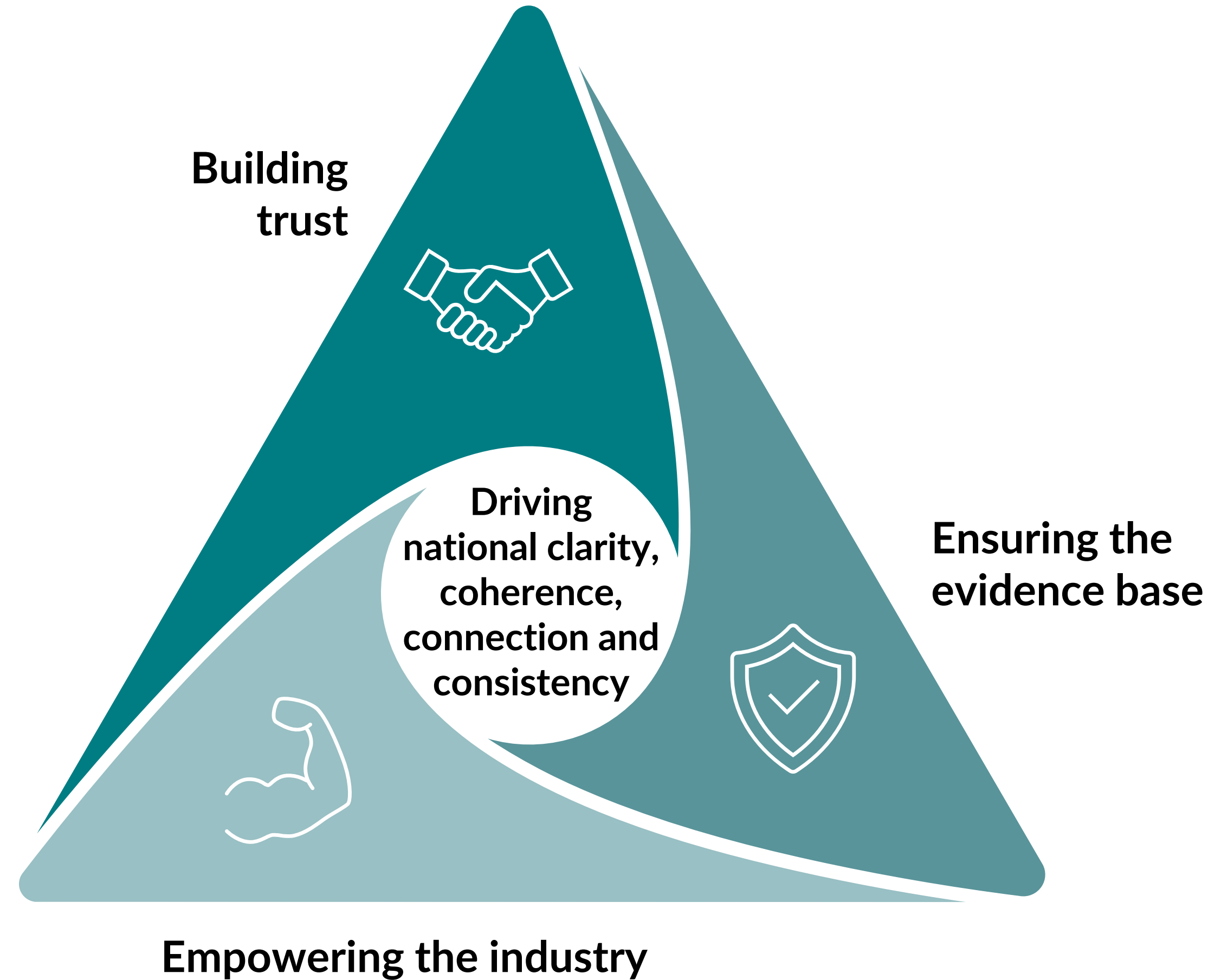
Sustainability progress must be **visible, measurable and meaningful.** It is time to move from high-level intent to **real-world outcomes** by aligning indicators, data and assurance to a common, coordinated national narrative.

## EXPECTATIONS

Leading the  
narrative, not  
chasing it

Markets, regulators and investors are raising the bar for sustainability claims. Without coordination, others will define the terms for us. A national approach **gives Australia the ability to anticipate, shape and lead** on sustainability expectations, not simply react to them.

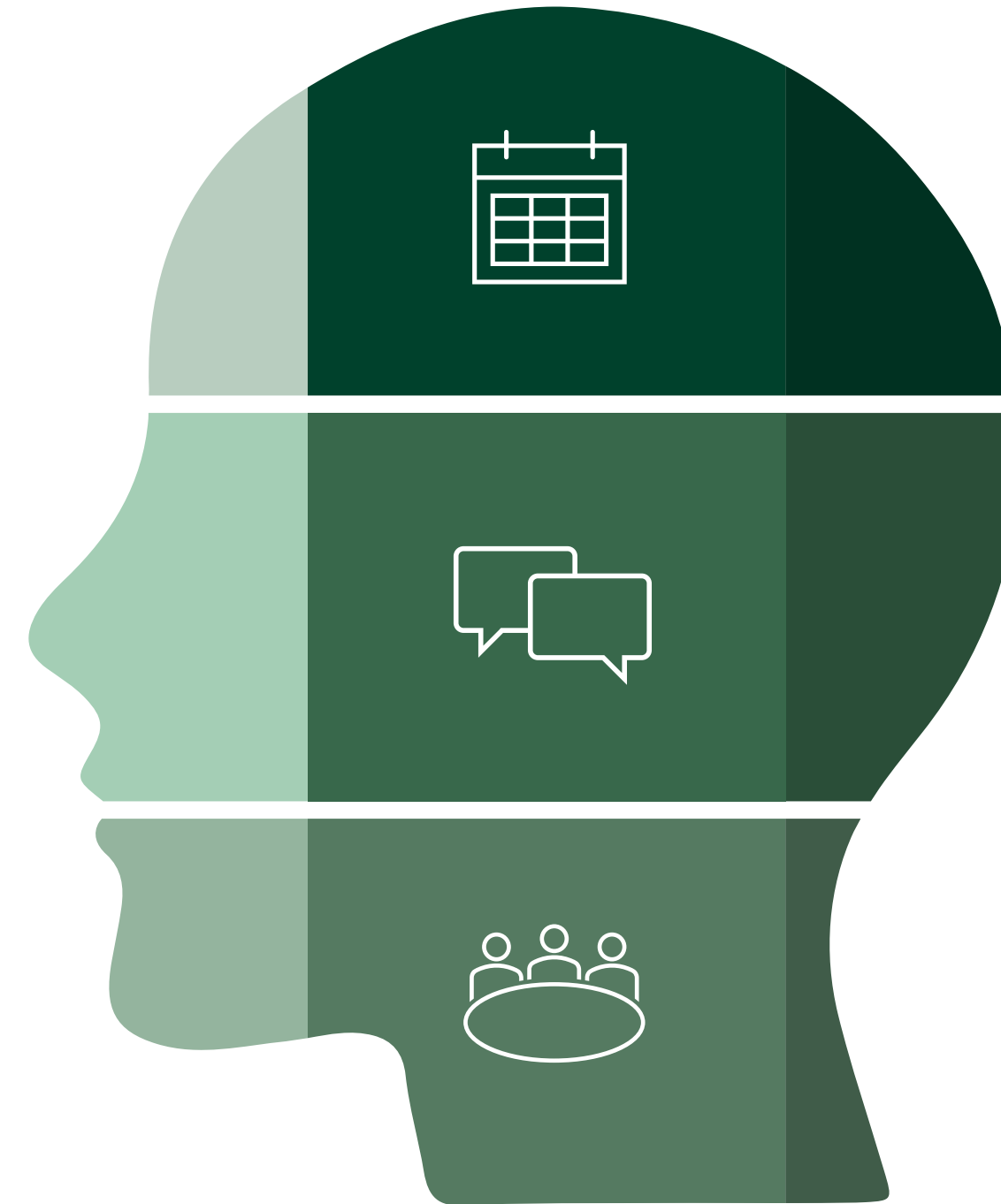
**... a coordinating-mechanism is required to achieve this**





# How do we know this?

- 1 AASF HISTORY**  
Over five years of stakeholder feedback and research across the AASF project has provided insights into its future.
- 2 CONSULTATION**  
Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback via the COP on the future strategy and governance arrangements.
- 3 ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
An eight-person expert Committee contributed to a five-year Governance, Strategy and Operations plan.



# AASF Governance, Strategy and Operations Advisory Committee



Nick Austin



Grace Falkiner



Allison Harker



Ange Hutchinson



Charlie McElhone



Kylie Porter

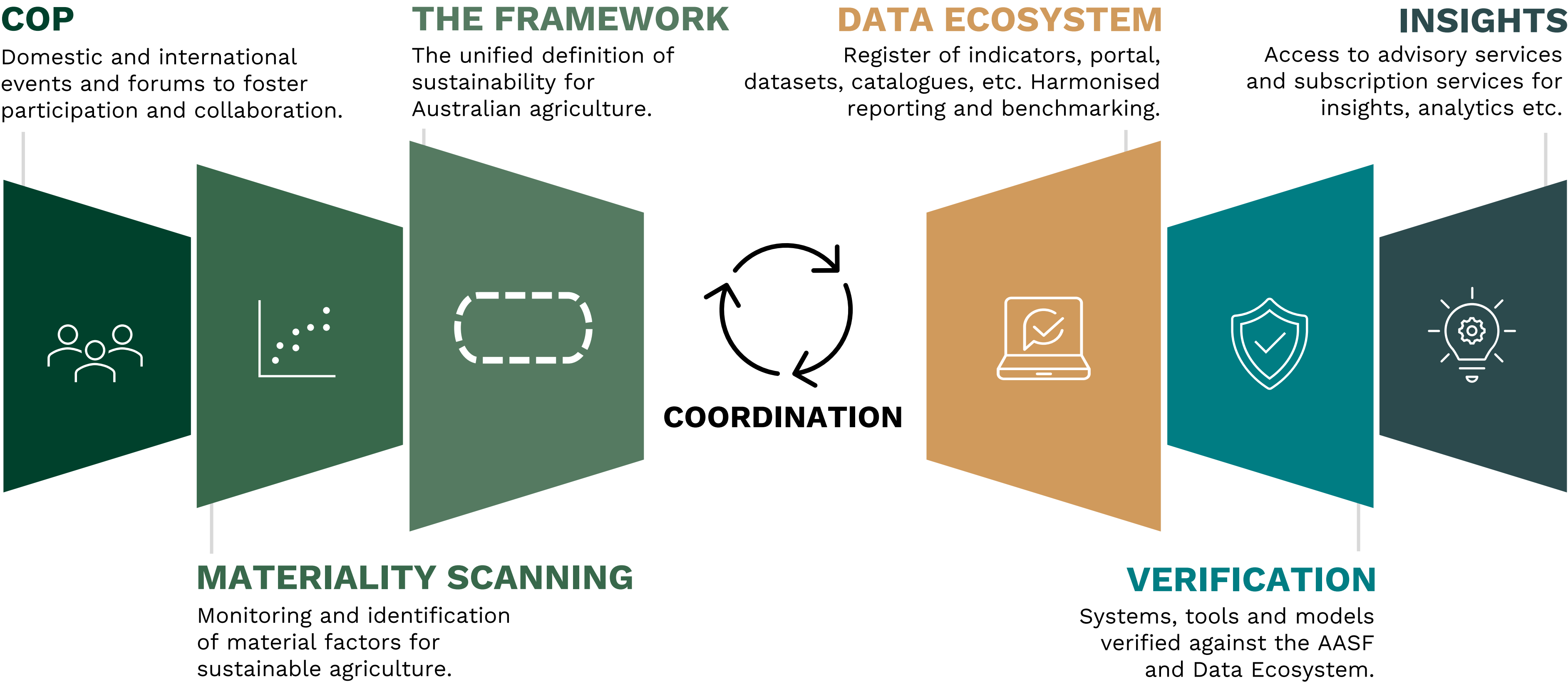


Troy Setter



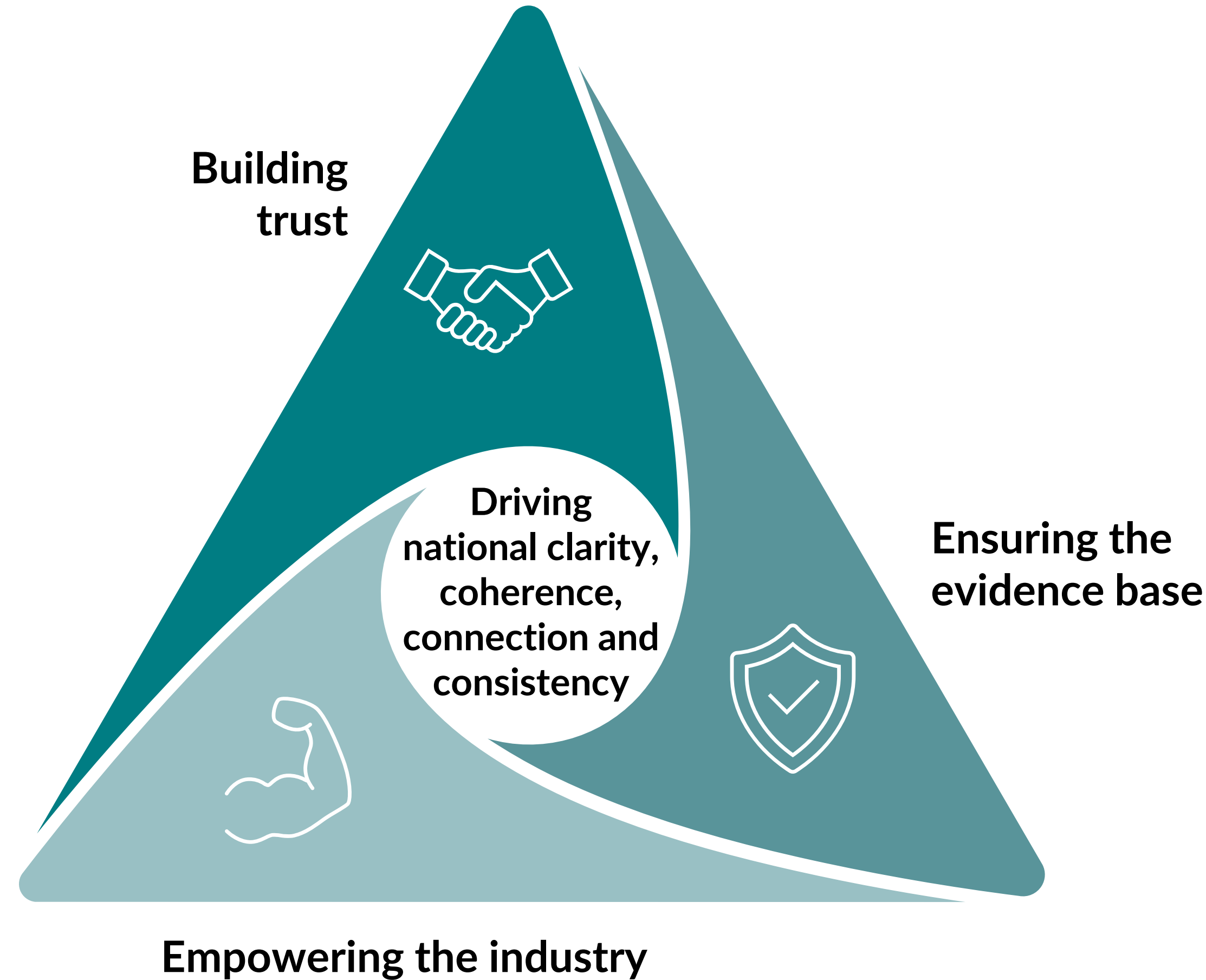
Fiona Simson

# The value stakeholders see over time

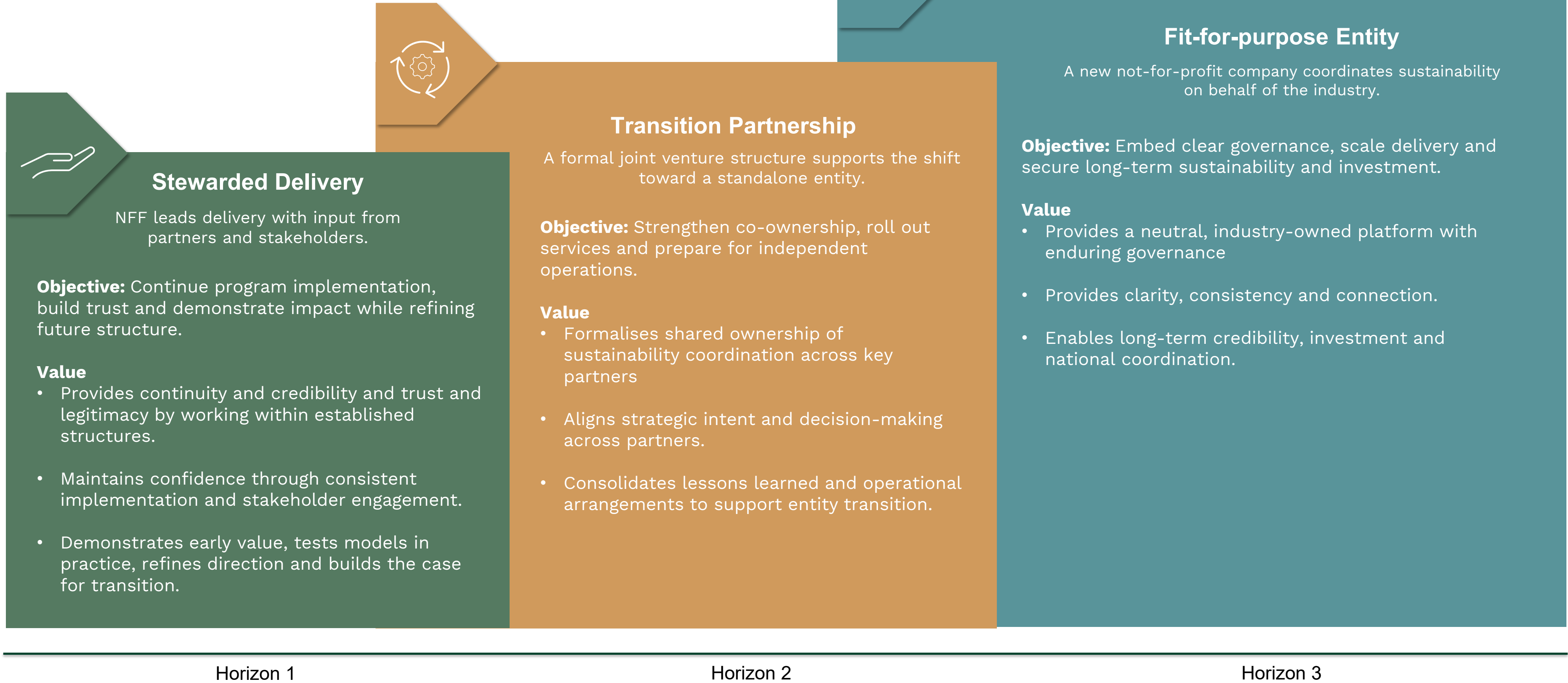




# How do we enable this coordinating-mechanism?



# A phased approach most practical



# But what would this look like?



National  
Farmers  
Federation

Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry



# Introducing: The Agricultural Sustainability Australia Alliance



National  
Farmers  
Federation

Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

# The Agricultural Sustainability Australia Alliance

## Why the ASA Alliance?

Australia's agriculture industry faces mounting demands from markets, regulators and investors to demonstrate sustainability in a clear, credible and consistent way.

Despite significant existing work, sustainability efforts across Australian agriculture are fragmented, duplicated and difficult to navigate, both for producers and supply chains.

Without coordination, Australia risks losing control of its sustainability narrative, while also increasing the burden on farmers and falling behind global competitors.



National  
Farmers  
Federation

Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry



# The Agricultural Sustainability Australia Alliance

## What the ASA Alliance is

The Agricultural Sustainability Australia (ASA) Alliance would bring together industry, supply chains, government, finance and experts to:

- align terminology, indicators and data across commodities and sectors;
- coordinate efforts, enable shared infrastructure such as the data ecosystem;
- harmonise sustainability reporting and reduce duplication; and
- support credible, trusted sustainability claims for Australian agriculture.



National  
Farmers  
Federation

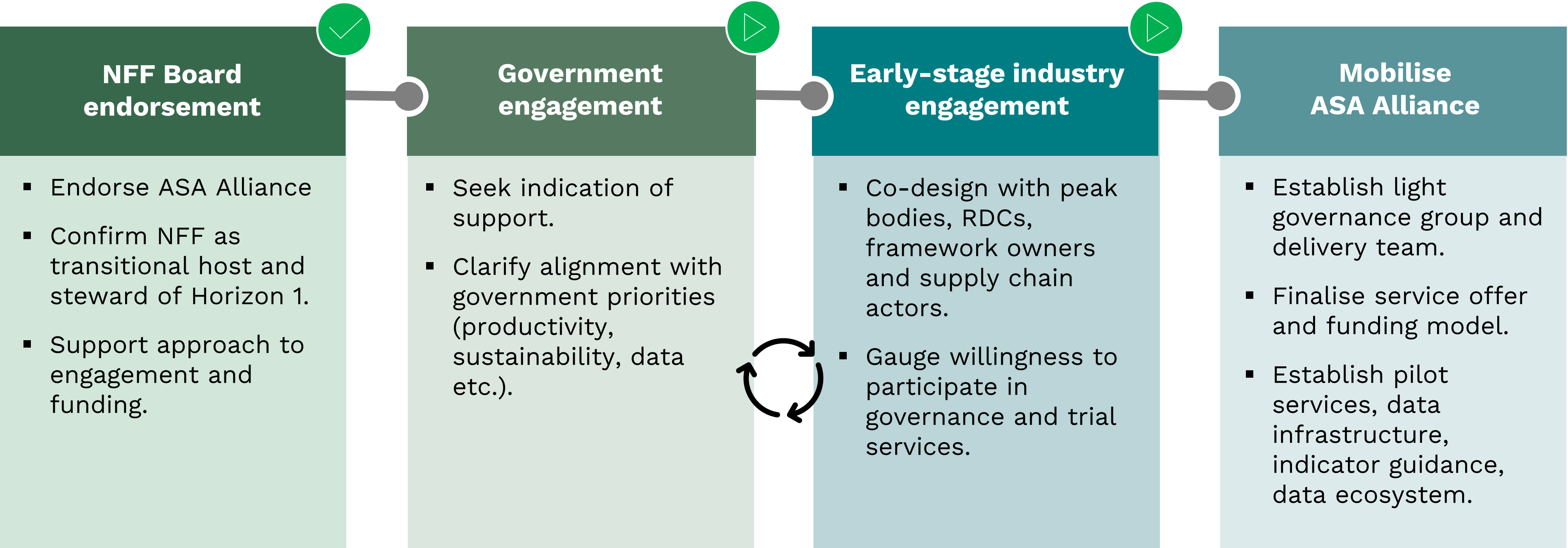
Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework



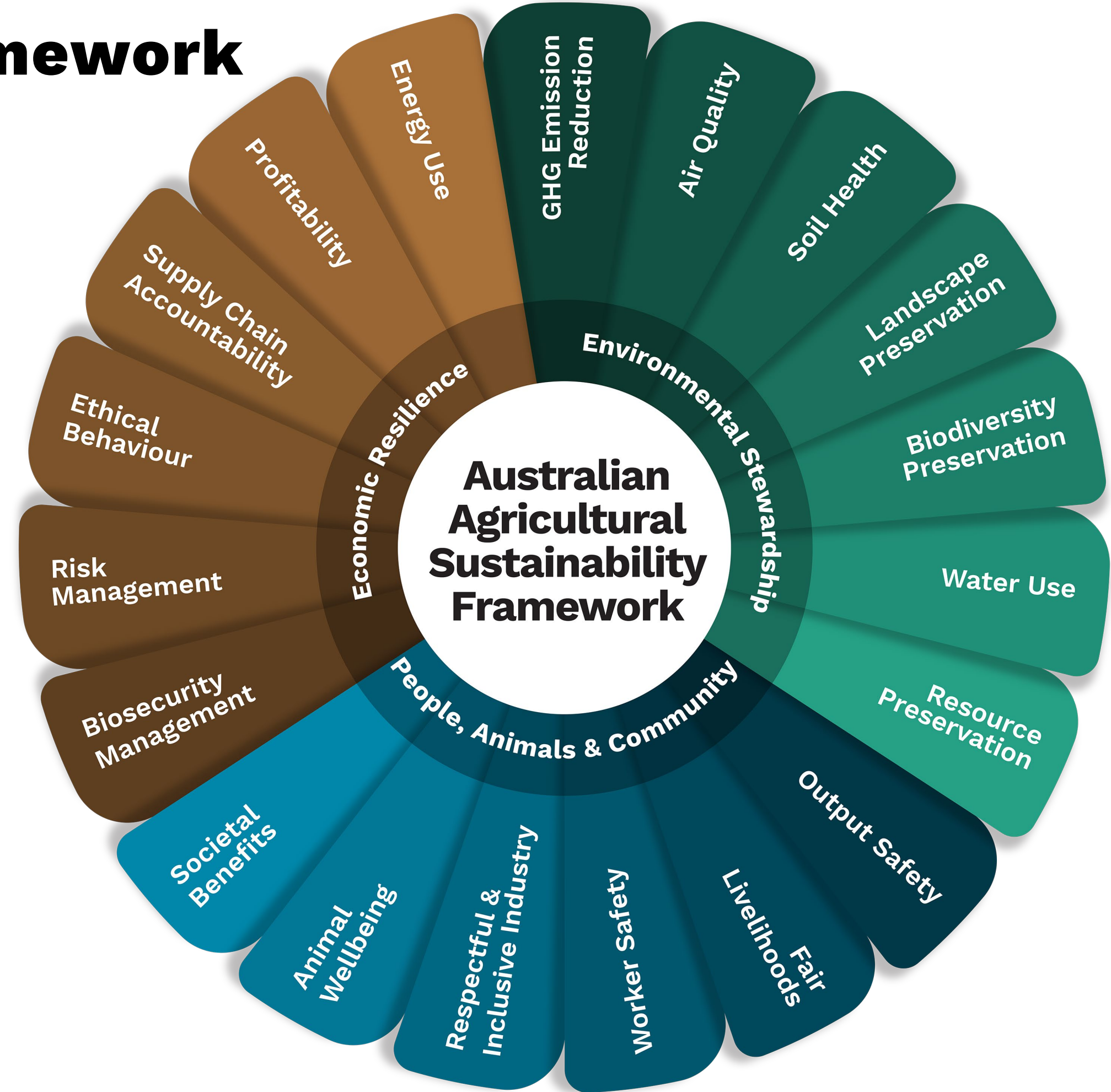
Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry



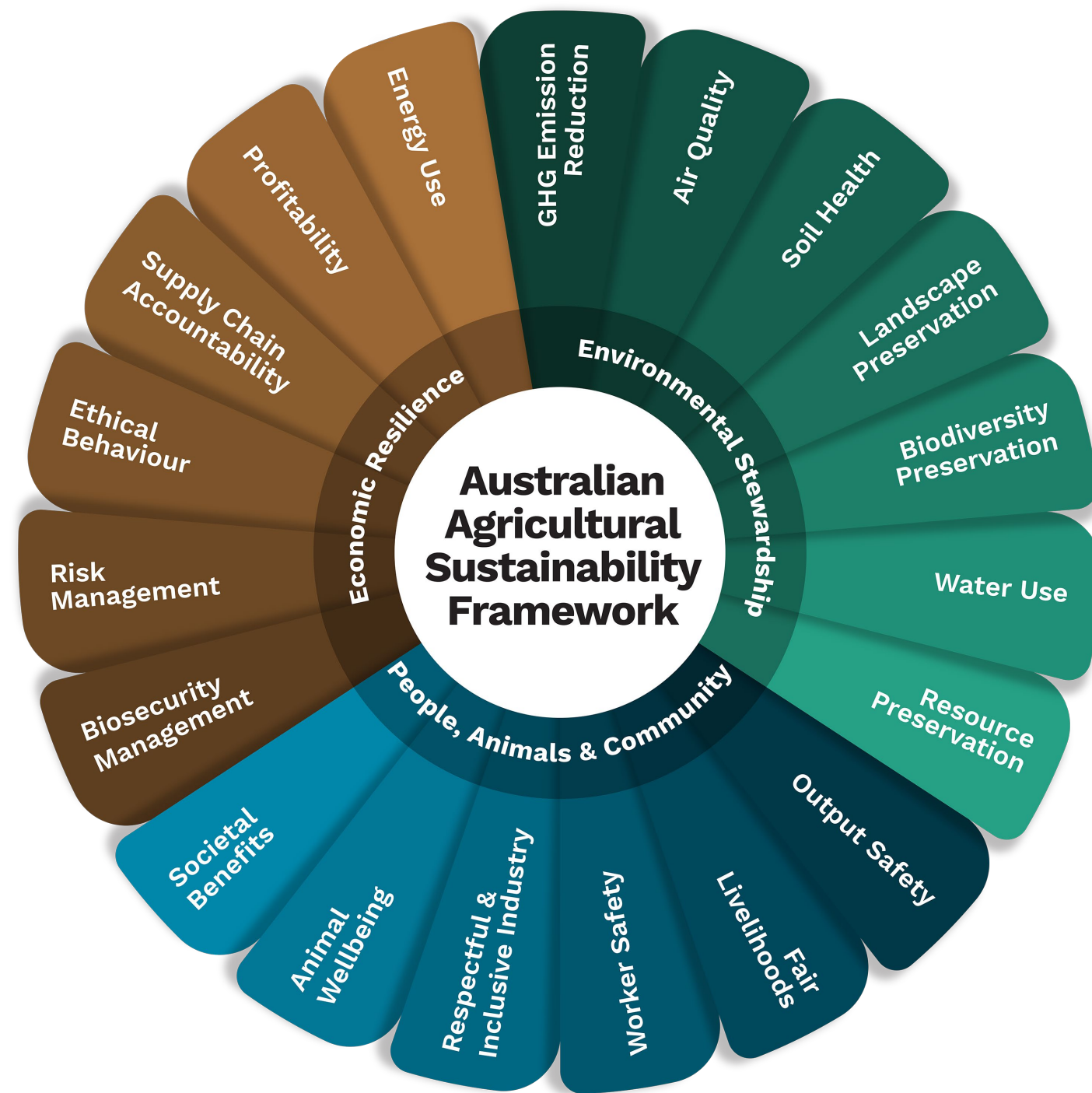
# Where to from here?



# Beyond the framework



# Beyond the framework



The AASF laid the foundation for Australia's unified sustainability story.

Now is the time to take it further by enabling the coordinating mechanism that connects and amplifies efforts across agriculture.

**Collaboration**  
**Productivity**

**Clarity**  
**Credibility**



# AASF Contacts:

## **Warwick Ragg**

General Manager – NRM

Project Lead – AASF

M: 0427 411 215

wragg@nff.org.au

## **Angela Schuster**

Project Manager – AASF

M: 0438 456 545

angelas@schusterconsulting.com.au

[www.aasf.org.au](http://www.aasf.org.au)



National  
Farmers  
Federation

Australian  
Agricultural  
Sustainability  
Framework



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

