Beyond a framework

The evolution of the AASF

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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.

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.

Skepticism and distrust in unverifiable processes

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

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.

Finance sector's emerging expectations

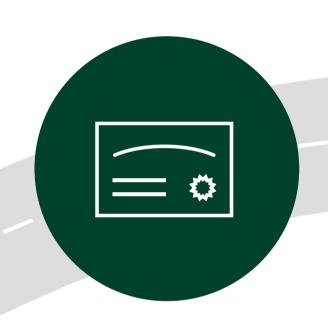
The agricultural industry needs to **meet emerging requirements** for sustainable finance that **supports investment** in nature-positive agriculture.

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

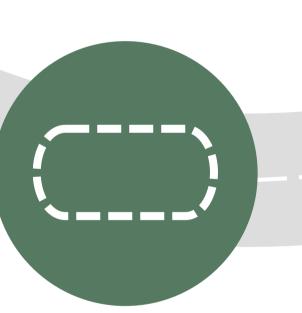




Grant fund to develop "biodiversity certification program"



Provides a common, unifying language for sustainability in Australian agriculture





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

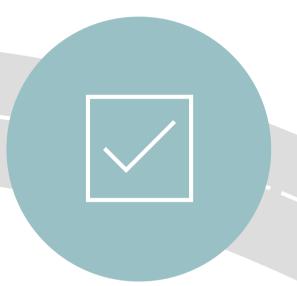
...and evolved through stakeholder input and research 2021-2025

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



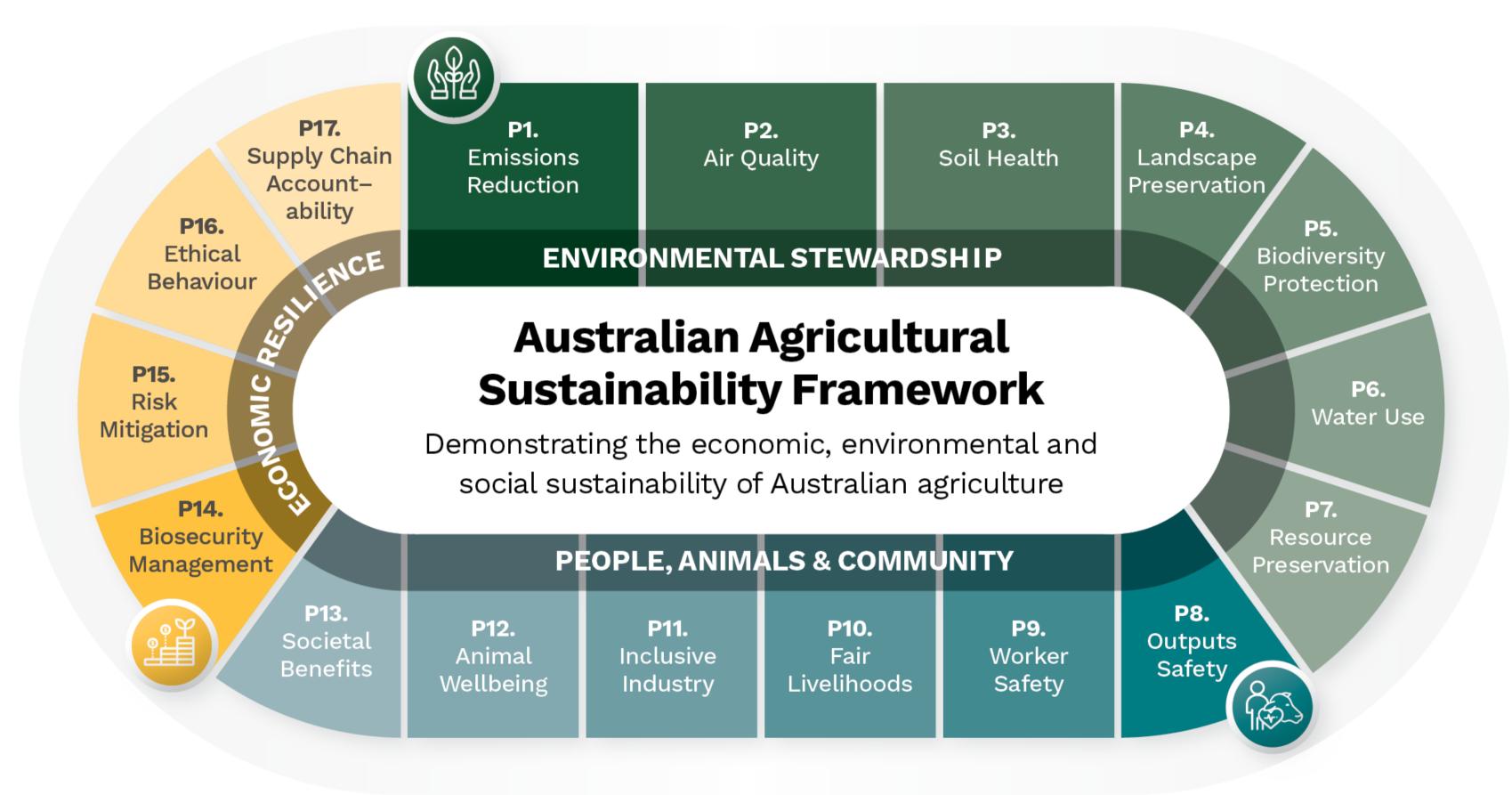


We now have a national sustainability framework (AASF), draft indicators, data ecosystem concept and roadmap, engaged stakeholders... and ... momentum and interest



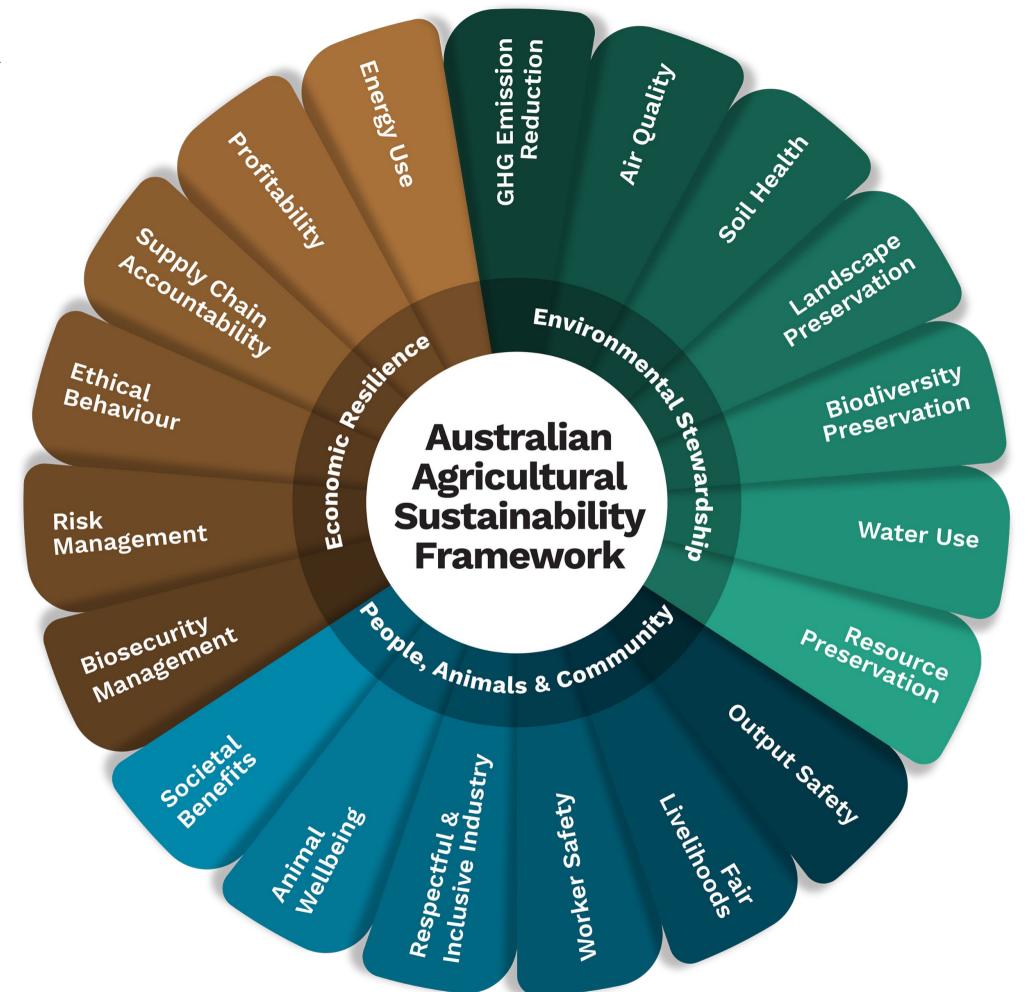
Continues to be informed by domestic frameworks, global sustainability standards

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

foster coordination and collaboration to tackle shared, difficult challenges.

OUTCOMES

seek to create outcomesbased Principles and Criteria supported by broad, Indicators.

CLARITY

bring coherence, confidence and clarity to agricultural sustainability efforts.

Development considerations













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











































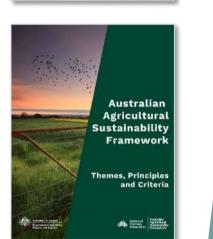






The outputs under the project

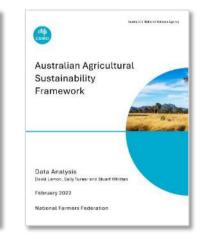












Australian Agricultural Sustainability

Framework

Stage 1 Final Report 2022 - 2023

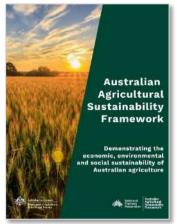


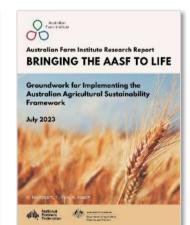




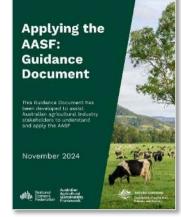


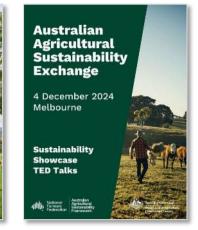


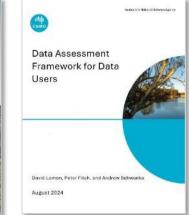




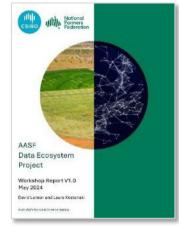


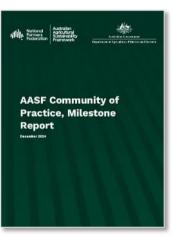


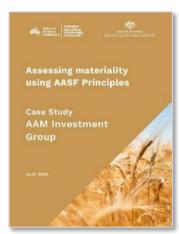


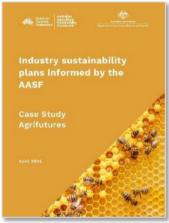




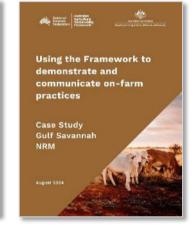


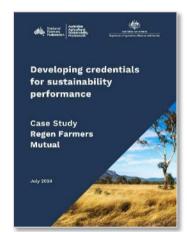


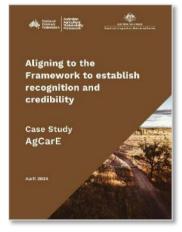


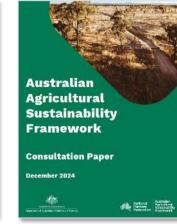




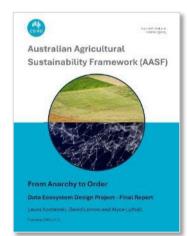




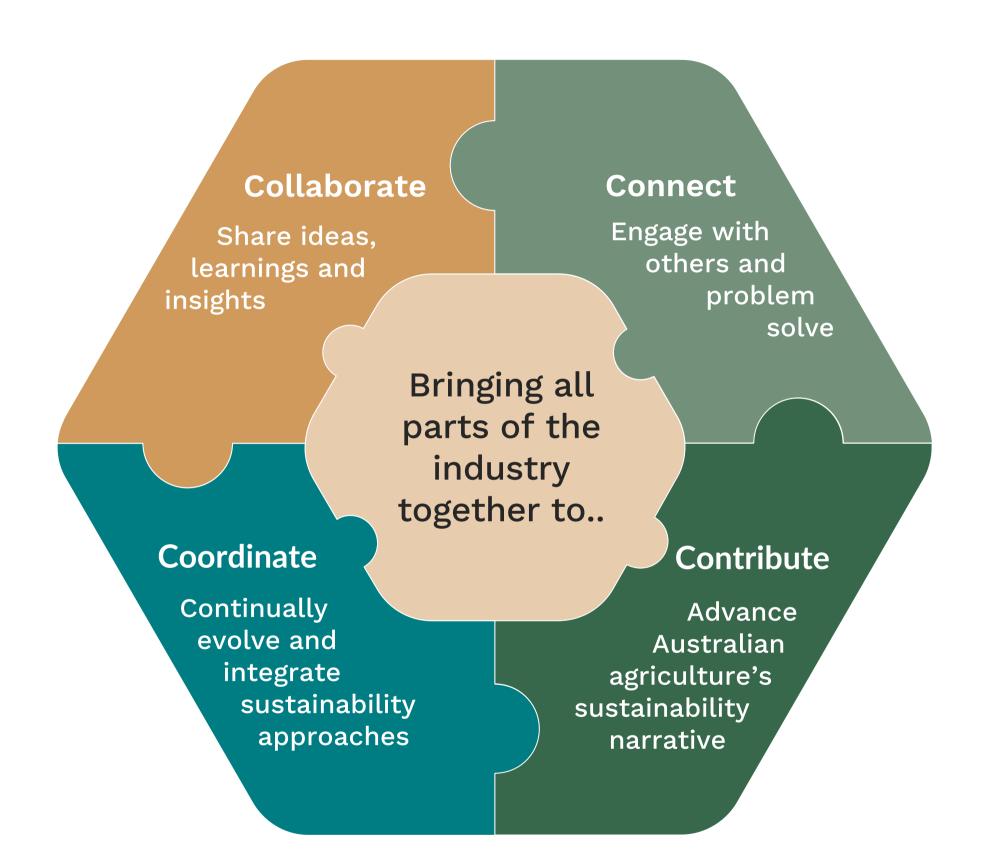








Community of Practice



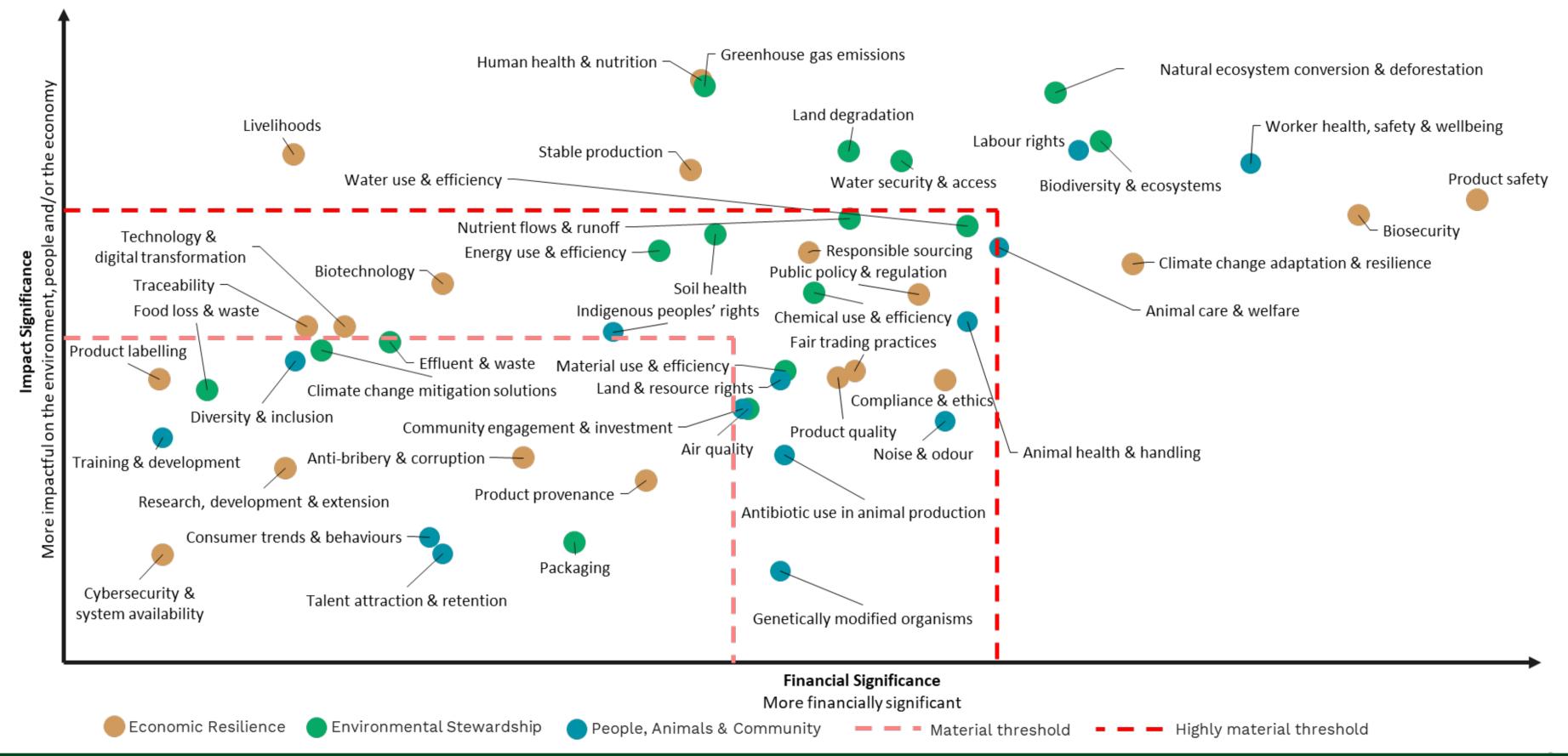
More than 430 stakeholders participate in the Community of Practice.

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.



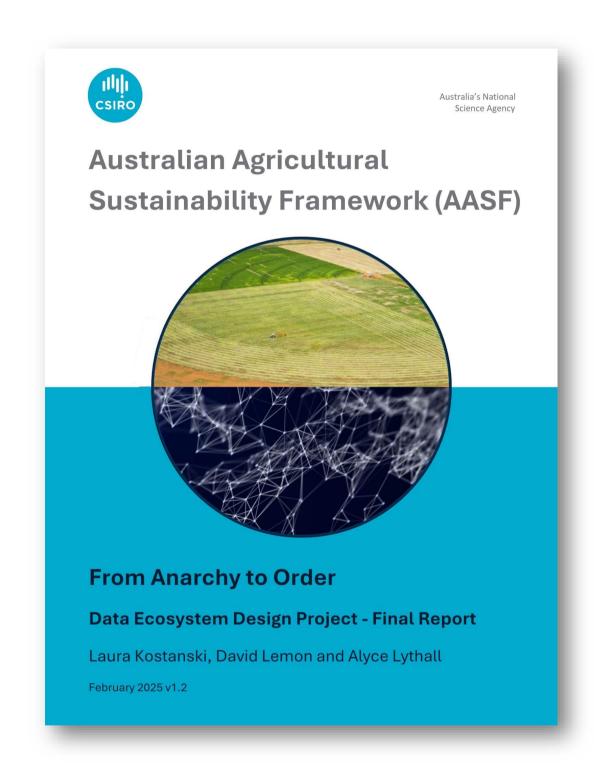
Materiality assessment







AASF Data ecosystem



The sustainability data landscape is anarchic...

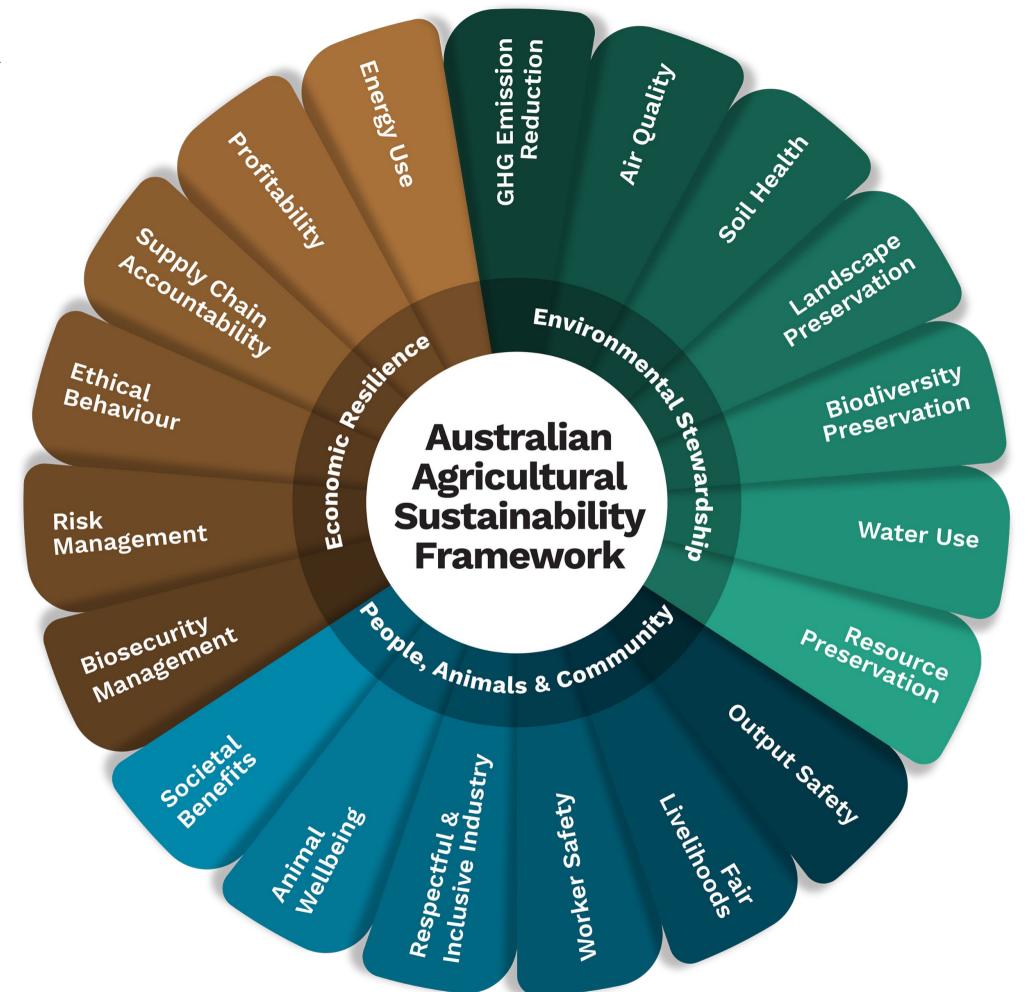


The challenge ahead ... and solution





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.



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

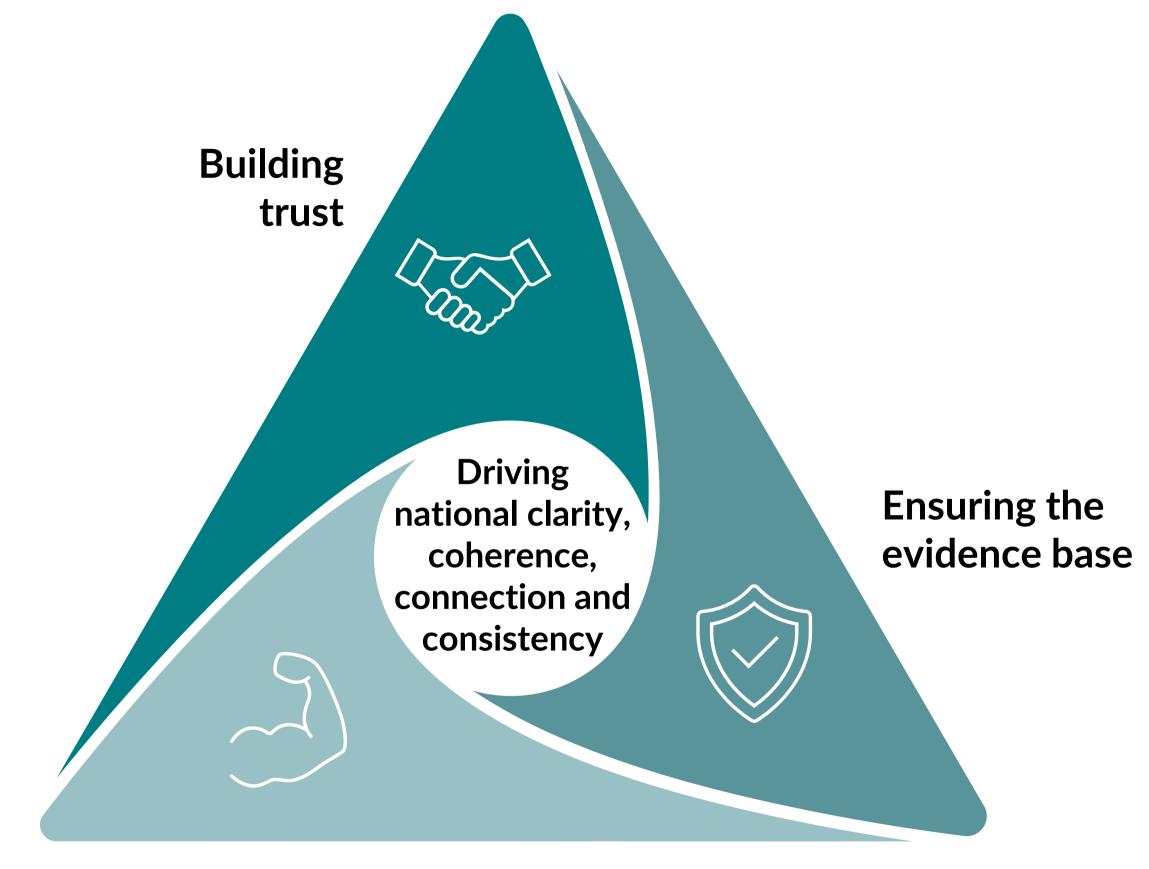
Sustainability
progress must be
visible, measurable
and meaningful. It is
time to move from
high-level intent to
real-world
outcomes by
aligning indicators,
data and assurance
to a common,
coordinated
national narrative.

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



Empowering the industry





How do we know this?

AASF HISTORY

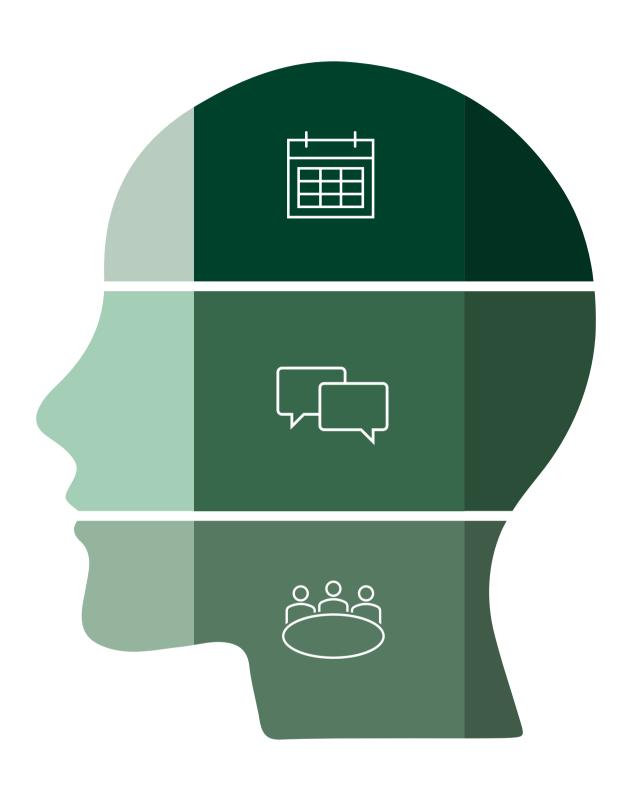
Over five years of stakeholder feedback and research across the AASF project has provided insights into its future.

CONSULTATION

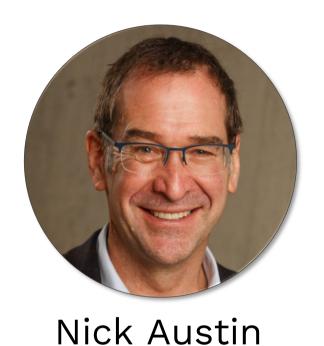
Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback via the COP on the future strategy and governance arrangements.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An eight-person expert Committee contributed to a five-year Governance, Strategy and Operations plan.



AASF Governance, Strategy and Operations Advisory Committee

















The value stakeholders see over time

COP

Domestic and international events and forums to foster participation and collaboration.

THE FRAMEWORK

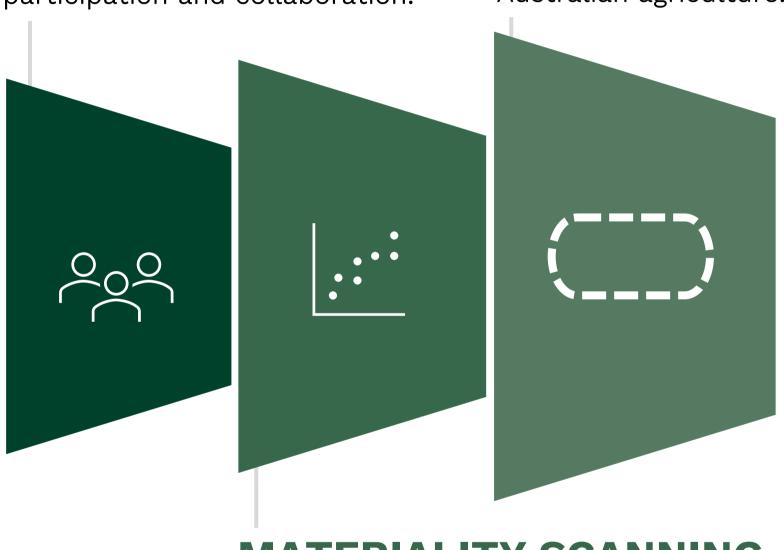
The unified definition of sustainability for Australian agriculture.

DATA ECOSYSTEM

Register of indicators, portal, datasets, catalogues, etc. Harmonised reporting and benchmarking.

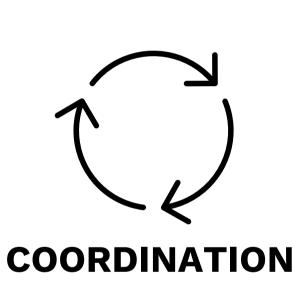
INSIGHTS

Access to advisory services and subscription services for insights, analytics etc.



MATERIALITY SCANNING

Monitoring and identification of material factors for sustainable agriculture.



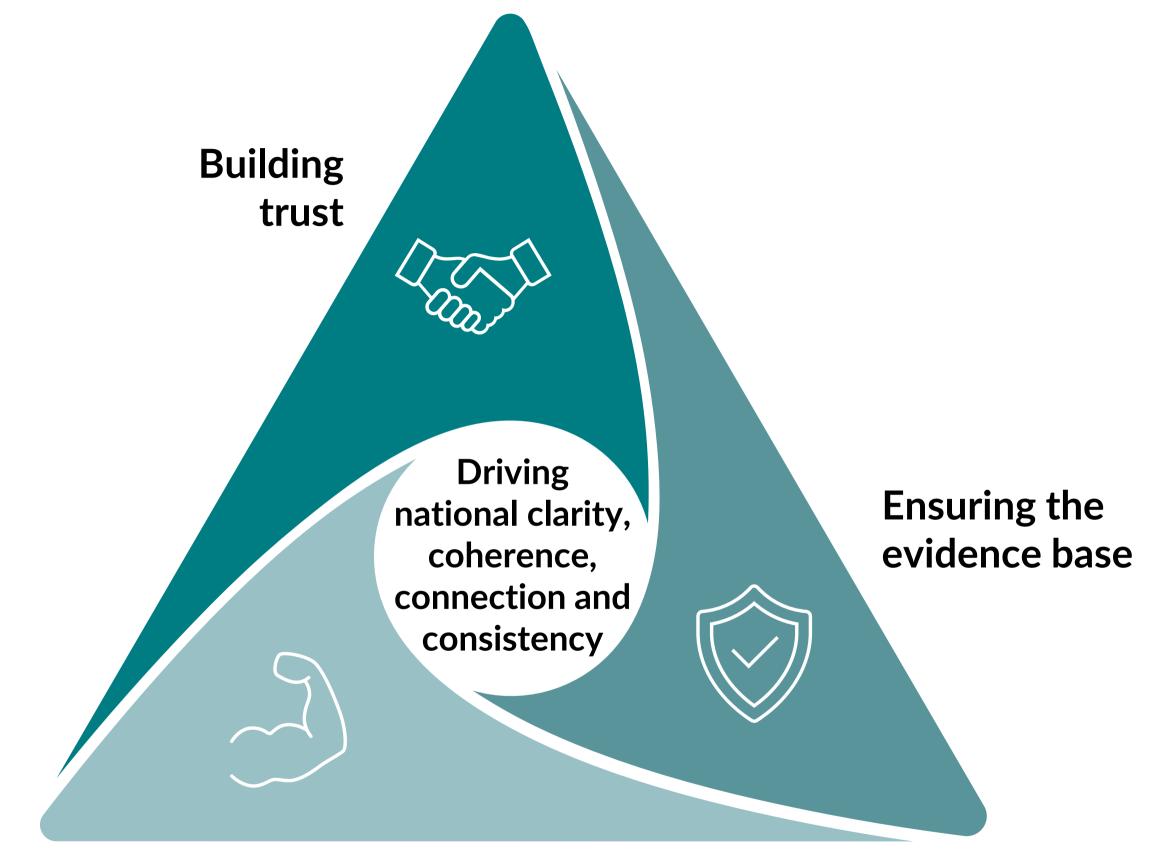




VERIFICATION

Systems, tools and models verified against the AASF and Data Ecosystem.

How do we enable this coordinating-mechanism?



Empowering the industry





A phased approach most practical







Stewarded Delivery

NFF leads delivery with input from partners and stakeholders.

Objective: Continue program implementation, build trust and demonstrate impact while refining future structure.

Value

- Provides continuity and credibility and trust and legitimacy by working within established structures.
- Maintains confidence through consistent implementation and stakeholder engagement.
- Demonstrates early value, tests models in practice, refines direction and builds the case for transition.

Transition Partnership

A formal joint venture structure supports the shift toward a standalone entity.

Objective: Strengthen co-ownership, roll out services and prepare for independent operations.

Value

- Formalises shared ownership of sustainability coordination across key partners
- Aligns strategic intent and decision-making across partners.
- Consolidates lessons learned and operational arrangements to support entity transition.

Fit-for-purpose Entity

A new not-for-profit company coordinates sustainability on behalf of the industry.

Objective: Embed clear governance, scale delivery and secure long-term sustainability and investment.

Value

- Provides a neutral, industry-owned platform with enduring governance
- Provides clarity, consistency and connection.
- Enables long-term credibility, investment and national coordination.

Horizon 1 Horizon 2 Horizon 3





But what would this look like?

Australian



Introducing: The Agricultural Sustainability Australia Alliance



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.



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.



Where to from here?

NFF Board endorsement

- Endorse ASA Alliance
- Confirm NFF as transitional host and steward of Horizon 1.
- Support approach to engagement and funding.

Government engagement

- Seek indication of support.
- Clarify alignment with government priorities (productivity, sustainability, data etc.).

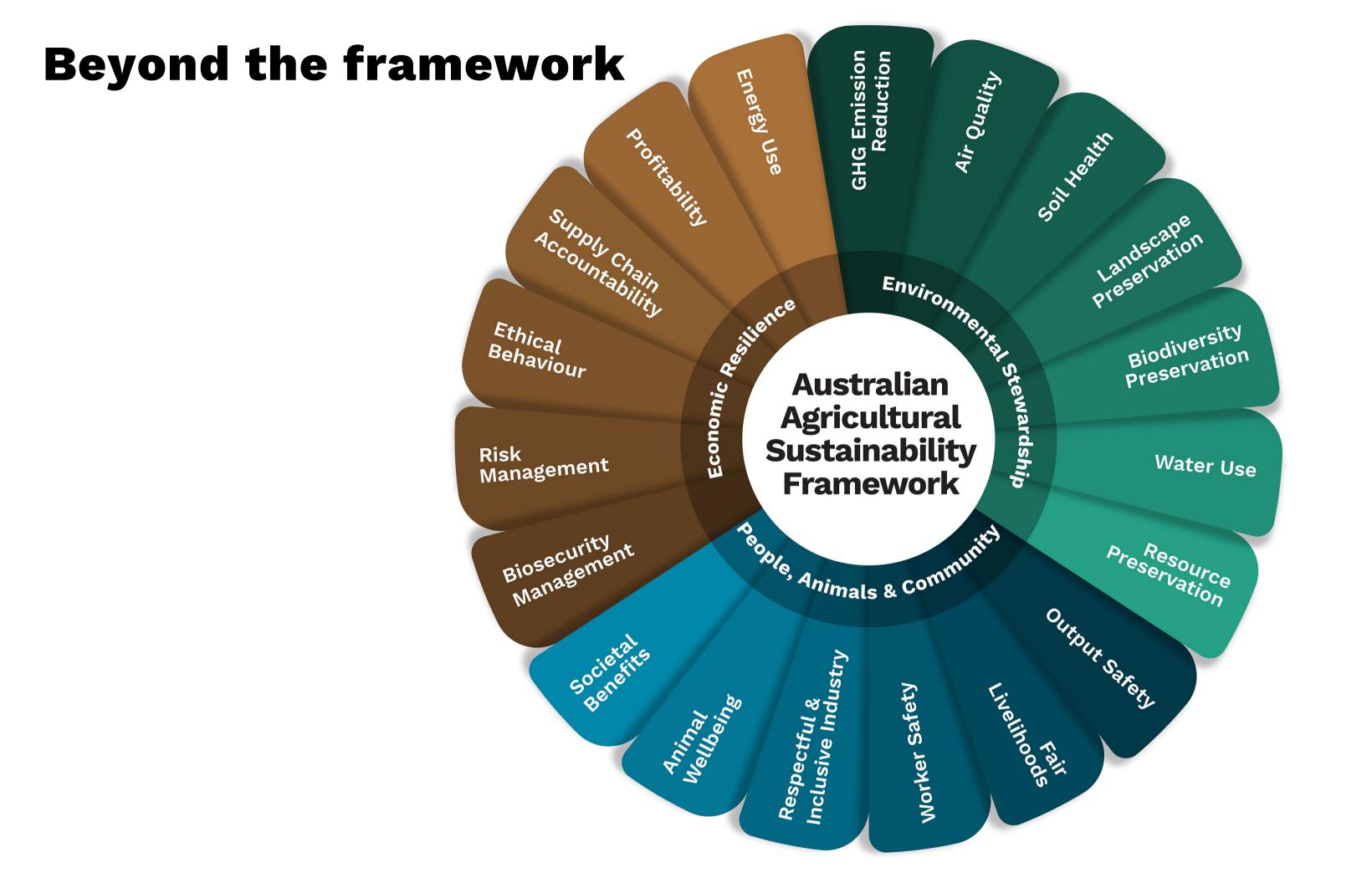
Early-stage industry engagement

- Co-design with peak bodies, RDCs, framework owners and supply chain actors.
- Gauge willingness to participate in governance and trial services.

Mobilise ASA Alliance

- Establish light governance group and delivery team.
- Finalise service offer and funding model.
- Establish pilot services, data infrastructure, indicator guidance, data ecosystem.







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 Clarity
Productivity Credibility



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Australian Government Department of Agriculture, **Fisheries and Forestry**

