Beyond a framework

The evolution of the AASF

Angela Schuster AASF Project Manager



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 demonstrate** Australia's sustainability credentials 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.

The starting point... 2020

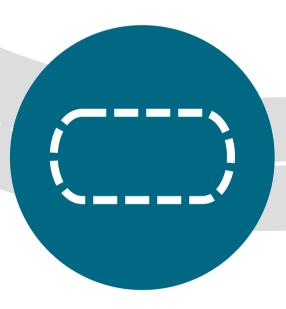
Research showed **growing pressure** to demonstrate sustainability in agriculture – credibly, consistently and without duplication and **not using certification**





Grant fund to develop "biodiversity certification program"







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

The evolution... 2021-2025

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





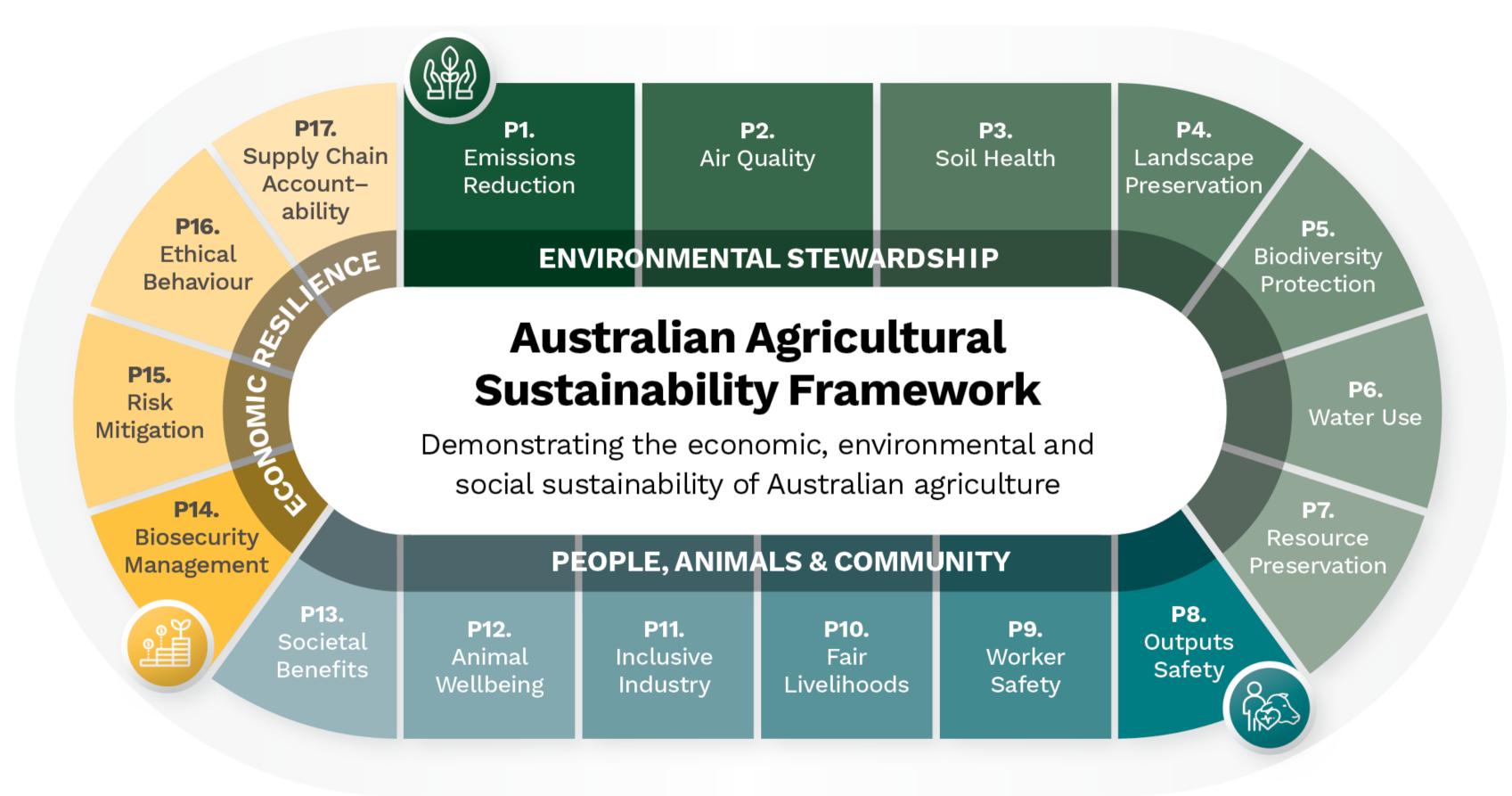
Continues to be informed by domestic frameworks, global sustainability standards Developed collaboratively with industry bodies, government, supply chains, finance, research and sustainability voices





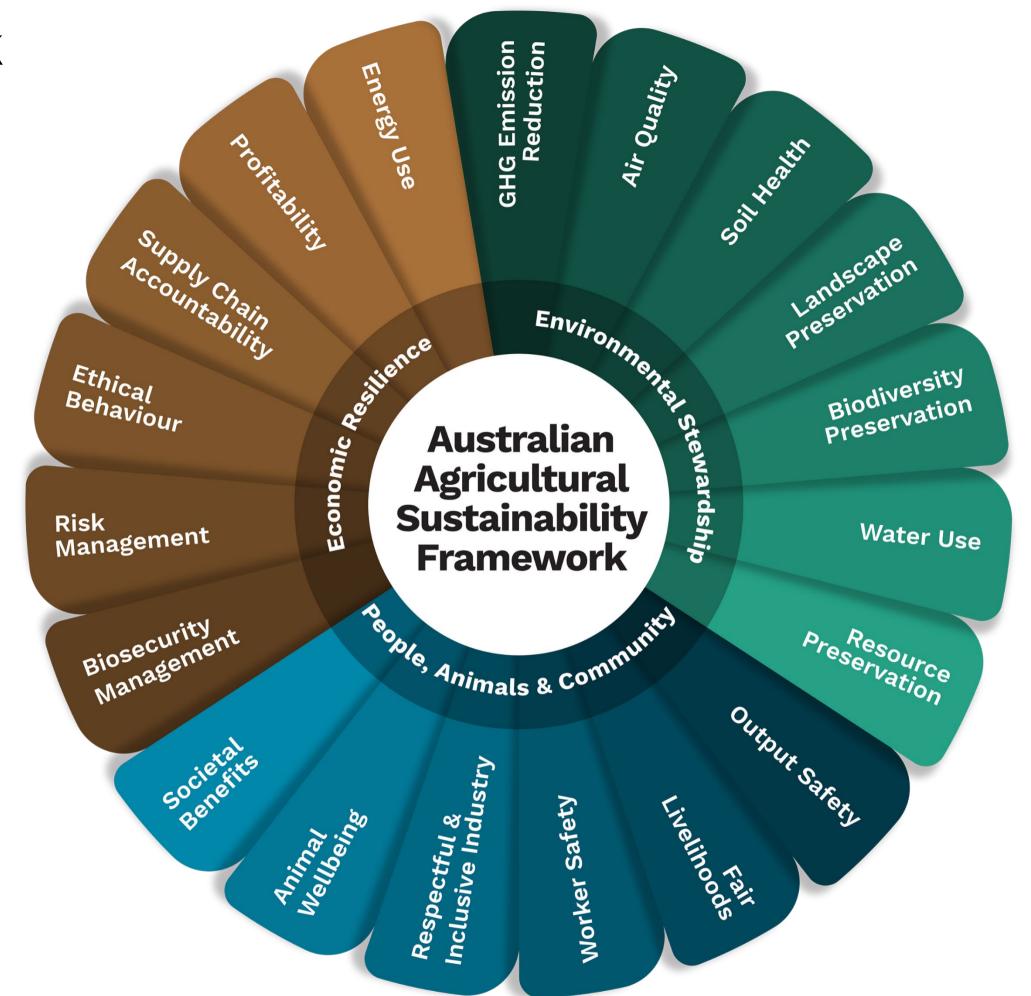
We now have a national sustainability framework (AASF), draft indicators, data ecosystem concept and roadmap, engaged stakeholders... and ... momentum and interest

The Framework





The Framework





What has changed?

Two new principles, 10 new criteria, minor revisions







P18. PROFITABILITY

The economic viability of agricultural businesses is protected and enhanced

C49. Agricultural businesses are profitable across varying operating conditions
C50. Competition and fair trade in agricultural mark

C50. Competition and fair trade in agricultural markets are promoted to benefit consumers, businesses and the community

P19. ENERGY USE

Energy is used responsibly and efficiently in agricultural activities

C51. Use of renewable sources of energy is maximised wherever possible

C52. Energy efficiency is improved by optimising energy consumption and generation



Overarching principles

HARMONISATION

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

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 outcomes-based Principles and Criteria supported by broad, verified Indicators.

CLARITY

bring coherence, confidence and clarity to agricultural sustainability efforts.

burden.

Development considerations













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















GRI





13 CLIMATE
14 LITE
15 ON LAND

15 ON LAND



















2 Fair Trading Practice

Human Health & Saf

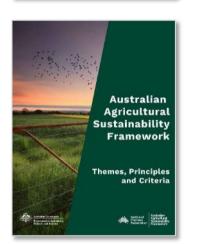
S6 Cultural Diversity

3 Labour Rights



The outputs under the project

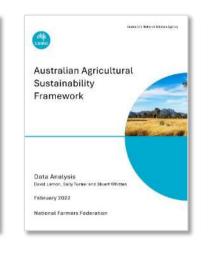












Australian Agricultural Sustainability

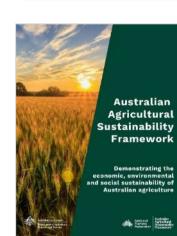
Framework

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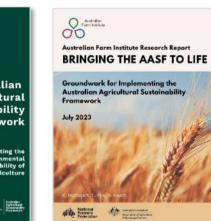








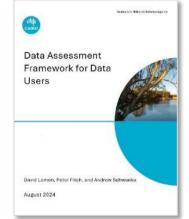


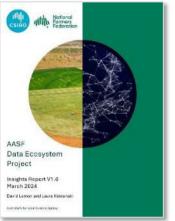


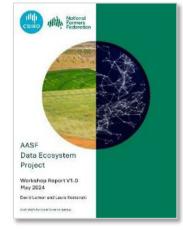


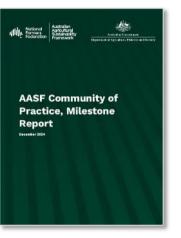


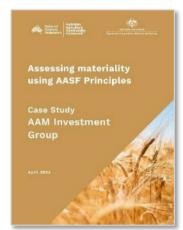


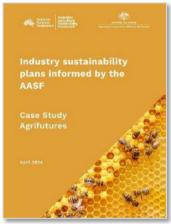






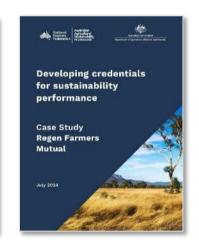


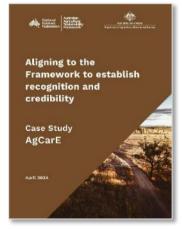


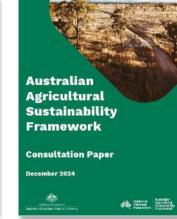


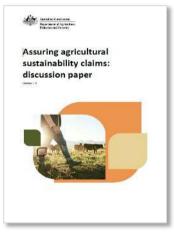


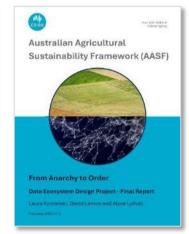




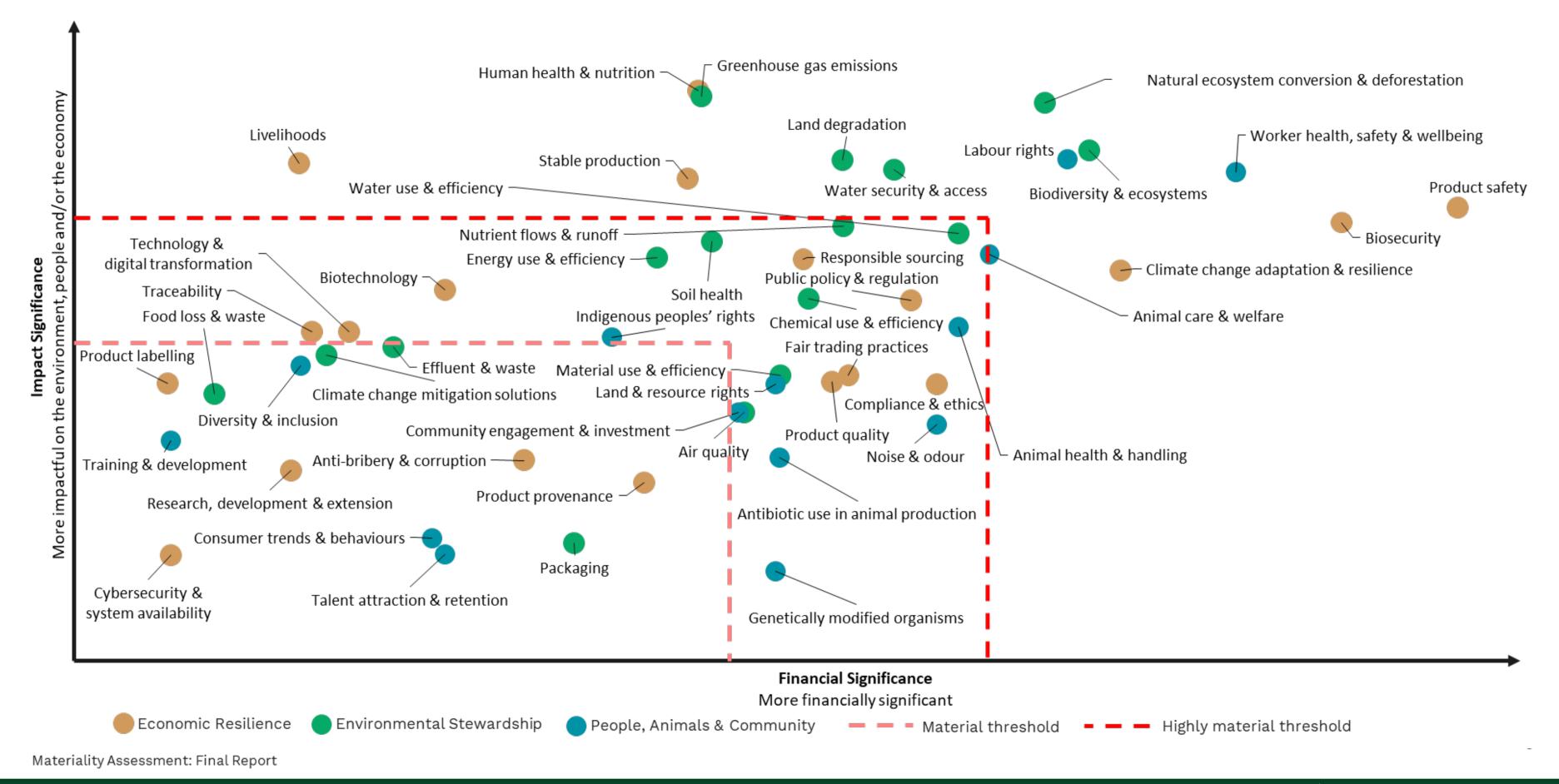








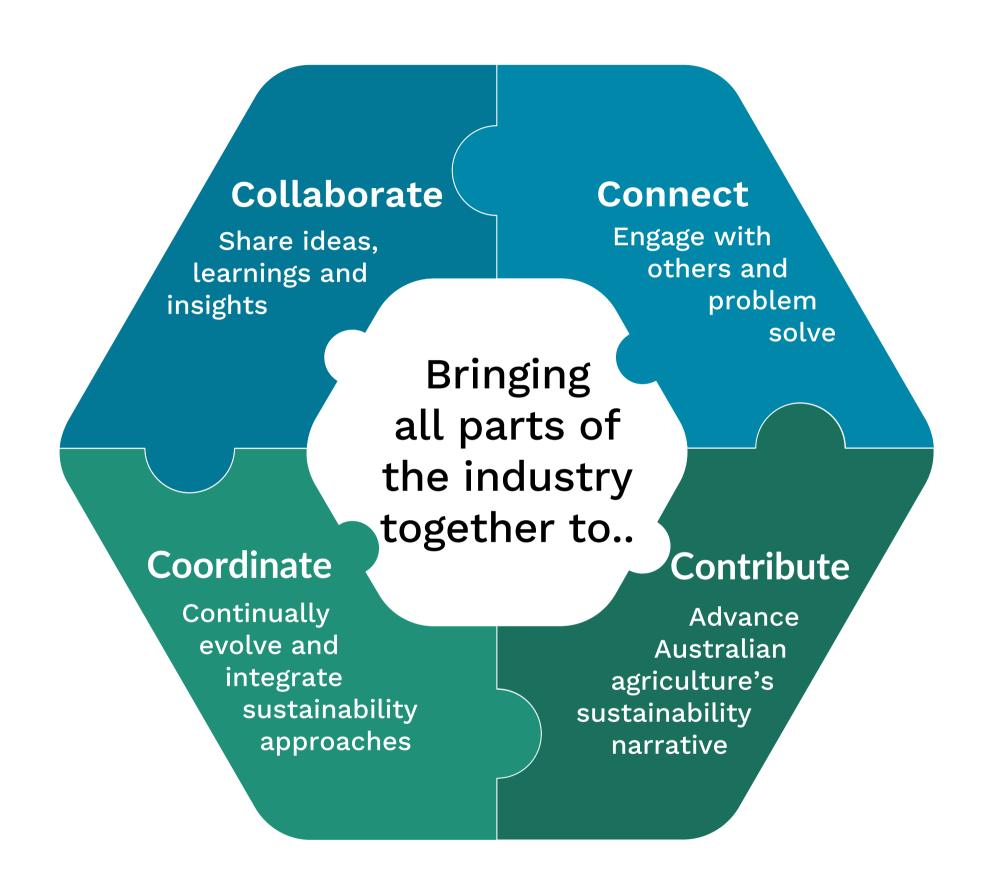
Materiality assessment







Community of Practice



More than 450 stakeholders participate in the AASF Community of Practice.

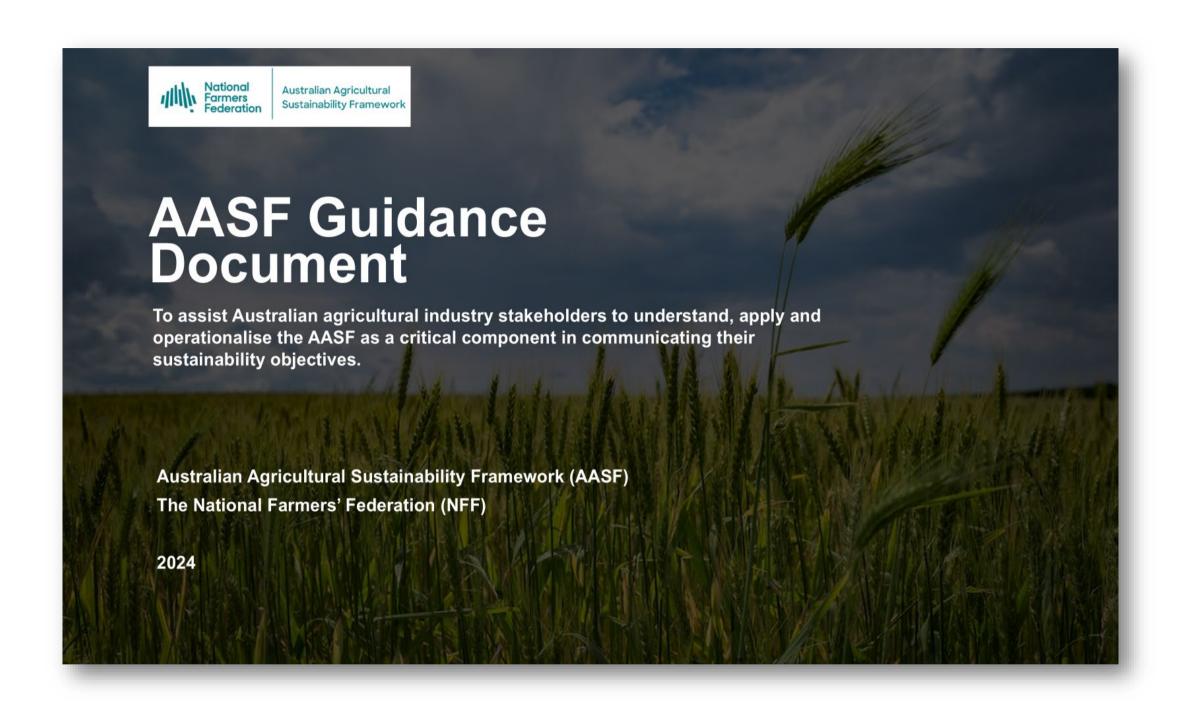
Made up of industry, Government, researchers, peak industry bodies, NRM organisations, supply chain actors, financiers etc.



AASF Guidance

Developed to support users of the Framework in two ways:

- **Direct users** to help them understand, measure and report on their sustainability activities and outcomes in a consistent and common way.
- Indirect users (those that rely or utilise the sustainability reporting of others) may view this document as a reference for the process by which the Framework is used.



AASF Guidance

Foundational Intermediate Advanced Align your organisation's Identify your organisation's key Identify your organisation's Р3 sustainability activities with the **P4** sustainability focus areas material sustainability issues Framework Understand your data **P2** capabilities and needs Build organisational awareness Strengthen organisational Build organisational capability **Implement** and capacity in relation to capacity in relation to 13 and preparedness sustainability action sustainability action Embed sustainability in your Implement sustainability into Integrate the Framework into operations, strategy and supply 14 12 your direct operations existing programs and policies chain Demonstrate alignment to the Analyse your performance to Review progress and Framework as part of your Action **A3** inform future activities and communicate your activities and continuous improvement and initiatives performance to key stakeholders communications





Examples of using the AASF – Self Initiated Users

USERS

AGRIFUTURES – Small levied industry accelerator tool - confidence on the right track

REGEN FARMERS' MUTUAL – Aligned Principles

BANK – Educate about ESG in agriculture and engage with clients

GULF SAVANNAH NRM – mixed farming stewardship

AAM INVESTMENT GROUP – inform materiality assessment and gives commodity agnostic view

AGCARE and HORT360 – external validation, reference across commodities for consistency

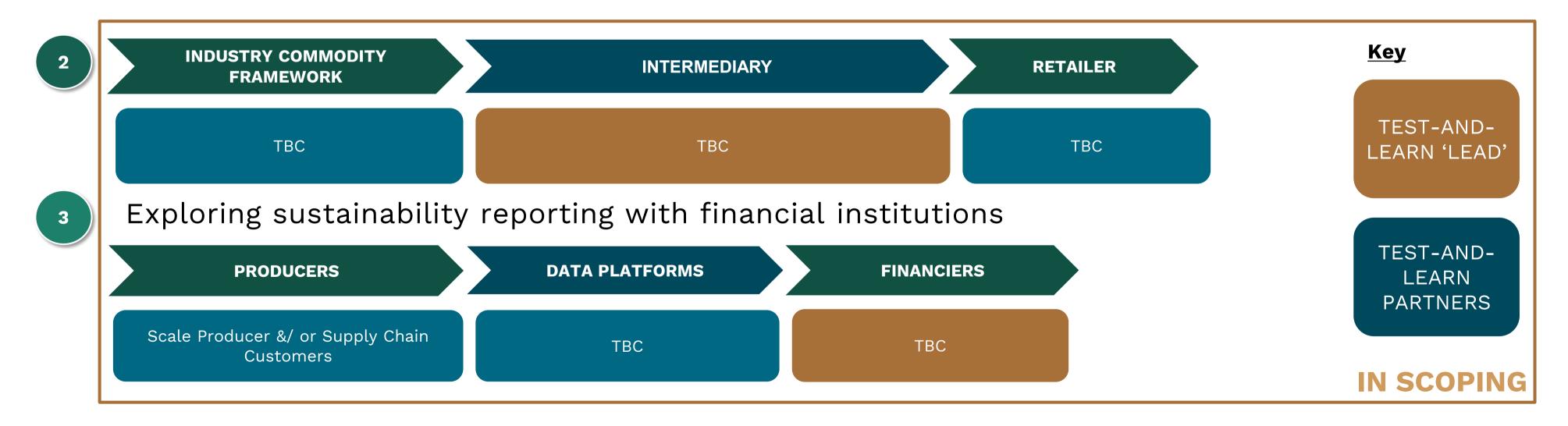
WHY CHOOSE THE AASF

- AASF is being used as a source of truth
- AASF meets the needs of multicommodity and multi-enterprise
- AASF provides consistency for preparing sustainability/ ESG reports
- 'Aligning to the AASF' is a key benefit –
 assistance with metrics and indicators
 is also needed



NFF Pilots - Test and Learn

How can data be captured along the value chain? **ON-FARM INPUT** SC **DATA PLATFORM CUSTOMER PROCESSOR PROVIDER INTERMEDIARIES** Agriculture Innovation Australia (AIA) -Gallagher Thomas Foods International McDonald's Nutrien **Emissions Calculator COMPLETE**



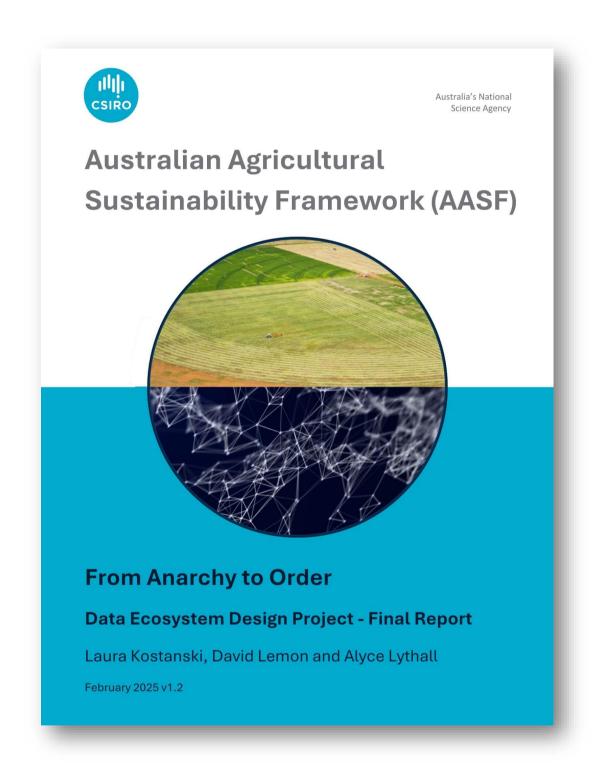




International engagement

- Global Forum for Farm Policy and Innovation Paris and Washington
- 51st UN Committee on Food Security, Rome
- World Farmers Organisation
- Nature Positive Summit Australia
- Climate CoP Baku Azerbaijan
- Masterclass on Building Innovation and Climate-Smart Agribusiness
- Pacific Week of Agriculture and Forestry (PWAF)
- DAFF Agricultural Counsellors and Su McCluskey as Special Representative

AASF Data Ecosystem



The sustainability data landscape is anarchic...

The greatest opportunity of, and the greatest risk to, the data ecosystem is **TRUST**



NOT A DATABASE



AN ECOSYSTEM OF PEOPLE & STRUCTURES

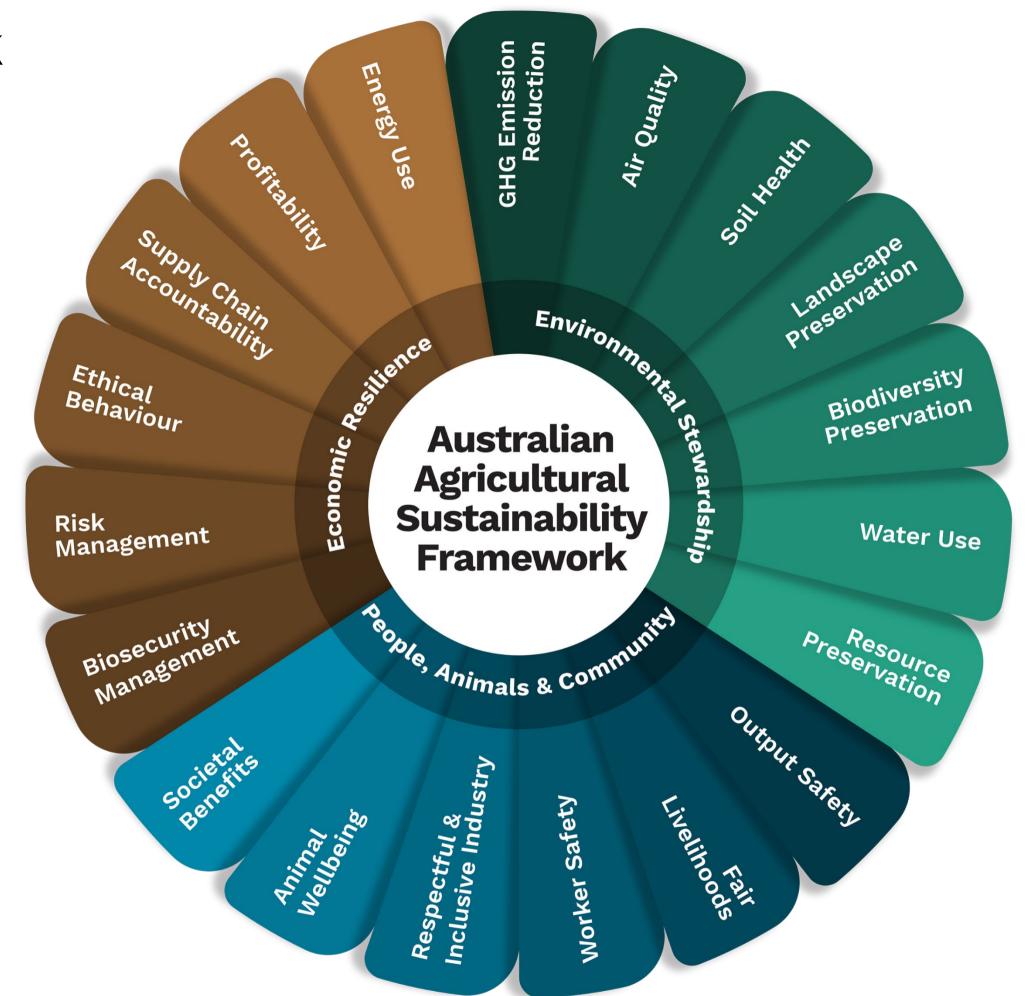
The challenge ahead ... and solution

Australian





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 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 fragmentation 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, sciencebased and governed independently of single interests.

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

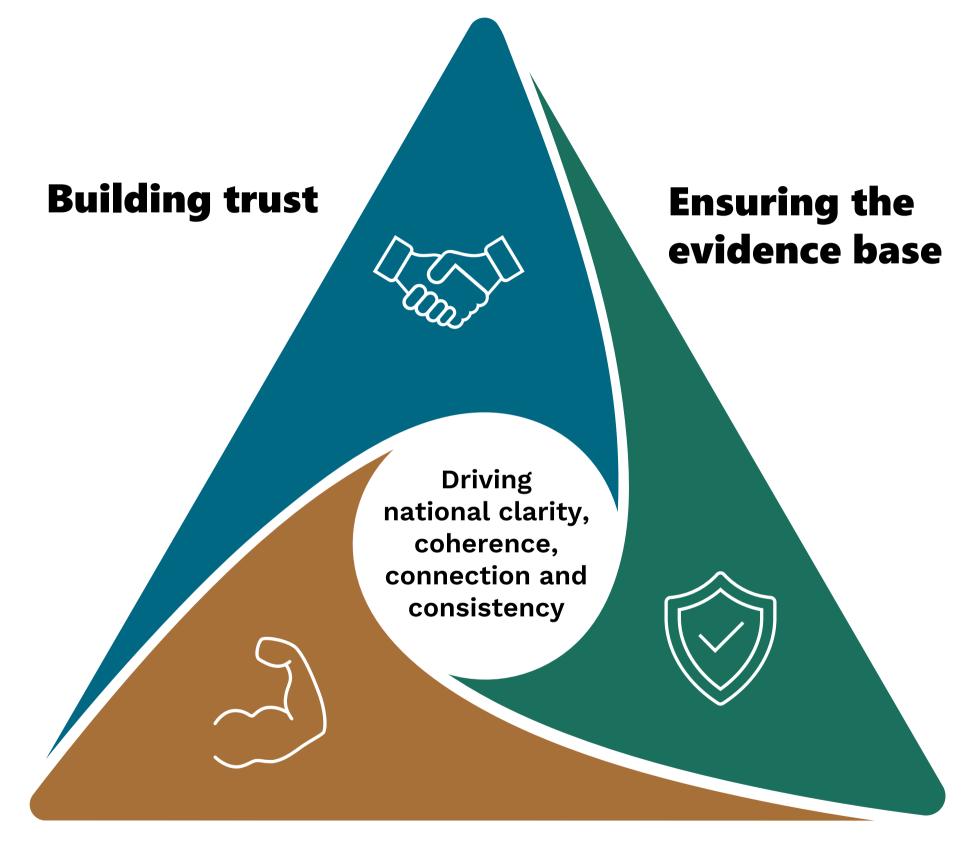
Sustainability
progress must be
visible, measurable
and meaningful. It is
time to move from
high-level intent to
real-world
outcomes by
aligning indicators,
data and assurance
to a common,
coordinated
national narrative.

EXPECTATIONS

Leading the narrative, not chasing it

Markets, regulators and investors are raising the bar for sustainability claims. 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



Empowering the industry



How do we know this?

AASF HISTORY

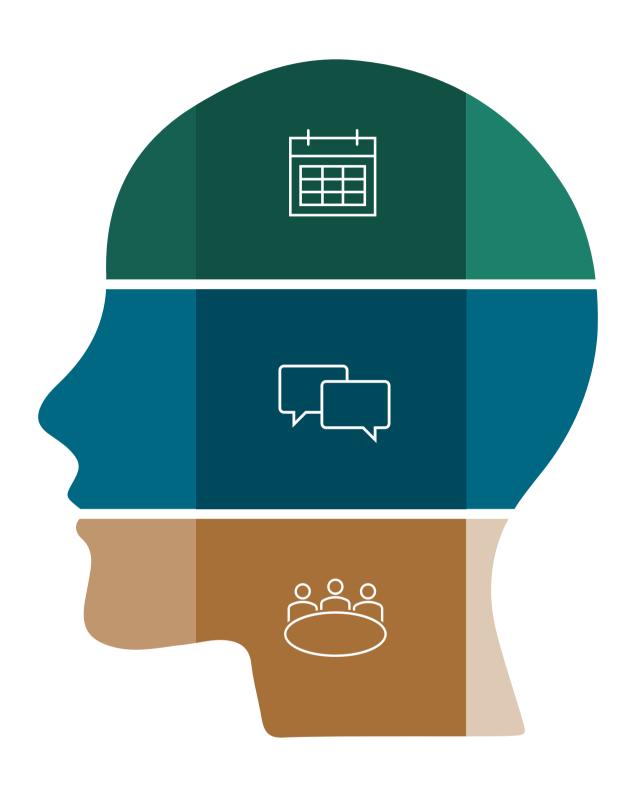
Over five years of stakeholder feedback and research across the AASF project has provided insights into its future.

CONSULTATION

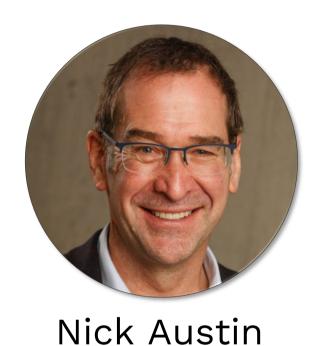
Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback via the COP on the future strategy and governance arrangements.

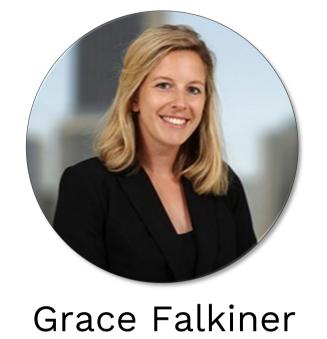
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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



AASF Governance, Strategy and Operations Advisory Committee



















Fiona Simson

The value stakeholders see over time

COP

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

THE FRAMEWORK

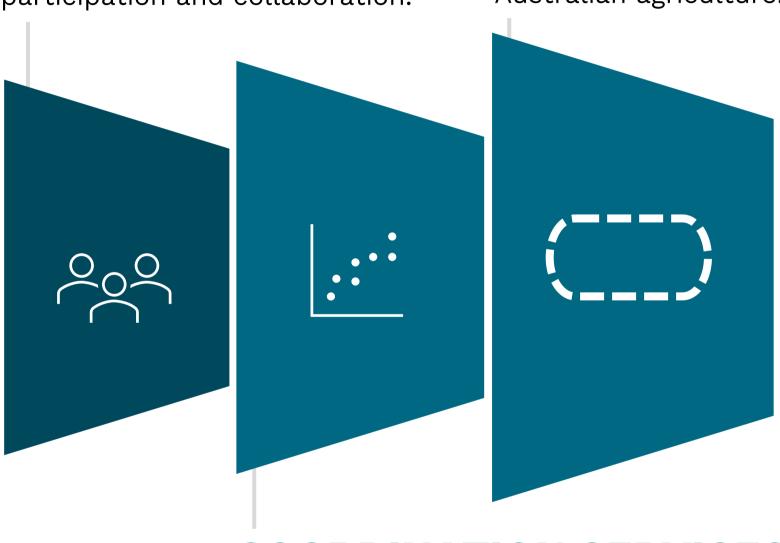
The definition of sustainability for all of Australian agriculture.

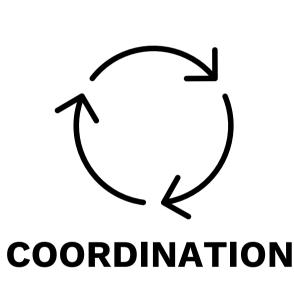
DATA ECOSYSTEM

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

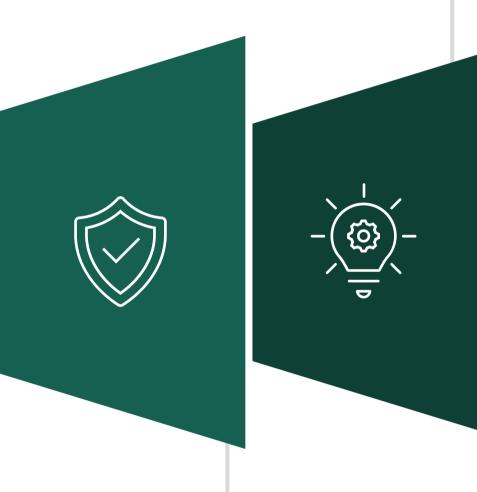
INSIGHTS

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









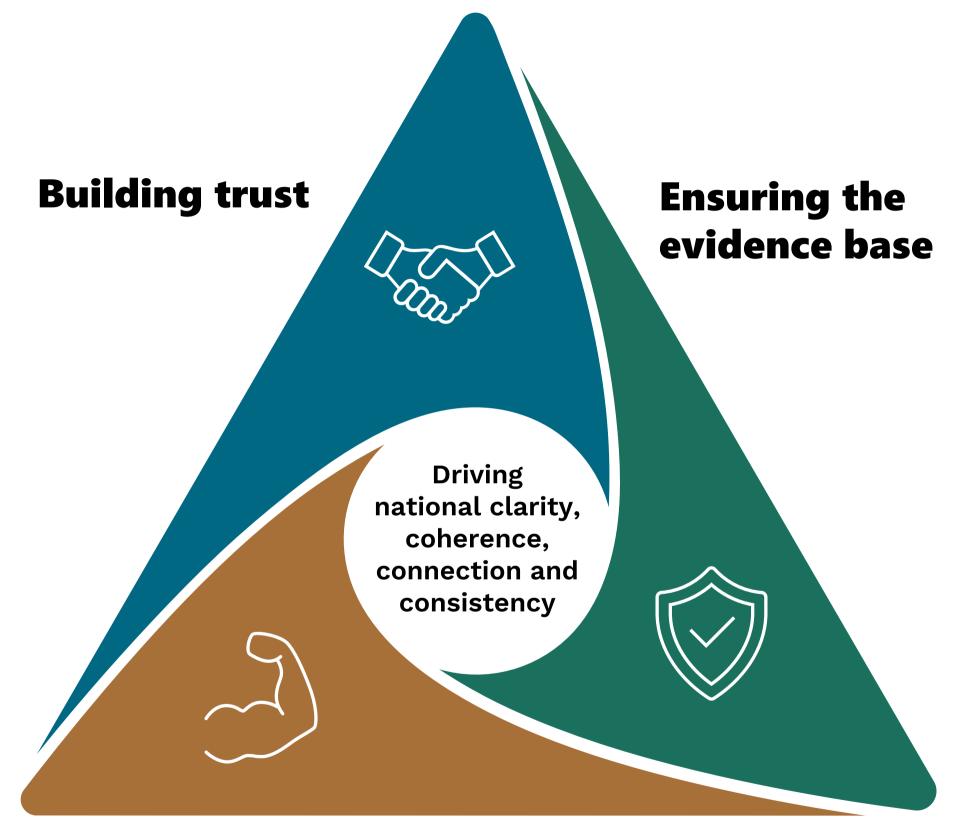
COORDINATION SERVICES

Materiality scanning, coordination of secretariat and sustainability services etc.

VERIFICATION

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

How do we enable this coordinating-mechanism?



Empowering the industry





Recommendation was a phased approach



Fit-for-purpose Entity

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

• Those accessing pay-as-you-go services contribute funding.

Stewarded Delivery

NFF leads delivery with input from partners and stakeholders.

- Government funding to establish
 Phase 1 will require funding.
- Range of services partners will have interest in:
 - Materiality
 - Coordination
 - Insights
 - Reporting

Transition Partnership

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

- Reduced Government funding.
- JV partners co-fund.
- Those accessing pay-as-you-go services contribute funding.

Only if industry indicated there was a clear and compelling need to transition and a sustainable model was possible.

Phase 1 Phase 2 Phase 3





But what would this look like?

Australian









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

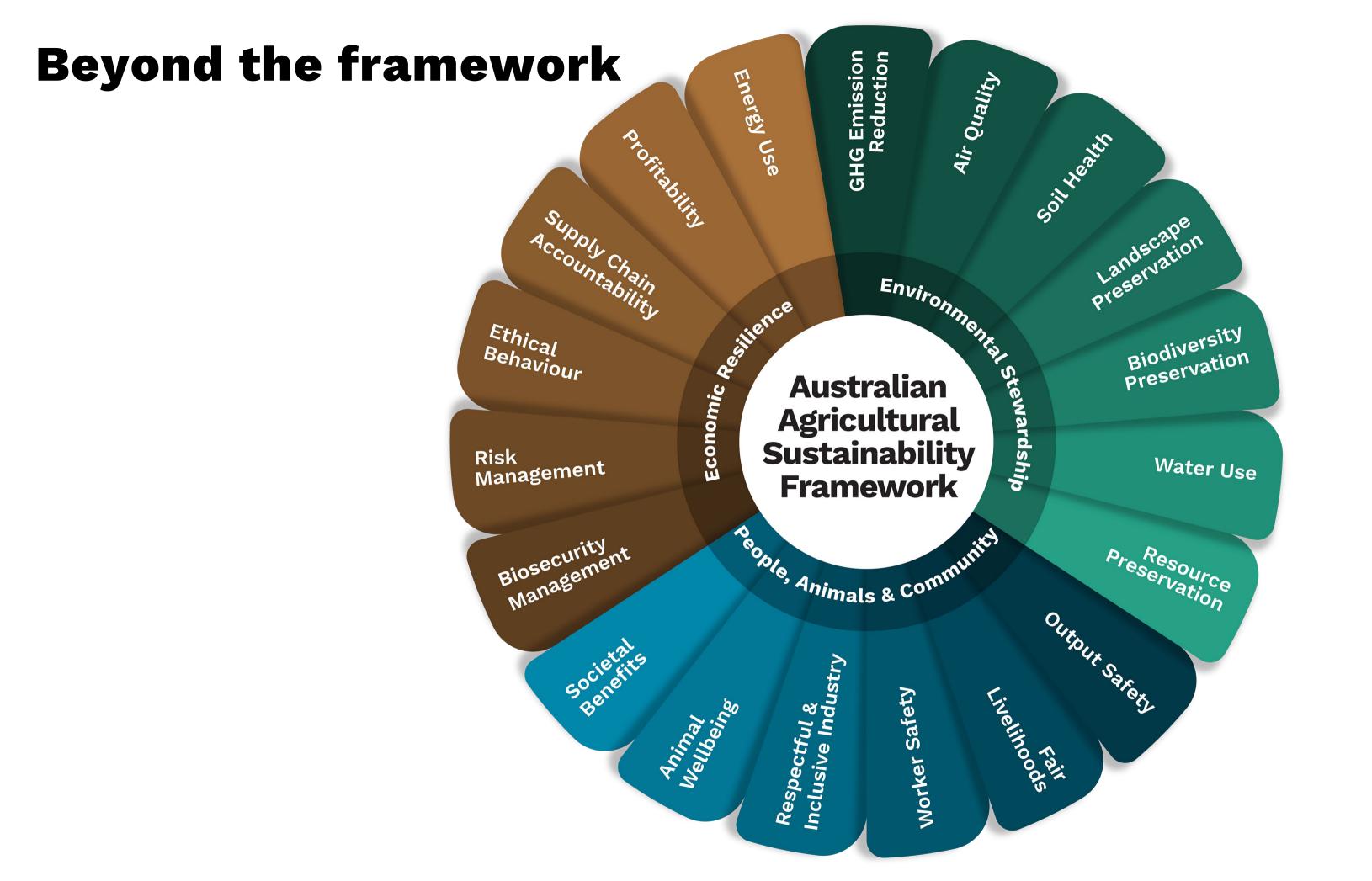
- Seek indication of support.
- Clarify alignment with government priorities (productivity, sustainability, data etc.).

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.

Opportunity exists to take this further by enabling the coordinating mechanism that connects and amplifies efforts across agriculture...

The Agricultural Sustainability Australia Alliance

Collaboration Clarity Productivity Credibility





How could we progress this concept with you?





Australian



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

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

