

ERBS Beef Sustainability Outcomes

Who We Are

The SAI Platform Beef Working Group is made up of diverse industry members across Europe. It was established in 2011 with the purpose of initiating a pre-competitive conversation on beef sustainability across the European industry, focussing at farm level.

As the Beef Working Group has evolved, it has recognised the importance of being a multi-stakeholder voice on beef sustainability in Europe. The European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability (ERBS) is a multi-stakeholder platform focussed on beef sustainability across the European region and across all aspects of the value chain, from farm to fork. It also represents the European beef value chain as one voice on the global stage, through its active participation in the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB). The European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability (ERBS) was officially launched at the GRSB Conference in Ireland in October 2018.

Our Approach to Beef Sustainability

When first established, the Beef Working Groups' focus was on defining a holistic set of 39 beef sustainability principles – from water quality to worker rights, and associated beef sustainability practices, to act as a holistic reference for the European beef industry. However, **achieving change on the ground and at European scale means focussing our efforts on a handful of key priorities, rather than trying to tackle everything at once.**

So, in 2016 the beef sustainability principles and practices were used as a holistic framework to identify the four-initial pan-European priorities on which to focus our efforts. These were identified through engagement with over 150 stakeholders across Europe and from this, four clear areas of focus emerged (see below). The 39 beef sustainability principles still remain our definition of beef sustainability, but we have agreed to start with the most urgent challenges first, recognising the inherent challenges with delivering measurable outcomes at this scale. These will be reviewed regularly to ensure the Beef Sustainability agenda remains at the forefront and other issues can be added in accordingly.

The four Priority Action Areas are:

- 1. *Environment (Greenhouse Gas Emissions)***
- 2. *Animal Medicines***
- 3. *Animal Health and Welfare***
- 4. *Farm Management***

The ERBS views sustainability as a journey of continuous improvement, not a destination. Work across our existing member organisations has demonstrated that there is a real opportunity to improve the sustainability performance of the beef sector, through a wider deployment of win-win best practices and without significant changes to production systems. The most effective practices may vary based on the production system, climate and needs of the individual farm. With this in mind, the ERBS is focussed on setting measurable outcome-based targets at the European level across each of the four Pan-European priority Action Areas. We recognise that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to beef sustainability in Europe and believe that focussing on outcomes at the European level will provide local stakeholders, farmers and existing national initiatives with the freedom and flexibility to work towards these targets in a way that is tailored to their local context.

Developing the Targets

To develop these outcome targets, we have been working collaboratively with a number of stakeholders at the national level including National Schemes and Programmes in order to ensure we can reach a wider producer base, and have robust implementation/delivery channels to support sustainability across industry. On this basis, the plan is that National Schemes/Programmes and In-Country Platforms collaborate to deliver against the outcomes we have set out.

As a pan-European group, it is always a challenge to develop impacts and outcomes which are applicable to the variety of systems, climates, geographies and consumers. We are confident we have worked collectively with Industry stakeholders across the European region to develop what we believe are robust and ambitious measures which we can report on as time progresses and ultimately help support and enhance the sustainability of European beef production.

The intention with each outcome target is to be ambitious, pushing the agenda forward on the key priorities we have identified through engagement with our stakeholders.

The Scope

We are fully aware that beef sustainability encompasses the whole beef value chain, from conception to consumption. As a group we have focussed on the primary production stage, at the farm gate, for this initial outcome-based approach.

We have **not** developed these Outcome Targets to be yet another assurance/quality scheme, and we see the benefits that working with existing national programmes, schemes and initiatives can bring to drive change across a wide producer base.

These European outcome targets have been developed to allow individual country platforms to take ownership of their own journeys to meeting them, whilst ensuring that we have a common and measurable approach for European beef sustainability.

Currently, we are working on a recognition framework for country platforms, and other collaborative programmes, to demonstrate commitment and progress towards our goals.

The Framework for our Four Priority Action Areas

To establish our impact areas, we are working with a logical framework as set out in Appendix 1.

The Impact we are aiming to deliver under each heading is:

Environment	Animal Medicines	Animal Health and Welfare	Farm Management
Improve the Environmental footprint of farming systems	Preserve the effectiveness of animal medicines in beef farming	Improve Animal Health and Welfare	Improve the resilience of beef farming

Under each heading there are various outcome targets which we are focussing on to help deliver the impact. We are very conscious that this is not an exhaustive list, but we believe that these areas are fundamental to sustainability and from our engagement process, are clear challenges for our stakeholders.

Each priority has been developed by the ERBS (members in Appendix 2) and have been endorsed by independent experts outside of the group.

PRIORITY AREA 1 – ENVIRONMENT

Improve the Environmental footprint of farming systems

The environmental discussions around beef farming are vast, from Greenhouse gas emissions, to water availability and biodiversity. Greenhouse gas emission is our first priority area for the Environment, as it is already an area identified by many stakeholders and reflects the urgency that is needed to ensure a stable climate for future generations.

1.1 Outcome Target: An intensity reduction of 15% in GHG emissions by 2025, with the aim of setting a future target that recognises the positive role beef production can contribute to mitigating climate change through reduction strategies and sequestration

This outcome has been taken from the existing European Beef Life Carbon project and includes greenhouse gas emissions from field to farm gate. According to current climate

science, this target is aligned with the pace of improvement needed to limit the earth's warming to 2 degrees by 2100 (i.e. the goal of the Paris Climate Agreement). This 2025 goal is a near-term target on a longer-term journey for more drastic emissions reductions in the beef supply chain and there is a need to identify post-2025 solutions in the coming years while the industry chases this target. The baseline year is 2015, although 2018 may be used by countries where 2015 data is unavailable. Existing high-level estimates are already available across the European region and can be used to provide country baselines.

PRIORITY AREA 2 – ANIMAL MEDICINES

Preserve the effectiveness of animal medicines in beef farming

Responsible usage of antimicrobials is a high priority for our stakeholders, including consumers. The ERBS recognises the need for responsible stewardship of antimicrobials in animal agriculture to preserve their future effectiveness in human as well as animal health.

2.1 Outcome Target: Total usage of antibiotics below 10mg/Kg PCU by 2023

2.2 Outcome Target: Reductions of 50% in the use of HP-CIAs by 2023

Based on the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) alliance targets published in 2017 in the UK, these outcomes are focussed at changing attitudes to antibiotic usage, addressing not only human and animal health challenges, but also resistance built up in cattle and effective and efficient usage of medicines as a whole. Combined with the Animal Welfare outcomes on overall herd health, the aim of these outcomes is to look at preventative animal health management, rather than reactive strategies. Current baselines will need to be established for this outcome at country level. The baseline will be 2016 for some countries where data already exists, with others extended to 2019 where data prior to this is unavailable.

PRIORITY AREA 3 - ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

Improve Animal Health and Welfare

Animal health and welfare is a broad subject area and we know there are different challenges in different countries. Improving animal health and welfare is not only the right thing to do for the animal, but has a positive impact on productivity and output which in turn helps the financial performance and overall sustainability of the farm. These outcomes do not prevent individual country platforms from developing additional outcome measures in any priority area, however, as a group we believe these are areas which will drive significant improvements in animal health and welfare across Europe. The ERBS endorse the Five Freedoms of animal welfare: Freedom from hunger or thirst; Freedom from discomfort; Freedom from pain, injury or disease; Freedom to express (most) normal behaviour; Freedom from fear and distress.

*3.1 Outcome Target: Target mortality rates are below 1.5%**

** for systems with mortality rates above this target, a year on year reduction of 20% should be achieved*

Under the Five Freedoms, animals must be free from injury and disease. The majority of activities on farm within the animal health and welfare arena are currently undertaken to prevent deaths and improve the health and performance of the herd. Many existing national schemes and programmes require herd health plans. However, the way proactive herd health planning and management are actually carried out can be very varied, and hence there can be considerable variation in the mortality levels across individual farms. This outcome will help drive herd health planning and management in a proactive way, whilst allowing flexibility in the approach. Ultimately, improvements in mortality rates on farm will help drive productivity and profitability, in addition to the animal welfare benefits. Current baselines will need to be established for this outcome at country level. The baseline will be 2019, unless previous robust data is available in a country.

3.2 Outcome Target: All animals have access to loose housing (when housed) by 2030

Under the Five Freedoms, animals must be free to express normal behaviours. Some housing systems across Europe are based on restricted movement i.e. tethering, albeit with exercise provided at certain times. We want to address this through this long-term outcome target to ensure all cattle have the freedom to move around during period of housing, mainly through winter and inclement period of weather. We are conscious that the investment needed on farms to change infrastructure can be significant, hence the 2030 ambition to allow for a manageable transition. This is an absolute target and current baselines will need to be established for this outcome at country level.

3.3 Outcome Target: All animals are given pain relief (analgesics) for all surgical procedures and for all forms of castration, dehorning and disbudding

Under the Five Freedoms, animals should be free from pain. The European legislative framework focusses on the use of anaesthetics for some procedures, but recent scientific research proves that an analgesic can have an equal, if not greater effect, on the animals' pain levels post procedure. We are setting this outcome to ensure that animals' pain levels are minimised across all procedures, which ultimately will result in quicker recovery, improved welfare and reduced productivity losses. This is an absolute target and baselines will need to be established for this outcome at country level.

PRIORITY AREA 4 - FARM MANAGEMENT

Improve the Resilience of Beef Farming

This subject area has been raised consistently through our materiality process and stakeholder engagement. For beef producers to be sustainable, the financial aspect of the business must be at a level to allow reinvestment and provide an income level comparable to the National

Living Wage (as defined by National Government – if available) for the farmer. Additionally, the high-risk nature of this profession is serious cause for concern. However, these are very sensitive subjects and not one we can set prescriptive targets on at this time, although it is under constant review. We have, as a result, focussed on the topic of health and safety and business planning.

4.1 Outcome Target: A reduction in serious accidents (reportable; ref: European Reporting Framework) on farm and a reduction in fatalities with an overall target of zero

The ongoing challenge the agricultural sector faces from serious injury or death cannot be ignored in the sustainability discussions. Often run by lone-workers, beef farming is at high risk if the main worker has an accident and it can be a very costly experience to deal with, both financially and emotionally. We appreciate that the overall target of zero is almost impossible but by setting outcomes under this topic we can generate a greater focus on the issue and instigate various activities at Country-level to promote safe ways of working. This is an absolute target and baselines will need to be established for this outcome at country level.

4.2 Outcome Target: Financially viable farms that have a business plan in place

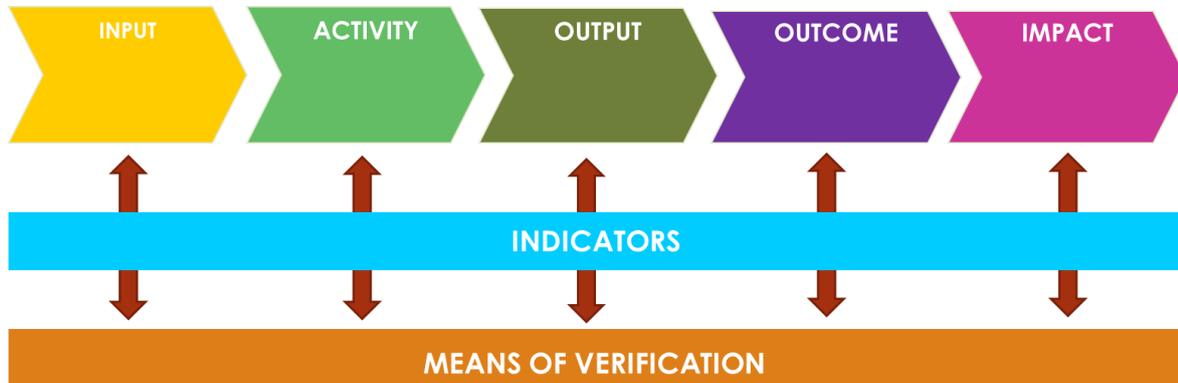
Business planning is a process which forms the building blocks for financial sustainability. Business planning programmes by which beef farmers can use their own data, both financial and productivity based, to see how they compare with others in a group, whether that be regionally base, system based, or other. We want to encourage such activities as it is a proven way of changing behaviour, through farmers learning from each other. There is no set process we are advocating, but through this outcome, we can hopefully increase the number of tools and support available, from on-line accounting-based programmes to discussion groups which allows farmers to ultimately make more informed business management decisions.

Conclusion

As a pan-European group it is always a challenge to develop impacts and outcomes which are applicable to the variety of systems, climates, geographies and consumers but we are confident we have worked collectively with stakeholders across the European region to develop what we believe are robust and ambitious measures which we can report on as time progresses and ultimately help support and enhance the sustainability of European beef production. This is not to mean that other areas are not important, but we have agreed to start with the most urgent common challenges first, recognising the inherent challenges with delivering measurable change at this scale. These impacts and outcomes will be reviewed regularly to ensure the Beef Sustainability agenda remains at the forefront and other issues can be added in accordingly.

Appendix 1: The Logical Framework

The framework below has been used to develop the Impact and Outcomes.



Many of the Scheme and Programmes in operation across Europe work within the Inputs, Activities and occasionally Output areas of this framework. These enable clear instructions to be given to farmers of what a Scheme/Programme expects to be done on farm and facilitates the traditional pass/fail audit process. Across our European Platform, we are setting our ambitious targets within the Outcomes arena, to allow Schemes/Programmes flexibility to tackle the Key priority areas in a variety of ways best suited within their national context, yet all aligned under the common goal.