



## Position statement on climate action

April 2020

Climate change is the preeminent existential global crisis of our time and agriculture is a significant contributor to rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and associated land use change are now about 25 percent of all human influenced global emissions and must be greatly reduced to meet climate targets<sup>1</sup>.

Our key principle here is to achieve: **“an agricultural sector that minimises greenhouse gases and noise, odour and air pollution, acts as a significant greenhouse gas sink, enables adaptations to a changing climate and supports the resiliency of farmers and farming communities.”**

The relationship between climate change and global food systems has critical implications throughout the value chain and the same is true on how the agricultural value chain can impact climate. Fertilisers on farms, livestock production and land use change on farms, food waste and loss at farm, post-harvest and post-consumer waste, fossil fuels at farms, factories, logistics, retail and in the home, all release GHG into the atmosphere. Equally, farming produces food and nutrition for the whole planet and plants and, under proper management, soil carbon sequestration.

The urgency of climate change is recognized in the Paris Agreement and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – SDG 13 calls for “urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.” SAI Platform supports the SDGs and this view.

Climate change also stresses the global food system compromising food security and is intrinsically linked with wider issues such as health and nutrition, human rights, water security, farmer income, biodiversity and education. It is imperative that agricultural practices develop to mitigate gas emissions and optimise sequestration of carbon, and also create resilience and adaptation. Whether it be temperature highs or lows; flood or drought; or increased volatility in these, climate change impacts us directly or our value chains.

Commitments from farmers themselves and others across the agricultural industry show our shared intent to address these challenges and ensure that agriculture is part of the solution. Success requires a common approach, built on strong science, speed and scale for delivery and practical solutions. These need to be widely adopted to provide a foundation for economic, social and environmental viability for farming.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-data>

Real progress requires proactive and ongoing engagement with stakeholders and collaborative action. The choices our members make do have impact. As a membership organisation of over 115 members across the food and beverage industry, SAI Platform recognises our role in supporting improvements in climate change.

- **We have a shared intent to urgently address these challenges.** Success requires a common approach, built on strong science. Practical solutions need to be adopted at scale in order to provide economic, social and environmental viability of the farming sector.
- **We work collaboratively, within SAI Platform membership and across partner organisations,** in addressing climate change to most effectively catalyse and scale success, as the challenge requires joint action.
- **We prioritise our workplans and projects** in support of positive climate action.
- **We endorse the leadership already shown** by many of our members, and other industry partners, by showing a clear position on this issue and to provide support, good practices, and a common voice for all. These include Commitments of the [Paris Agreement of 2016](#), approach of leaders such as [WBCSD](#) and [Climate Smart Agriculture](#) and intent of the [World Farmers' Organisation](#), [Climakers](#) that agriculture is part of the solution.

## SAI Platform's theory of change

The carbon cycle for agriculture is central to climate impacts and our opportunities to reduce them. We recognise that all actions for change will need to ensure a balance with other challenges such as biodiversity, food loss and more.

SAI Platform's scope for action is across the value chain and all aspects of sustainability - economic, environmental and social change. We recognise that this is part of a wider set of activities from many organisations and builds on our own development and delivery.

It is driven by:

- The priorities of our members and the raw materials they influence.
- The scale of opportunity for action and the change we can achieve.
- Best farming practices, inputs and outputs management, soil health improvement, livestock solutions<sup>2</sup>, carbon sequestration, land use change and prevention from deforestation.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i8098e.pdf>

SAI Platform has a role to develop and support the systemic changes required. We will:

- **Advocate for “agriculture as a solution”.**  
Farming systems that increase on-farm biomass, both above and below ground, can make the agricultural sector a significant greenhouse gas sink, enable adaptation to a changing climate and support the resiliency of farmers and farming communities.
- **Support our members to improve their own practices.**
  - Using our tools and solutions such as the [European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability \(ERBS\)](#), the [Farm Sustainability Assessment \(FSA\)](#), and the [Sustainable Dairy Partnership \(SDP\)](#), as well as on the ground projects to deliver and scale positive change.
  - Engaging with local stakeholders to implement practical solutions through collaborative action at producer level to address animal welfare issues.
- **Work with thought leaders and partners** to improve data and methodologies and apply the best available science to our strategies and to ensure our members have access to the right solutions for success in soil health, water management, deforestation, carbon sequestration and biodiversity and more.
- **Support our members with implementation of practical “climate smart” solutions** through collaborative action at farm level to combat climate change.
- **Ensure transparency and provide open access to best practices**, whether they are members or not of SAI Platform, to support widespread adoption of change across the whole industry.
- **Support the call on governments** to establish policy commensurate with the need for change.
- **Support the demonstration of the business case** for agriculture and identify suitable funding to underwrite the transition needed at farm level to combat climate change.

## Current situation

There are clear signals that the climate has changed over the last century. Climate scientists measured 2016 as the warmest year on record, and 16 of the 17 warmest years have occurred since 2001<sup>3</sup>. Every day, all around the world, people feel the effects of extremes and increased averages in temperature and rainfall.

The international Paris Agreement sets out a clear threshold to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. We should limit global warming to well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperature. To stay beneath this threshold, scientists estimate that no more than 1 trillion tonnes of carbon dioxide can be added to the atmosphere. This is called the “carbon budget”. Global emissions since 1870 have already consumed more than half of that budget, leaving less than 500 billion tonnes to emit in the future.

We continue to refine our understanding of climate change and reduce remaining uncertainty, however, the scientific consensus on the need for urgent action is clear and is recognized in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 13 calls for “urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.” Ultimately, by all stakeholders doing everything we can to reduce our GHG footprint consistent with the global 1.5°C goal, we can achieve real, positive, and sustainable change.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-noaa-data-show-2016-warmest-year-on-record-globally>