

Eco Working Group Key Messages

Eco Working Group in 2023

The Eco Working Group continues to develop the detail of proposals to measure and communicate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the food system. The group has met 10 times since forming in early 2023, assisting government to achieve the following objectives:

- to standardise the methodology and data sources used for measuring and reporting scope 3 GHG emissions of food and drink.
- to establish a mandatory methodology for voluntary food eco-labels.

To that end, the group has identified and prioritised a wide range of challenges for quantifying and communicating the environmental impacts of agri-food organisations and products. The group has agreed recommendations to Defra for further policy development, including:

- GHG Protocol Scope 3 standard should be the minimum baseline for company reporting.
- To support the development of WRAP's reporting protocols V2, which will provide more specific guidance on scope 3 reporting for the food and drink sector.
- To facilitate and support primary data collection in parallel with improving the quality and representativeness of secondary data.
- To ensure eco-labels accurately communicate environmental impact data to consumers and are future-proofed and adaptable as the science develops.

The group has also contributed to the development of the FDTP roadmap paper, which summarises the Eco Data workstream progress to date, which we aim to publish shortly. The group will continue to meet in 2024, aiming to progress towards the objectives set out in the roadmap.

Eco Data Sources Task & Finish Group

The Eco WG requested the formation of an eco-data sources task & finish group made up of industry experts to provide their guidance on improving the accuracy, consistency and accessibility of secondary data sources. Distilling months of biweekly discussions, the task & finish group identified three priority areas:

- Data quality requirements to ensure the accuracy and consistency of secondary data sources, across a wide range of use cases.
- Integration of primary data into secondary datasets to enable continuous improvement of the datapoints.
- Open-access database with reliable secondary emission factors aggregated from existing sources for use in scope 3 / product-level assessments, for example.

These recommendations will be put forward to the Eco/Data WGs for review in the March workshop.

Next steps

On the 18 March members of the Eco and Data working groups will hear the outputs of a Defra funded study by WRAP and Hestia to improve the availability of high-quality environmental impact data for key food commodities and multi-ingredient foods relevant to UK consumption.

On March 25, the Eco and Data Working Groups will have a joint workshop to ensure a shared understanding of work done so far, and to discuss important “gaps” in relation to data infrastructure work. In particular, the groups will discuss data formats and open-access datasets.

On ecolabelling, through the feedback and evidence we have gathered so far, it's been clear that there are two fundamental challenges we need to tackle to enable a standardised approach to eco-labels. The first challenge is a lack of consensus on how to quantify product level environmental impacts fairly and accurately. The second is the insufficient availability and quality of data used to inform these assessments. Therefore, we are currently focusing on tackling these two challenges, as they are critical to achieving our goal to reduce the potential for misleading or false environmental claims to consumers.

Greater detail on the next steps for the eco workstream is contained in the roadmap document.

Summary of FDTP sustainability roadmap

The roadmap outlines the priorities of the FDTP in addressing environmental data challenges for the food & drink industry. It highlights several priorities in the short- and medium-term. The paper will be of greatest interest to professionals involved in measuring and communicating the environmental impacts of organisations and products within the agri-food sector.

The UK food system accounts for around a quarter of our domestic emissions – driving consumer concern for the environment, investor demand for environmental performance, and reporting requirements from governments. This means there is increasing urgency to address challenges and deliver improvements to environmental impact data, as well as unlock the potential for the UK agri-food system to actively support the transition to net zero and restore nature alongside food production.

In the absence of a joined-up approach, both within the UK and globally, there is a confusing landscape of initiatives. Key challenges identified by the FDTP roadmap paper include:

- Lack of a common approach to reporting on environmental impacts, including scope 3 company reporting, product-level footprinting, eco-labelling and farm level carbon accounting.
- Lack of accuracy, consistency and accessibility of environmental impact data currently available.
- Lack of capacity within the food & drink industry to deliver environmental data solutions (e.g. measurement and reporting), with particular consideration for SMEs.

Next steps identified by the FDTP roadmap paper to tackle these challenges include:

- Standardising/harmonising the measurement and communication of environmental impact data underpinning scope 3 company reporting, product-level footprinting, carbon calculators, and eco-labelling.
- Improving the accuracy, consistency and accessibility of environmental impact data.
- Building capacity within the food & drink industry to deliver environmental data solutions (e.g. measurement and reporting), with particular consideration for SMEs.
- Working across Defra to support farmers on making best use of environmental data.

Health Working Group Key Messages

Health Working Group

- The Health Working Group (HWG) is co-chaired by Susan Barratt (non-executive and former CEO, IGD) and Natasha Burgon (DHSC). The group consists of 15 industry members with expertise and experience from across all sectors of the food system.
- The HWG will explore and define the most appropriate metrics to incentivise the sale of healthier food and provide advice and recommendations to DHSC ministers including, on how that data could be voluntarily reported. This is an important part of government's strategy to address poor diet and reduce obesity and included within the [Governments Major Conditions Strategy](#).
- There have been four HWG meetings, with the first meeting held in July 2023. Meeting note summaries are available at the [FDTP webpage](#). A summary from HWG meeting 4, which took place at the end of February 2024, will shortly be available.

Engagement

- A key commitment of the HWG is timely and transparent communication so that wider food sector stakeholders can input as the programme of work to define the metrics develops.
- Wider stakeholder engagement took place in October and November 2023, feedback from which HWG members reflected on in HWG meeting 3. Further wider stakeholder engagement will continue as the work develops.

Timelines

- We expect to provide Ministers advice on the HWG's recommended list of metrics by Summer 2024 and to move into the next phase of work looking at quality assurance of metrics, operational feasibility, and streamlining data collection and reporting.

Data Working Group Key Messages

Our approach/goals for any data intervention as part of FDTP are:

Recognising diversity and complexity

The approach should be rooted in systems thinking. This involves trying to understand and recognise the diversity of all the actors and processes in the system and how these fit together, without oversimplifying the complexity. In the context of our work, the 'system boundaries' include the agrifood system, interconnected data systems and data users. The data system includes actors such as external providers of data services, ranging from general data management services to providers specialising in calculating impact metrics for businesses.

User-centered: making things as simple and easy as possible

Our approach is also centered on design thinking. The FDTP is committed to minimising the burden of data collection and reporting for businesses. This means taking a user-centric approach where those businesses and the relevant employees are treated as users in their own right, not just the ultimate audiences of the data, and considering their needs. Thinking about what the adoption of any agreed methodology looks like for business on a day-to-day basis will help us to reduce the friction and costs businesses could face or already face when compiling, storing, and sharing data.

Building on current best practice, not replacing it

We recognise this is an area where businesses, NGOs and academia have already done an immense amount of work. We want to make use of that experience by learning from what has worked well and build on top of it in partnership with those practitioners.

Solution agnostic

Interventions will be developed without any preference for particular solutions, technologies, or providers. They will be guided by the needs of businesses, users and the programme.

Future-proofed, scalable, and resilient

Interventions should be able to evolve over time to accommodate potential future data needs and growth. A robust infrastructure should avoid creating single points of failure or any operational reliance on a single proprietary standard or solution.

Respect commercial sensitivity/confidentiality

Where the infrastructure supports sharing of data between businesses it must reflect the commercially sensitive nature of this data. It must allow for this to be done securely, and to give the businesses who own the data full control over who it gets shared with.