



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Food Data Transparency Partnership

Eco Working Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

1. The Food Data Transparency Partnership (FDTP) launched in 2023 as a partnership between government, industry and civil society experts on the food system to work collaboratively to improve the environmental sustainability and healthiness of food and drink through better food data.
2. The Defra-led Eco Working Group (Eco WG) is supporting the FDTP Eco workstream to ensure consistent reporting on scope 3 GHG emissions and other environmental metrics. This will enable the food and drink and farming sectors to decarbonise and reduce impacts on the natural environment.

Aims

3. The aims of the FDTP Eco workstream are to:
 - ensure GHG impact reporting for food and drink companies is consistent, accurate and fair, to enable the industry to reliably monitor progress and focus efforts towards net zero
 - consider impact reporting for other environmental metrics beyond GHG emissions to support other positive efforts towards nature and the environment
 - ensure consumer information including corporate claims and disclosures on the environmental impacts of food and drink is consistent, clear and accurate, including by building a process for product level comparison which enables consumers to make informed choices and avoids greenwashing

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- enable government, civil society, investors and the food industry to compare performance on environmental impacts consistently, fairly, and with clarity and to ensure good practice in determining and communicating outputs is adopted and recognised
- effectively collaborate across government, the food and drink industry and wider experts, generating shared solutions to measuring and communicating environmental impacts

Objectives

4. The Eco WG will assist government to deliver the priorities outlined in the [Eco Data Roadmap paper](#) (and updated publications). It is envisaged that there will be periodic updates to the specific objectives. The current priorities are listed in Annex A.

Key Principles

5. International alignment

The UK is part of a global food and drink supply chain with many businesses operating across international boundaries. We recognise the need to maximise international alignment of our work and to carefully consider imports, exports and trade implications.

6. Recognising diversity, inclusivity and complexity

Our approach is rooted in systems thinking. This involves recognising the diversity of actors and processes in the system and their interactions, avoiding oversimplifying 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 environmental impact metrics for businesses.

7. User-centred: making things as simple and easy as possible

We are committed to minimising the burden of data collection and reporting for businesses. This means taking a user-centric approach, where every data user in the system is considered, not just the final 'audience' for the data. We will aim to design interventions that work for all sizes of business on a day-to-day basis, reduce costs and reduce complexity.

8. Building on current best practice, not replacing it

We recognise this is an area where businesses, Non-Government Organisations, civil society 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.

9. Open inquiry without pre-conceived answers

As a partnership, we will work together to establish what the problem is to be solved, and only then start developing answers, guided by the needs of businesses, consumers, users and the programme. If and where centralised or single provision may be desirable, this will be determined in a fair and transparent way.

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10. 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.

11. Respect commercial sensitivity and confidentiality

Where the infrastructure supports sharing of data between businesses it must respect commercial sensitivities and the value of this data to its owners. It must allow for data sharing to be done securely and give the data owner full control over who it is shared with.

Participation

Appointments

12. The Eco WG co-chairs are Karen Lepper, Deputy Director of Food Data, Standards and Sustainability at Defra and Judith Batchelar, former Sainsburys director and food sector expert. They have been appointed by Civil Service Senior Responsible Officers for the FDTP, based on their experience and credibility in their sectors.
13. Appointments to the WGs will be made by the co-chairs, based on deep professional expertise and experience of sustainability / environmental reporting in scope of the WG, and the willingness and commitment to work collaboratively as part of the FDTP on these issues. The membership will be comprised of experts from across industry and civil society.
14. These roles are unpaid. Reasonable expenses will be covered, for example, in travelling to meetings, although where possible we will work flexibly and remotely.

Roles and responsibilities

15. The WG members will be asked to consider proposals presented to the group by the Defra secretariat, by members of the group, and by other invited experts. They will be asked to share views as practitioners working on measuring and communicating environmental data on a day-to-day basis. They will also be asked to gather views from their organisations or networks to inform the work.
16. We estimate that this work will require:

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- a. For co-chairs: 2 to 3 hours' worth meetings per month (of the WGs + discussions with officials) and a further 2 to 3 hours' work outside meetings (reading, engagement within the sector);
 - b. For WG members: 1.5 hours' worth meetings per month and up to 6 hours' work outside of meetings (reading, engagement within the sector).
17. These estimations are indicative and will depend on the specific programme of work. We appreciate that members are giving up their time to support this important work, and we will aim to be flexible and sensitive to existing professional commitments and availability in scheduling FDTP business.
 18. To support WG co-chairs and WG members, Defra will provide a clear point of contact within the FDTP civil service programme team. The team will provide the secretariat for the meetings, including liaising with the co-chairs to establish workplans, preparing agendas and papers as needed.

Information sharing and legal issues

19. We want WG members to be able to bring expertise from their sectors so there will not be any overarching expectation of confidentiality or non-disclosure. However, co-chairs reserve the right to conduct some parts of the meeting under the Chatham House Rule (discussions can be reported but not attributed to individuals or organisations), and members will be expected to keep the content of these discussions confidential. Anonymised meeting summaries will be published on the FDTP's gov.uk page.
20. Members should seek permission from the Secretariat before speaking to the media about the FDTP and their involvement in the programme, as unauthorised media contact may result in removal from the group.
21. Meetings will be conducted in a competition compliant manner which will not involve any discussions, decisions or subsequent behavioural change that may be construed as anti-competitive. Members shall not act in a manner that could be construed as advertising or promoting their own business or business concerns or soliciting for business or work.
22. Competition Law concerns can arise in a few ways including from the exchange of sensitive information, from an agreement (or more general understanding) or decisions to boycott or to refuse to deal with certain businesses, agreements amongst competitors to impose unfair trading terms as well as agreements which fix prices, or which otherwise limit output or supply. Failure to adhere to these

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conditions will result in the premature termination of the meeting.

Review

23. These terms of reference will be reviewed periodically and may be updated with the agreement of members.

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Annex: Objectives/deliverables

Objective 1: food and drink supply chain reporting at company and product

Ref	Objective
1.1	Standardised scope 3 company level reporting
1.2	Approach to company level nature reporting
1.3	Standardised product level accounting method, including multi-metric approach
1.4	Carbon removals and within value chain mitigation

Objective 2: farm data

Ref	Objective
2.1	Support for carbon tool providers to harmonise their underlying methodologies
2.2	Support for farmers to complete an audit and act on it
2.3	Repurpose existing data to complete an audit
2.4	Carbon removals and within value chain mitigation

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Objective 3: environmental impact data for food, drink and agri products

Ref	Objective
3.1	Data for key imported commodities
3.2	Accessible LCA data

Objective 4: data infrastructure

Ref	Objective
4.1	Data sharing infrastructure
4.2	Governance of data infrastructure
4.3	Data quality

Objective 5: supporting and enabling workstreams

Ref	Objective
5.1	Skills plan
5.2	Joining up, communications and horizon scanning

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