



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Food Data Transparency Partnership Eco working group minutes

Date 20 November 2023
Time 15:30-17:30
Venue 2 Marsham Street / Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Co-Chairs:

Judith Batchelar Food sector expert and Environment Agency Deputy Chair
Karen Lepper Deputy Director Food Data, Standards and Sustainability, Defra

Twenty-one Eco working group members in attendance

FDTP team

The Eco working group is a stakeholder engagement group that provides input on policy development as part of an open policy design process. These discussions do not reflect agreed government policy.

1. Welcome and introductions

- Judith Batchelar (JB): Introduced new members: David Moore (Compleat Food Group), Emily Rout (Mondra), and Louise Rezler (Soil Association Exchange – standing in for Joseph Gridley during his paternity leave).
- JB recapped Chatham House rules and SharePoint access.
- JB set out the agenda:
 - Discussion and feedback on proposed changes to WRAP's guidelines.
 - Discussion and feedback on draft roadmap paper.
 - Today is not the last chance to give feedback.
- A Defra official noted the Ministerial reshuffle, and change of Defra Secretary of State, which may mean it takes us a bit longer to ensure everyone is up to speed on this work.

2. Discussion and feedback on WRAP's proposed updates for version 2 of "Scope 3 GHG Measurement and Reporting Protocols for Food and Drink"

- WRAP: Advance notice to this group. Will show the group some of the final text, but likely not ready for December meeting.
- We will ensure protocol's minimum **requirements** align with the minimum requirements of GHG Protocol Corporate and Scope 3 Standard.
- WRAP's **recommendations** will go beyond the recommendations of GHG Protocol.
- Have reviewed several other major documents ahead of this work. Engagement with key stakeholders through Courtauld.
- Land Use Change, carbon removals calculation guidance, biogenic CO₂ accounting guidance are areas where we will provide more detailed text circulated to group in December, for written feedback on that text.
- Area of biogenic GHG accounting had a red flag when GHG Protocol was released. Was some confusion as to how it would work in practise. Trying to address in our new version.
- Consultation will be in January and will last four weeks.

Discussion:

- One member raised **international aspect** – ensure it is explicitly stated. There was discussion about whether **other countries** were developing specific scope 3 guidance for food & drink:
 - One member highlighted the EU's Environment Committee recent approval of the cross-sectoral [Carbon Removal Framework](#), suggesting we need to keep pace. *Since the meeting, the [European Parliament has voted in favour of the framework](#).*
 - Another member highlighted [New Zealand's work on GHG reporting](#), which includes a section on agriculture and land use.
 - A member suggested Australia, but WRAP said from conversations with partners in Australia that scope 3 guidance was not there yet.
- Members also discussed how the paper would stay **up to date with latest science**.
 - WRAP: Version 1 did lay out some of this. Need to determine at what stage of the science updating a change to the document is required.
 - One member suggested **regular updates**. WRAP said this could be possible but will have to balance what we think can be recommended.
 - Another member made a broader point that the Eco and Data working groups would need to develop an end-to-end picture of how changes will be triggered and managed to ensure systems update with new science.
- A member praised the mention of **biogenic methane** in the paper and highlighted recent work by FAO on biogenic methane.
- Replying to a member's question, WRAP said they had engaged with GHG Protocol to receive the ["Built on GHG Protocol" mark](#), but that GHG Protocol currently lack the capacity to proceed.
- A member asked if WRAP would adapt the guidance for **organisations lacking the expertise / specialists to understand it**.
 - WRAP said there was a balance between necessary detail versus being more digestible. At this stage focusing on getting the detail right. Following consultation will think about communicating different in separate documents.

- Another member said, even if businesses are outsourcing some of the work, they need the knowledge to ask specialists questions and challenge them.
- A member asked how much of the document was going to change in this second version.
 - WRAP said it would likely be 20-30% of the text, in addition to some new sections (e.g. adjusting emission factors, and sources and emission types).

3. Discussion and feedback on FDTP draft roadmap paper

Please note, hereon, "the paper" refers to the FDTP roadmap paper.

Tone, language, narrative:

- One member asked if the paper was now superseded by WRAP's document, as the latter expanded on Land Use Change, carbon removals and biogenic methane. They said these topics should be added to the paper, especially for the farming audience.
- Another member said they felt the paper was cohesive with WRAP's document, which would be one of a few standards underpinning the FDTP's work.
- A member felt the document was a bit dry, and several members suggested more case studies should be added.

Timescales and actions:

- A few members said they wanted to see more timescales in the paper.
- There were suggestions that timescales could still be kept vague, if necessary.
- One member said it would be useful to highlight interdependencies in the work, especially for critical actions that are being relied upon for other areas of work.

International dimension:

- A few members said greater emphasis was needed on the international dimension of the work. Interoperability with international systems due to imports.
- Outline what other countries are doing to emphasise the UK's progress.
 - Examples: New Zealand, France, Ireland, EU.
 - One member said that the EU is actually behind the UK on our area of work.
 - Another member said other country case studies on primary data would be useful.

Sector-specific:

- One member said the paper should highlight how the agri-food sector is different to other industries (e.g. land use, biogenic emissions and carbon removals). Will help with engaging with farmers.
- However, another member argued that other sectors do consider these factors (e.g. mining and land use). Instead, the unique aspect of agri-food sector is its diversity – very different needs across the sector.
- Another member said the section on scope 3 reporting could pull out slight differences for the sector. Not that we are taking a different approach, but that some areas are going to be more relevant to the sector (e.g. land use and certain GHGs).

Solution-agnostic:

- A member said the paper should make clear that we want a solution-agnostic back end, but not everywhere else, such as WRAP and HESTIA. Should identify who is most appropriate to deliver certain solutions.
- A member said there will be issue if we do not have common infrastructure. Agree with some recognition around seeking commonality.
- FSA responded – when solution-agnostic approaches were first mentioned, we were more focused on technology and systems – not the standards. There's a balance between standards and lock-in, especially in terms of monetary costs. Something to consider after the paper.
- A member replied that a shared solution, such as Mondra, would be cost-effective as the costs of basic infrastructure would be shared. Could still enable other solution providers to address specific needs. Retailers should use the same type of portal, so that a consistent approach is taken.
- A member replied that we would need to identify which functionality should only be provided once.
- A member said it would be important to identify how farmers add / share their data. Red Tractor and Digital Grain passport could be used as case studies.
- There was a further conversation between two members on Red Tractor, and other organisations engaging with a large number of farms – important to ensure system would be interoperable and contractually sound with these groups. Dairy and beef case studies underway.

Plan for data section:

- There was discussion about the governance of data, with agreement that the paper could explore it in more detail, whilst still not making policy promises.
 - One member suggested that trusted bodies could manage the governance on behalf of their membership / community of interest. Could therefore be many areas of governance, even if they follow a similar standard.
- One member suggested there could be greater mention of the definitions and systems of collection.

Capacity-building:

- Members said it was still unclear where capacity-building was required.
- There was agreement that further support would be needed, and that this would differ across the sector.
- First step would be to identify existing channels offering support. Then identify gaps and determine how to develop capabilities. Most members only know their own sector in detail, so it's unclear where the gaps are.
- There was agreement that further engagement was needed with organisations who have less capacity / knowledgeable on the subject. SMEs, farmers, and manufacturers were examples mentioned.
- A member suggested that England might need specialist farm advisors, as is the case in New Zealand, Ireland, and the DAs. Alternative to consultancy model.
- A member also highlighted that further capacity-building might be required if other environmental impact metrics (e.g. biodiversity) were introduced for eco-labelling.

Future priorities:

- Members were asked to suggest which future priorities should be set out in the paper.
 - One member said the first focus should be to carry out a **baseline of farm (primary) data**.
 - However, another member said it would be important to first **define the scope** of what to cover in baselines, and then **build infrastructure** for primary data collection. If you skipped these steps and anything was missed, you would have to do a lot of work to retroactively adjust the baseline.
 - A few members agreed that the very first step would be to **decide what can be standardised** for organisational and product foot printing. Will determine what the infrastructure looks like.
- There was broad agreement that priorities needed to be timebound. Otherwise, there was a risk of dragging on forever, and people losing confidence in any developments.
 - One member suggested a year to agree the scope and create the basic infrastructure. Then start baselining farms and work from there.
- A couple of members said that differences between carbon calculators would be a big challenge to get over.
- Another member said that once we have more emissions data, different farming systems will come into focus. Concern raised in recent engagement on assurance schemes that more extensive and regenerative systems will look significantly disadvantaged if factors such as **biodiversity** are not considered. Suggested a timeline to **more holistic transparency** to help messaging and take up of the group's work.
 - Two members suggested that Mondra's work could assist in this. Mondra's Farm Data Done Better workstream is trialling an LCA model that includes regenerative practises. Also allocates farm level sequestration to private label products. Need to reward farmers who adopt regenerative practises.
- Another member said that engagement with financial institutions would also be vital.
- A member raised the recent Green Tractor scheme's engagement – stakeholders were consulted, but when the scheme was announced, some stakeholders announced they were against the scheme. How do we avoid the same?
 - Members suggested greater engagement, including with NFU.
 - Internal communications within organisations also very important. Ensure influential members are aligned.

4. Next steps and close

- The next meeting will be held in the London on 11th December – please attend in person if possible. The focus will be on eco-labelling. More details to follow.