



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Food Data Transparency Partnership Eco working group minutes

Date 17 June 2025

Time 10:00-12:30

Venue Caxton House (UKRI office) and by MS Team

Attendance

Co-Chairs: Judith Batchelar, Food sector expert and Environment Agency Deputy Chair and Karen Lepper, Deputy Director for Food Data, Standards and Sustainability

Twenty-one Eco working group members.

Defra officials. Welsh Government Officials, DAERA Officials

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:

Welcome / updates

- Judith Batchelar (JB) welcomed members to the meeting and recapped Chatham House rules.
- JB welcomed new members to the Working Group after a competitive expression of interest campaign.
 - Joe Prosho is Head of Sustainable Sourcing and Agriculture at ASDA.
 - Hazel Smith is Head of Supply Development at Barfoods
 - Catherine Russell is Environmental and Carbon Specialist at Albert Bartlett
 - Catherine Chong is Engagement Lead at CLEAR, the Consortium for Labelling for Environment, Animal Welfare and Regenerative Farming.
- JB set out the agenda, including presentations and discussion on:
 - The first session which would be covering Standardising data including a presentation on supply chain asks from IGD and then from Bankers4NetZero on developing disclosure sustainability

- The second session focusing on Farm Data and including a presentation on making Defra data more available and a proposal on Carbon Calculator Standards.

2. Defra updates

a) General Update

- A Defra official gave updates from across Defra since the previous meeting:
 - Work ongoing on Defra strategies and publications expected before and after summer including the Environmental Improvement Plan update, Food Strategy, and Farming Roadmap
- [Product Level Methodology Publication](#) was published in July 2025. We have already presented the work at a recent OECD online seminar, and BRC Mondra has agreed to evaluate the methodology.
- Defra's Call for Evidence; [Expanding the role of the private sector in nature recovery](#) 'Expanding the role of the private sector in nature recovery' opened on 12 June and runs until 7 August 2025.

Action: FDTP team will send round an information note on the above updates ahead of the next meeting.

b) FDTP Update Comms

- Defra official thanked all those engaged in the comms subgroup that discussed how better comms could be achieved. It was agreed that the objective of the comms should be to revisit the 2024 roadmap, review the current context in terms of the Food Strategy, report on the progress of specific workstreams and explain the way ahead. The key to all of this is to ensure the publication can mean something to everyone including Devolved Government contacts and ensure that the products are clear.
- We hope to have the first draft ready in the next few weeks. If people are keen to get involved, please contact the FDTP team as we are happy to hear more thoughts about making an effective document.

c) FDTP Evaluation

- A representative of Eunomia Environmental Research consulting gave a brief review of the ongoing evaluation of the FDTP that Defra has commissioned. Eunomia/ICF and ADAS aim to evaluate how FDTP is working.
- Eunomia are looking at process evaluation and are proposing to do stakeholder interviews over the summer including members of the group and will give initial findings to Defra in autumn 2025 with the second stage to be delivered in the middle of next year.
- Interviews will be around how the FDTP process is working and having the right people in the room and what things it is focusing on. This way of working is considered good practice. Daniel agreed to take further questions by email.

3. Session 1 – Standardising data asks.

a) IGD Standardised Data Asks

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The IGD presented on their SCALE project (Supplier Common Approach for Leading on Environment) which was initiated by manufacturing businesses and looks to align data reporting requests through the supply chain.

- Businesses are increasingly having to navigate a wide range of inconsistent and technically challenging data requests.
- They often struggle to determine which topics are relevant and applicable.
- They often lack the resources, systems, and knowledge to report.

Project SCALE is the creation of a framework designed to capture all relevant environmental standards, relevant to the whole food system supply chain. The seven areas that the framework is based on are: carbon; deforestation; water; biodiversity and nature; food waste; packaging; human rights. The framework is designed to support businesses and suppliers to understand where they are in relation to sustainability standards and improve the sustainability of their supply chains. It will be trialled over the summer and there is a workshop with the SCALE Steering Group in July to scope the next steps.

Discussion/questions

- The discussion confirmed that animal health and welfare are not in scope currently but could be considered in the future, but FNET (Food Network for Ethical Trade) offers a potential framework for alignment.
- The group discussed the different needs and challenges for businesses across the sector, including small suppliers who are nowhere near having granular data for reporting and the fact that retailers need to support alignment efforts for this to streamline the efforts of those upstream in their supply chains.
- The group also discussed whether a platform would be required as a repository for information with robust standards on data quality. The group queried the link between this work and other initiatives, such as the Environment Agency-led SEEBEYOND programme. It was confirmed that the SEEBEYOND research has been consulted in developing the framework. The two projects have different purposes and scopes.

Action: That IGD update the group when these plans are further developed.

b) Bankers for Net Zero – UK SME Voluntary Emissions Standard

- B4NZ is a not-for-profit initiative bringing together banks, businesses, regulators, and policymakers to accelerate the shift toward a just, resilient net zero economy. Rooted in the UK's policy and regulatory framework, they champion the national delivery of international climate commitments while reinforcing the UK's leadership in sustainable finance through engagement with a wide-reaching global network.
- As large organisations and financial institutions respond to increasing regulatory and market pressure to report on emissions, they push data requests down their supply chains. This has created a cascade effect: SMEs are now at the receiving end of fragmented, inconsistent, and often duplicative emissions data demands. These requests typically come in the form of bespoke, complex questionnaires that vary by sender and lack a standardised approach. Most SMEs lack the resources, expertise, and capacity to respond effectively, let alone accurately, to these growing asks.
- As a result, the current system creates a significant administrative burden for SMEs, while often failing to generate the consistent, high-confidence data that banks, buyers, and policymakers need. Emissions information is often collected through static templates or one-off forms with limited validation or contextual support. This undermines trust in the

data, making it difficult for financial institutions and corporates to draw meaningful insights or act.

- The lack of common infrastructure and standards for collecting primary data – first-hand information from SMEs such as energy bills or vehicle fuel receipts – is compounding the problem. Without a clear, coordinated approach, SMEs are increasingly treated as ‘data gaps’ rather than active contributors to decarbonisation. In turn, this undermines the integrity of climate disclosures across the economy and risks stalling progress towards national and global net zero goals
- To address this, B4NZ and the Broadway Initiative have convened the SME Sustainability Data Taskforce of 25+ organisations (including DESNZ), and developed the UK SME Voluntary Emissions Standard, a practical, credible, and scalable disclosure approach designed specifically to help SMEs share consistent emissions data in a way that works for them and meets the needs of the wider market.
- The standard will provide a cross-sector foundation to allow different sectors such as farming and construction to have specific requirements for emissions disclosure. B4NZ will be engaging partners in phase 3 of the work to develop this further.
- The first public version of the standard was launched on Monday 23rd June and is available [here](#).
- B4NZ are now moving into phase 2 of the project, a 'test-and-learn' exercise where they will invite feedback from stakeholders who have not been involved in the project to date and test the current standard with SMEs in focus-group sessions. This phase will run until the end of October, where the Taskforce will return to the Net Zero Council to share their findings and proposals.

Discussion/questions

- It was highlighted that farming businesses are clearly material to this project, and farmers will have a close relationship with their bank manager. B4NZ said that many banks do have a huge farming portfolio and that they will be working with data coverage for SMEs. We want to leverage credit rating institutions – they are missing in action in the data sharing ecosystem for trusted sustainability data.
- The group wish to offer their support on this project and maintain contact with B4NZ in the future.

4. **Farm Data**

Making Defra data available (by James Peacock, Head of Defra Data Access)

- Defra priorities in this space are to audit and improve its existing data and, where appropriate, to make these available.
- Defra's data services platform hosts 10k data sets. <https://environment.data.gov.uk/>. There are a range of apps that help you engage with data.
- There are several issues we are working through, such as addressing inconsistencies and gaps, improving accessibility and quality, keeping the information up to date, improving our understanding of who is accessing and using Defra data and what more we can do to help people access the information they need.

Discussion/questions

- The potential for value to be derived from RPA data, subject to commercial considerations.

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- The impact of the Basic Payments Scheme closure on removing farmers' incentive to keep their farm status data up to date. It was noted that that RPA have committed to keep land parcel data up to date in line with the previous 3-year EU requirement in terms of size and the context of what the land covers in terms of hectares, permanent agricultural and non-agricultural features (including crops, arable land/grassland and farmhouses) as well as hedgerows. However, this excludes information on the ownership of land parcels.
- The mismatch between Single Business Identifier (SBI) Number and County Parish Holding (CPH) number was raised. Farmers often consider the former more relevant. Also, some owners sub-let out land on a short-term basis which creates additional complexity. Data is a social construct, and the RPA data is slightly detached from the overall picture
- The group agreed that numerous issues merited further discussion, including the link to compliance with EUDR and whether there can be an easier way for farmers to update their own data with Defra and Defra arms-length bodies.

Action: To set up a follow up discussion with James to have a deeper dive into how data can be better updated on the Defra data platform separately

Carbon Calculator Standardisation (Defra official)

- Measuring farm carbon emissions accurately is not easy. Different tools have been developed and have given different results. Divergence creates problems. Stakeholders have said that this slows the progress of de-carbonisation.
- Through iterative feedback with a wide range of stakeholders we have developed an approach to create standardized calculation models and minimum expectations for farm carbon calculators.
- Modelling carbon removals is included in these plans and given the challenges there will need to be tradeoffs and complex decisions to achieve solutions that are practical and not unduly burdensome.
- Our expectation is that uptake will be voluntary, and we want to work with the sector to drive use and uptake of this approach.
- We are in further discussions with Devolved Government colleagues about their participation.
- The discussion today is focused on which stakeholder groups we will need to involve in this work and how the sector can support uptake.

Summary

The following themes were raised in discussion.

- Accessibility for small farm businesses: it is important to engage with smaller growers to understand data they hold, what data is common, already collected, and easy to access.
- Respecting historical data: Many farms have been doing carbon calculations for over ten years and there is a risk that changing requirements will invalidate historic results and the ability to track change over time. We need to minimise the impact of any methodology change.
- Recognition that there is complexity and challenge in some aspects of the standard, such as the treatment of methane and quantifying carbon removals. A combination of

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scientific research, reference to international standards and an industry perspective on practicalities will be needed to reach a pragmatic way forward on these issues within the proposed models and guidance.

- Incentives: need to be in place to drive uptake as part of a holistic package. Role for the supply chain in alignment with other actors. Once a standard is in place, adoption of this standard will happen as there is high support for standardization in the sector.
- Granularity of data: is a minimum data requirement needed? How to achieve the difficult balance between granular data so that it is reflective of positive changes vs. having drop down box of five hundred different feed options.
- Carbon literacy of users: critical to successful use of tool in generating and acting on insights.

Action: Members were asked to share any additional perspective following the meeting on the questions posed.