

Food Industry Benchmarking Toolkit

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WHY HAVE WE CREATED A TOOLKIT TO BENCHMARK THE FOOD INDUSTRY?

How your organisation can develop a national food industry benchmark, aligned with global standards and metrics

FOOD SYSTEMS HAVE MAJOR IMPACTS ON OUR HEALTH, SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

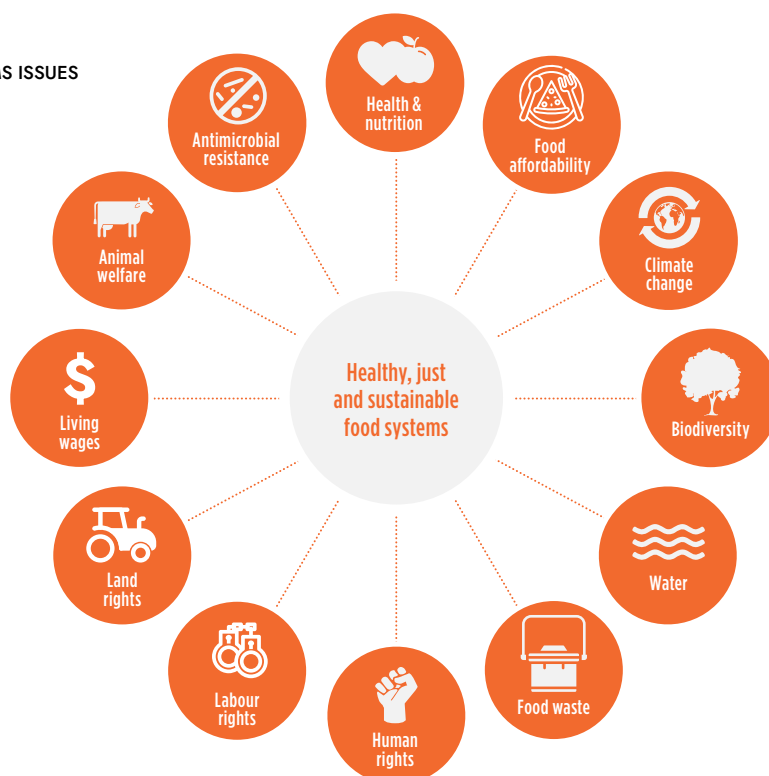
The food system is responsible for 30% of human made greenhouse gas emissions, 70% of freshwater withdrawals and a key driver of biodiversity loss and land degradation. We are also experiencing the global dual nutritional challenges of obesity and hunger, with 1 in 3 people being overweight or living with obesity, and 1 in 9 hungry or undernourished. And yet, 30% of food we produce is lost or wasted. Across food value chains there are persistent concerns regarding human, worker and land rights violations and workers facing poverty due to low wages.

Source: Plating Up Progress 2019 Part 1

See Figure 1 for some of the key issues related to food systems (please note, this is illustrative and not a complete list of topics and metrics we recommend using in a national food industry benchmark)

‘Fixing food’ is possible with a transition that involves the protection and restoration of natural habitats, widespread adoption of sustainable farming practices, reducing food waste, ensuring human rights are upheld, and, crucially, ensuring healthy, affordable and sustainable diets are accessible to all. There is no “one size fits all” to this dietary shift, but one thing is clear: the accessibility and affordability of healthy food is crucial as currently dietary patterns are the principle cause of ill health across the globe.

FIGURE 1: KEY FOOD SYSTEMS ISSUES



THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE BUSINESSES ARE KEY TO DRIVING CHANGE

The companies across the food value chain, from food producers to retailers and restaurants, have a role to play in driving change in the food system. Understanding what these companies are doing to contribute to a global transition to a healthy, just and sustainable food system is crucial if customers are to be able to make choices, if governments are to be able to regulate the industry, and if other stakeholders such as investors are to be able to invest their money responsibly.

This toolkit has been put together by the World Benchmarking Alliance and The Food Foundation. The World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) has already begun to assess the food and agriculture sector from a global perspective, benchmarking 350 of the world's biggest and most influential companies across the value chain. This Food and Agriculture Benchmark provides a crucial global picture of the industry, where the strengths and weaknesses are, what sectors are doing most and least to drive change, as well as direct assessment of the individual companies. Similarly, The Food Foundation assesses key UK-operating food companies at a national level. This work (Plating Up Progress) provides a more detailed picture by assessing companies that are influential in the United Kingdom, not all of which are influential at a global scale.

WHY DO WE NEED A TOOLKIT FOR NATIONAL BENCHMARKING?

If we want to assess food and agriculture businesses in a consistent way and to be able to compare them and identify leadership and best practices, we need a consistent way of measuring their behaviour. A shared methodology and consistent set of indicators and metrics helps to make sure that businesses are being assessed in a similar way.

To transform the food industry, we need to speak a common language and have **aligned expectations on reporting**. National benchmarks of the food industry need to align with global initiatives so that we have a common understanding of what good looks like for the food and agriculture industry at a **national and global scale**.

OTHER BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- understanding **how a global company operates differently in different countries**,
- being able to **track progress in large national companies** that are not global,
- being able to **understand how food industry progress compares across countries**,
- giving **national governments** a common understanding of progress and key issues within the food industry in their country,
- giving **investors** a consistent overview of food industry progress, risks and opportunities across and within countries.
- giving **businesses** a consistent set of expectations regardless of the market of their operations.

Additionally, it can be more effective to engage with governments, business and investors at a national level *as well as* a global level.

WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT AIMED AT AND WHAT DOES IT INCLUDE?

This toolkit is intended to help other organisations (such as NGOs, civil society organisations, research institutions) in different countries to benefit from reusing the methodology developed by WBA & The Food Foundation.

It sets out the methodology developed by WBA and The Food Foundation, explains the full set of indicators used in WBA's methodology and provides guidance on how they can be applied at a national level to different businesses and sectors.

It provides an overview of the Food Foundation's Plating Up Progress national benchmark as an example.

It also provides some examples of engagement with the industry, governments and investors.

This toolkit is not a self-assessment tool for companies, but is aimed at organisations wishing to assess the companies and join the coalition to develop their own food industry benchmark.

This toolkit is also not specifically designed to be used for detailed "on-farm" assessment. We are however aware of initiatives in this space and collaborating with them to ensure there is alignment between their work and this toolkit.

Who is in this coalition?

THE FOOD FOUNDATION is a UK-based charity with a vision for a sustainable food system that can deliver health and wellbeing for all. Collaboration is at the core of how we work, giving us strong relationships with a variety of stakeholders across the private sector, in government, with citizens, other NGOS. Our **Plating Up Progress** work, started in 2018, tracks progress towards within the UK food industry, towards a healthy, just and sustainable food system and engages with businesses, investors and the government to create change.

The **WORLD BENCHMARKING ALLIANCE** (WBA) is developing global benchmarks comparing companies' performance on the Sustainable Development Goals. By 2023, WBA will benchmark the 2000 most influential companies across **seven areas of transformation**. The results of the first Food and Agriculture Benchmark published in September 2021 can be found [here](#).

The methodology developed by WBA and The Food Foundation builds upon more than two years of research and collaborating with a wide range of experts and stakeholders, including other benchmarking and standard setting organisations. The methodology development is overseen by an independent multi-stakeholder Expert Review Committee.