

# Food Industry Benchmarking Toolkit

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HOW YOU CAN USE THIS TOOLKIT IN YOUR OWN BENCHMARK

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

The aim of this toolkit is to help other organisations to use the methodology and implement national benchmarks. National benchmarks are free to use any part of the methodology as guidance and make their own choices on the sectors of the industry and topics that are most relevant at a national level. The value-chain segments and full list of indicators assessed by WBA can be used as a menu from which to pick priorities in a given national context.

### CHOOSING COMPANIES TO INCLUDE

Many of the current benchmarks that focus on nutrition, climate change and so on focus on large companies. As highlighted in section 2, WBA's Food and Agriculture Benchmark assesses 350 keystone companies with a minimum annual revenue of USD 1 billion; therefore, those with a disproportionately large influence on the global food system. Many of these benchmarks also focus on companies publicly listed on stock exchanges because the benchmarks are often intended for investors.

These two ideas often mean that only the largest, publicly listed companies are being benchmarked.

However, others, such as the Access to Seeds Index, demonstrate how both large and small companies can be effectively benchmarked alongside each other, revealing their relative strengths and weaknesses. A consideration of which size and type of companies to include will be influenced by the country context, the nature of the local food industry and the types of issues stakeholders wish to address. As well as including relevant national companies, national benchmarks can also assess global companies performance in that country specifically, by for example focusing on their commitments and performance within that country and not their global commitments.

### INDICATORS

Benchmarking at the national level allows stakeholders the opportunity to identify and act upon the levers of change which are most material for the country or region in question. WBA's methodology, designed to be holistic, relevant and applicable for companies across the entire value chain, can equally be adapted and applied to different sectors of the value chain.

WBA has developed an internal materiality matrix that demonstrates the range of industries which sit within each of WBA's six value chains sectors, alongside a categorisation of materiality for each indicator. The matrix offers a guiding principle from which stakeholders can begin to map and construct tailored versions of the methodology for their specific contexts, as each topic is assigned a 'high', 'medium' or 'low' level of materiality for each sub-industry in question. It also indicates which indicators were considered 'non-applicable' to certain industries in the first iteration of the benchmark.

The selection of indicators will also depend on the type of companies chosen for the national benchmark. A national benchmark on food retailers and food service companies is more likely to use the Nutrition and Environment indicators (from a supply chain perspective) (like Plating Up Progress has done). However, a national benchmark in Kenya might like to zoom in on the transformation-specific social inclusion indicators, for example. Similarly, if a stakeholder has an interest in benchmarking dairy companies at the national level, topics including animal welfare, water use and protection of natural terrestrial habitat (environment) and increasing the availability, accessibility and affordability of healthy food (nutrition) could form a central element of the assessment. Alternatively, many topics have a high degree of materiality across the entire value chain, such as greenhouse gas emissions, and could therefore be assessed cross-sector or from a full value chain perspective.

WBA and The Food Foundation would be happy to provide guidance on a materiality assessment for a national benchmark as part of our support and collaboration with organisations looking to implement national benchmarks.

### HOW DID THE FOOD FOUNDATION IMPLEMENT ITS NATIONAL BENCHMARK?

#### SCOPE

The Food Foundation's benchmarking work began in 2018 and has been collaborating with WBA since 2019 on methodologies, metrics and indicators. This project, Plating Up Progress, focuses on supermarkets, contract caterers and restaurant chains, rather than the whole value chain. This is because The Food Foundation has a key goal that food should be healthy, sustainable and affordable for all and sees these customer-facing sectors as being highly influential in this outcome in the UK. These food businesses are in a unique position to influence the required transitions in consumption and production, being both gatekeepers to our diets and the funnel through which most commercially produced food is channelled. The assessment covered 29 major UK-operating companies whose annual revenues ranged from £53 billion to around £700 million, with two thirds of companies being publicly listed. Of the 29 companies assessed in the UK benchmark, 14 were also assessed from a global perspective in WBA's Food and Agriculture Benchmark 2021.

#### INDICATORS AND METRICS

The assessment used a subset of the indicators used by WBA, because some of the more agriculture-focused and social inclusion metrics were not within this project's primary focus of healthy, affordable and sustainable diets. Because the United Kingdom has some specific challenges, a few of the WBA indicators have been applied slightly differently. This is partly because the first assessment by The Food Foundation was done before WBA's methodology was finalised, and partly to reflect slightly different priorities in the food-related challenges faced in the UK. For example, introducing two separate indicators for sales of healthy food: one for overall sales and one for sales of fruit and vegetables. This was because there is a particular challenge within

the UK's population concerning eating enough fruit and vegetables, so this merited a separate focus. A similar approach was taken with biodiversity, separating the deforestation indicator into three separate ones for palm oil, soy and beef. The main point is that this assessment used a subset of WBA's indicators and ensured, as far as possible, that the data required from businesses was aligned with WBA.

You can see the indicators used and their alignment with WBA's methodology [here](#)

#### SCORING GUIDELINES AND WEIGHTING

This project used a similar scoring approach to WBA (based around the need for commitments, targets and performance data) but did not calculate an overall score for each company. The reason for this was because The Food Foundation benchmark was used for very targeted engagement with businesses, investors and the government so the assessment needed to show very clearly where companies were performing well or badly, as opposed to comparing overall company performance. This also meant there was no need for a weighting approach to the scoring. Instead, the indicators were allocated to specific topics and the results presented at a topic level (see later in this section).

#### DATA SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

In The Food Foundation UK benchmark, only publicly available company information was used. This included corporate reports, company websites, sustainability reports as well as other topic-specific benchmarks and indexes such as ATNI (nutrition), FAIRR (livestock farming and protein sales), BBFAW (animal welfare), and disclosure platforms such as CDP (for climate change, water and deforestation). The team performed their own research and then gave each company a period to verify the data. This has given the benchmark a strong basis for credibility with the businesses as they have been given the opportunity to check the findings.

**PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

Results were presented in a number of different formats, the two main ones being a “spider diagram” showing where businesses performed well or badly, and a league table showing their performance alongside others in the sector (see Figures 5 and 6)

FIGURE 5: PLATING UP PROGRESS SPIDER DIAGRAMS SHOWING INDIVIDUAL COMPANY PERFORMANCE

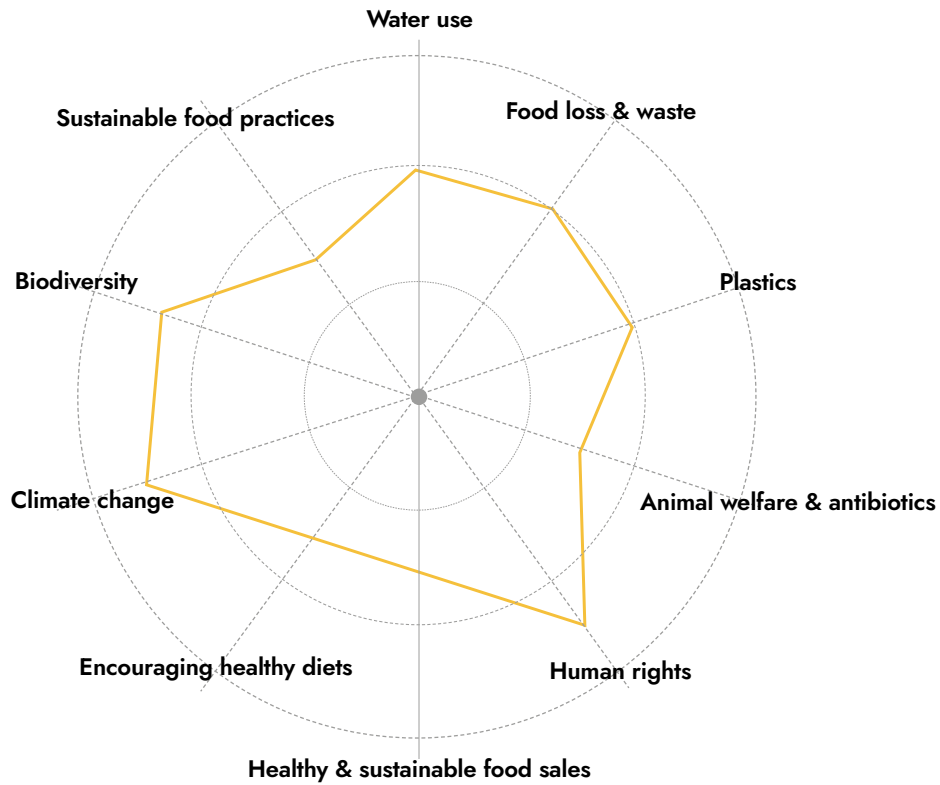


FIGURE 6: PLATING UP PROGRESS TRAFFIC LIGHT TABLES COMPARING COMPANY PERFORMANCE

Company	Healthy & sustainable food sales	Encouraging healthy diets	Climate change	Biodiversity	Sustainable food practices	Water use	Food loss & waste	Plastics	Animal welfare & antibiotics	Human rights
2021 Leaderships	Orange	Orange	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Yellow
JD Wetherspoons	Orange	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Orange
Mitchells & Butlers	Orange	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Red	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Red
The Restaurant Group	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Orange	Red	Orange	Orange	Orange
Nandos	Orange	Orange	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Red
Whitbread	Orange	Orange	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow

You can see the live dashboards for each sector here:

SUPERMARKETS

CATERERS

QUICK  
SERVICE  
RESTAURANTS

OTHER  
RESTAURANT  
CHAINS

WHOLESALEERS

### MORE RECENT COALITION WORK ALIGNED WITH THE METHODOLOGY

Over time The Food Foundation and WBA will be developing an international coalition of organisations using common indicators drawn from the overarching methodology and sharing best practices. For example, a recent national approach that builds on the WBA's Food and Agriculture Benchmark is Canada's National Index on Agri-Food Performance. This diverse private-public coalition is developing Canada's first agri-food

sustainability index. It takes a holistic, value chain approach, measuring private sector impact and progress spanning the four blocks of sustainability: environment, health and food safety, economic and societal well-being. The Index will present a national frame of reference by providing a consolidated and high-level view of performance of the country's agri-food sector.

**Learn more about Canada's work:**  
[agrifoodindex.ca](http://agrifoodindex.ca)