

# GRSB Global Beef Sustainability Goals



GLOBAL ROUNDTABLE FOR<sup>®</sup>  
**SUSTAINABLE BEEF**





# GRSB

## Global Beef

## Sustainability Goals

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**Climate**

**Land Use**

**Animal Health & Welfare**



# GRSB BACKGROUND

**S**ince 2010, the GRSB has set about bringing people together to drive a more sustainable beef industry. This process has focused on creating a forum for the sector to come together, inspire and support each other to create a shared ambition to continually improve, and be bold in sharing these improvements with our consumers and stakeholders.

In 2019, as we sat down and refreshed the GRSB strategy, we sought to find a way to communicate our ambition and create an energising platform to drive further progress. To achieve this, we have committed to setting goals for key sustainability indicators. This effort is aligned to, and an evolution of our [Principles and Criteria](#) which form the foundation of our shared understanding of a sustainable beef industry.

## VISION

*We envision a world where beef is a trusted part of a thriving food system in which the beef value chain is environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable.*



## MISSION

*The GRSB mission is to advance, support, and communicate continuous improvement in sustainability of the global beef value chain through leadership, science, and multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration.*

## Global Beef Sustainability Goals

These Goals intend to:

### Articulate ambition:

By clearly communicating what we want to achieve and by when, the GRSB can clearly communicate its role and the responsibility of the beef industry in delivering a sustainable, thriving food system.

### Recognise reality:

By basing the global goals on regional current scenarios as well as what is possible 'on the ground,' the goals reflect the current work being done at our regional roundtables and through our members as well as our future ambitions.

### Compel collaboration:

Communicating a suite of goals that align to shared global ambition on issues like animal welfare, climate, and land use will enable GRSB to bring together a greater group of stakeholders to engage and buy-in to the work we are doing.

### Inspire innovation:

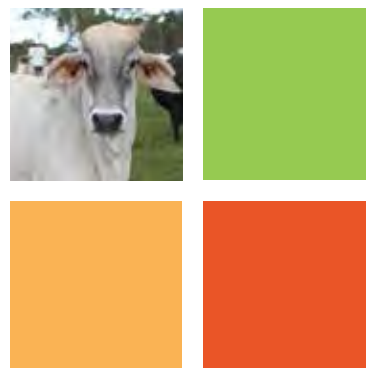
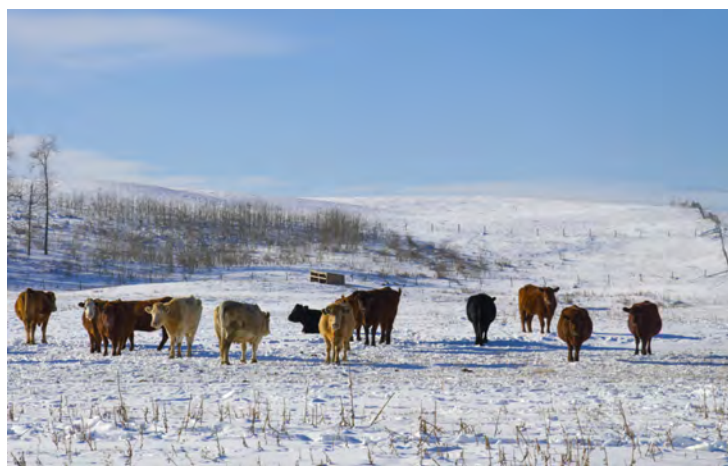
Our goals are ambitious, and we may not yet have all the solutions to achieve them. By focusing efforts on these goals, we aim to inspire research and investment in science and innovation that will unlock the potential impact of the goals.

To write the goals, GRSB set up a technical working group to develop a suite of global goals. This working group undertook an analysis of the materiality and prioritisation work of the regional roundtables to identify areas of obvious overlap and importance and settled on three subject areas to be the first goals written:

- Climate
- Land Use
- Animal Health and Welfare

*GRSB is a voluntary membership organisation funded by member contributions. Our goals represent a collective ambition delivered through our members and roundtables with full respect of property, cultural and personal rights.*





**We committed to having the goals finalized by the second quarter of 2021. To achieve this a clear action plan was drawn up including:**

#### Completed actions:

- A technical review of external goals, metrics and science for each of the goals.
- Small drafting groups developed to interpret the review and draft goal language.
- Goal working group review of draft language. Iterative feedback processes with GRSB members to improve draft language.
- Finalisation of draft language for full GRSB membership review.
- Detailed and extensive GRSB membership and key external stakeholder review.
- Final amendments to draft language.
- Approval by GRSB general assembly.

**The achievement of these goals will also be dependent on four 'cross-cutting' work streams:**

#### Transparency and traceability:

To achieve shared value, recognise good practices, and communicate them to customers, we must increase efforts in transparency and traceability that will build confidence in the beef supply chain as a whole.

#### Monitoring and reporting:

To measure and communicate progress towards these goals, members of the GRSB will support the monitoring and reporting of goal metrics within their region/business.

#### Incentives:

To increase adoption of good practices that support the goals, the GRSB will work to ensure adequate and effective incentives are made available.

#### Innovation and technology:

Many of the tools and practices to be done to achieve these ambitious goals may still be under development and therefore, the support of the GRSB and its members to drive continued research and development of production practices is of the utmost importance to the success of our goals.



## Climate SMART Goal

**Globally reduce the net warming footprint of each unit of beef by 30% by 2030, on a pathway to climate neutrality.**

**Be able to report measured progress by 2025.**

### Why:

The GRSB commits to delivering climate action across the beef industry to support the urgent global ambition to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

### How We Are Going to Get There:

1. Using the best available metrics that recognize short lived gases and sequestration, support the development and implementation of accounting and reporting frameworks.
2. Implement and incentivize climate smart beef production, processing and trade throughout the value chain
3. Safeguard and build upon the carbon stores in soil and landscapes
4. Invest in research and development of climate smart practices, tools and knowledge, to work towards net positive beef production.

### Context:

Limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C is seen as crucial to restoring natural balance and ensuring a equitable and stable future for humanity. The global beef industry is stepping up with goals contributing to this by committing to a 30% reduction in global emissions intensity of beef by 2030 on a pathway to smart beef production.

Reducing atmospheric greenhouse gases requires both emission reduction and carbon sequestration – making agriculture a key player in positively sequestering carbon in agricultural soils. Due to their significant acres (an estimated 1 billion hectares of grassland used for beef production globally), the potential of grazing lands as carbon sinks should not be discounted even in places where carbon sequestration potential is low on a per acre basis. The IPCC rates managed grazing and improved pasture management as having high climate change mitigation potential. It is also considered one of the most cost-effective options for the potential amount of carbon sequestered. The IPCC estimates that grasslands alone could sequester 54 to 216 million tons of carbon annually by 2030 (Toensmeier, 2016).

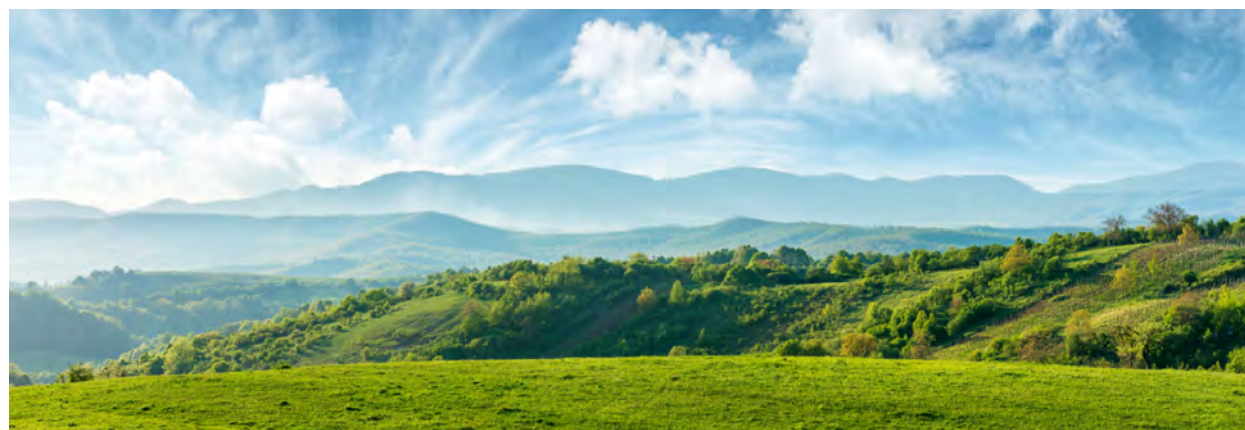


In addition, the current global grasslands store an estimated 12% of current terrestrial carbon. However, 52% of these grasslands are at risk of land use change, which would result in a portion of that carbon being released. (See the GRSB Land Use goal for more details around the importance to maintaining grasslands both for maintaining a stable climate as well as providing a home for nature.)

It is estimated that if all livestock producers achieved the production efficiency of the top 10-25%, total emissions could be reduced by 18-30% (Gerber et al. 2013). However, the GRSB recognizes that global beef production is diverse and occurs in many different contexts. Improving the carbon footprint of a unit of beef will be accomplished in ways appropriate to each region and production system (i.e. livestock, feed production, or production system efficiencies). It is noted that continuing beyond this 30% target will be necessary, and the longer-term trajectory of beef production must head towards climate smart production.

In addition, the GHG goal cannot be considered in isolation, as the GRSB has also developed goals for land use and animal health and welfare. The GHG footprint could even be improved in a region without improving the sustainability of the livestock or the production system as a whole (for example, by focusing solely on improving efficiency at the cost of animal welfare). Trade-offs must be considered carefully and evaluated in each situation.

These ambitious goals will be accomplished on the ground through the commitment and collaborative actions of regional roundtables and their members. The national roundtables are committed to making goals specific to their context.



## Land Use SMART Goal

**By 2030, GRSB and its members will ensure the beef value chain is a net-positive contributor to nature.<sup>1</sup>**

### Interim Milestone

**By 2023, GRSB and its members will be able to measure, track, report, and verify regional and global metrics that will clearly and transparently demonstrate progress and results toward this goal.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> A net positive impact is defined as the overall (2030) impact being positive, after considering the relevant set of positive impacts and negative impacts. Net positive simply means there are more positive impacts than negative impacts in a particular period of time. In the context of this goal, the aim is to ensure the collective set of actions taken by the GRSB and its members result in an overall net-positive outcome for nature and land-use by 2030.

<sup>2</sup> The metrics and practices to measure, track, report and verify progress and results to be developed under the interim milestone to help achieve the goal will build on relevant work at the national roundtable level and will aim to establish quantifiable targets for the priorities outlined in the How We Are Going to Get There section, among other relevant consideration that will be co-created between GRSB and the national roundtables.



## Why:

The GRSB and its members are committed to producing, financing, sourcing, and supporting practices throughout the entire value chain that are designed to sustain and restore grazing lands, enhance resilience, conserve forests, grasslands, and native vegetation, increase biodiversity, and help reverse ecological decline.

GRSB believes that sustainable beef production can and should have a net-positive impact on nature. Therefore, we commit to mobilizing efforts of our members and within the network of national and regional roundtables to publish, measure, track, report, and verify key metrics to demonstrate, in a quantifiable and transparent manner, the net-positive contributions that the sustainable beef value chain has on nature.

## How We Are Going to Get There:

1. Mobilize efforts with the GRSB, its members, and the network of national and regional roundtables to establish metrics and practices (if they don't already exist) that are regionally applicable and can be aggregated globally to effectively measure, track, report, and verify progress and results.<sup>3</sup>
2. Adopt science-based land management practices<sup>4</sup> that improve ecosystem services, maintain healthier soils, generate additional carbon sequestration, promote more efficient water usage, and increase biodiversity.
3. Promote practices that help recover degraded pastures, improve productivity, and increase resilience.
4. Eliminate illegal deforestation and illegal conversion, as fast as possible.
5. Increase the production, financing, sourcing, and recognition of beef that does not contribute to additional deforestation, conversion, or degradation of native ecosystems.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The GRSB's existing technical working group, the Joint Working Group on Land-Use (JWG), can serve as a dedicated forum to co-create the metrics and practices to measure, track, report, and verify progress and results.

<sup>4</sup> The adoption of science-based land-management practices (and other activities related to this goal) will be carried out with full respect of property, cultural and personal rights.

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this goal, "Illegal Deforestation" will be defined by relevant local, national and international laws. In addition, "Deforestation," "Conversion," "Degradation," and "Native Ecosystems" will be defined by official nationally determined definitions within relevant national roundtable countries, with the potential to use common global-level definitions and norms outlined in the [Accountability Framework Initiative \(AFI\)](#), as appropriate, and as determined by national roundtables.

## How We Are Going to Get There: (cont.)

6. Improve traceability, transparency, and the availability of relevant information throughout the value chain.
7. Foster meaningful incentives for producers and other actors in the value chain to help catalyze action, spur innovation, reward progress, and promote continuous improvement.

## Context:

Cattle ranching and the production of beef is central to many communities around the world and plays an important role in a sustainable food system. All stakeholders throughout the entire beef value chain have an important role to play in supporting efforts that help maintain, restore, and improve grazing lands, enhance resilience of lands, conserve forests, grasslands, and native vegetation, increase biodiversity, and help reverse ecological decline.

At global and local levels, there are many instances in which cattle ranching may have beneficial or detrimental impacts on nature and land-use, depending on a wide variety of social, economic and environmental factors. Under science-based sustainable land management practices, cattle ranching can contribute positively to nature – both within grazing areas as well as within the broader landscape. Conversely, unsustainable practices can lead to the destruction of primary forests, loss of biodiversity, and declines in pasture productivity and producer financial security, among other negative impacts.

The GRSB aims to advance more sustainable practices that deliver better economic, social, and environmental outcomes throughout the entire beef value chain, while discouraging and minimizing unsustainable practices that are detrimental to nature and land-use. To support these aims, the GRSB has developed a global sustainability goal on land-use to help drive progress, spur innovation, and foster collective action on this important sustainability priority within the global roundtable network.

Land-use issues are critical sustainability priorities around the world and throughout the entire beef and cattle roundtable network. However, the specific land-use priorities and challenges can vary across regions. For example, in some regions, eliminating illegal deforestation and advancing forest conservation



practices are the foremost priorities. In other regions, soil health, pasture resilience, and biodiversity are some of the top priorities. Given the diverse set of priorities across regions, this land-use goal has been developed to ensure global-level applicability and relevance, while also reflecting the varying critical local priorities across the network of national and regional roundtables. The goal is ambitious enough to catalyze meaningful progress and results – and reflects a pragmatic approach to ensure viable implementation of the goal and showcase that the entire value chain, across all stakeholder constituency groups, has a responsibility in helping achieve this goal. In addition, the goal provides the flexibility to enable regional-level prioritization of specific metrics and voluntary practices, while fostering global-level aggregation of results for clear and transparent reporting. This regional-to-global flexibility is one of the key strengths of this land-use goal.

The global land-use goal builds on the existing GRSB Principles & Criteria and underscores the sustainability priorities outlined by national roundtables. It also reflects the key issues surfaced in the GRSB's Joint Working Group on Land-Use (JWG), which consists of 42 members from 12 different countries and represents the full range of stakeholder constituency groups in the GRSB. The goal, reasoning, and priority actions presented below were developed via a collaborative and iterative process, led by a core drafting group, with multiple rounds of input and feedback from GRSB and key stakeholders from the roundtable network.



## [ Animal Health and Welfare SMART Goal ]

**Provide cattle with a good quality of life and an environment where they can thrive<sup>1</sup>**

### Why:

Sustainable beef means providing cattle with a good quality of life and an environment where they can thrive; health and welfare are the major contributors to this.

Animal health and welfare are achieved through increased adoption of best practices in disease prevention and treatment measures, cattle handling (e.g., low stress), and appropriate genetics to promote animal health and welfare<sup>2</sup> throughout their life<sup>3</sup>. We must also continue our efforts to minimise morbidity and mortality and focus on achieving measurable improvements. We encourage all value chain partners, from farm to plate, to support and invest in the continuous improvement of cattle's health and well-being.

<sup>1</sup> [In line with OIE Terrestrial Code Section 7, Chapters 7.1-7.6, 7.9 and 7.11](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid (OIE terrestrial code reference)

<sup>3</sup> Throughout the value chain i.e. on farm, during transport, finishing and at the abattoir.



## How We Are Going to Get There:

Increase the percentage of cattle producers and handlers undertaking training in or demonstrating competence in comprehensive cattle care (as defined by the World Organisation for Animal Health) by 25% from the 2020 numbers. Training should be appropriate to caretakers, and the effectiveness of said training should be monitored and assessed.

Comprehensive cattle care training<sup>4</sup> is designed to result in continuous improvement in animal health and welfare outcomes to reduce mortality and increase the ability to thrive. Training should also improve outcomes within the five domains of animal welfare; e.g. (but not limited to) ensuring comfort and allowing animals to express normal patterns of behaviour, pain mitigation, and the adoption of best management practices<sup>5</sup>.

### GRSB members and roundtables will:

- Introduce and promote comprehensive cattle care training in areas around the world where it currently does not exist, ensuring that it achieves all aspects of the GRSB's Principle and Criteria for Animal Health and Welfare.<sup>6</sup>
- Develop (or adopt) research and monitoring systems to track the effectiveness of cattle care training. Research should identify causes of mortality and actions to overcome them to reduce mortality by 10% of their current rate by 2030.
- Encourage all beef value chain partners to support and invest in the continuous improvement of cattle's health and well-being.

<sup>4</sup> In line with OIE terrestrial code, see this ISO Standard for further detail: <https://www.iso.org/standard/64749.html>

<sup>5</sup> I.e., Resource, animal and management-based measures improve; programs should be national level and recognised by national roundtables.

<sup>6</sup> Training should be at national level and recognised by national roundtables.

## How We Are Going to Get There: (cont.)

### Continuous improvement will be achieved through:

- Development and implementation of comprehensive cattle care training and evaluation for outcomes-based adoption in line with the World Organisation for Animal Health's terrestrial animal health code and ISO/TS 34700.
- Research and development.
- Promotion and advancing adoption of pain mitigation<sup>7</sup> practices, including where appropriate, use of genetics that contribute to avoidance of painful procedures, such as polled cattle.

### **Context:**

Animal health and welfare are quite rightly included in global sustainability expectations, and being one of our principles for sustainable beef, GRSB members are committed to protecting the health and welfare of the cattle under our care. Producers are already providing a high level of care that must be recognized. This goal recognizes the dedication to cattle welfare and pushes the beef industry to continue striving for excellence.

To improve cattle welfare within the overarching sustainability framework, cattle caretakers at all stages need to adopt and believe in the selected outcomes, which is why this goal is the result of an extended consultation process.

The [technical summary](#) undertaken for GRSB by Colorado State University (CSU) provided the background for setting this goal; it considers international, national, and private regulations, codes of practice and systems, and the metrics they use to measure welfare. A follow-up [webinar](#) organised by GRSB further discussed these topics to support the drafting of this goal.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) serves as the principal resource for animal welfare worldwide. The OIE explains animal welfare as a complex and multi-faceted subject defined as the physical and mental state of an animal

<sup>7</sup> Mitigation includes avoidance or/ and treatment of pain



in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies (OIE, 2020). The OIE's main objective is achieving "a world where the welfare of animals is respected, promoted and advanced, in ways that complement the pursuit of animal health, human well-being, socio-economic development, and environmental sustainability. The OIE achieves this goal by using guiding principles such as the Five Freedoms (more recently, Five Domains or Provisions) to define animal welfare and describe society's expectations for the conditions all animals should be raised in when under human control.

Within the OIE terrestrial code, several sections focus on the guiding principles of animal welfare, measures used to assess animal welfare, and some species-specific information. The criteria and measurables for the welfare of beef cattle described in the OIE code include behaviour, morbidity rates, mortality rates, changes in weight and body condition, reproductive efficiency, physical appearance, handling responses, and complications due to routine procedure management (e.g., post-procedure infection or swelling). These criteria are outcome-based measurables or, more specifically, animal-based measurables that can be useful indicators of animal welfare (OIE, 2013).

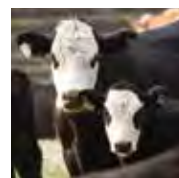
Animal-based measures provide a direct assessment of animal welfare. Other types of measurements that assess the environment, procedures, or training are referred to as resource and management parameters.

We know how to measure animal welfare and what constitutes good animal welfare; the challenge is finding metrics that have global application and can be tracked in a manageable way. Although animal-based outcomes are a more direct measure of animal welfare, resource or management-based parameters, such as training or adherence to third-party programs, may be a simpler way to start measuring welfare on a global scale. Additionally, although these measures are indirect, they provide insight into how animals are being managed and thus can illustrate overall welfare.

Combining these types of measures represents an opportunity to track animal welfare and demonstrate improvement over time, e.g., measuring, tracking, and benchmarking a resource-based parameter like animal care training at a national/regional level can demonstrate changes in that metric, positively impact animal welfare via an animal-based outcome.







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