

USFRA 2019 FOOD METRICS AUDIT & RESEARCH REPORT

Data-driven metrics are an essential tool for assessing the sustainability of food production and informing decisions across the food value chain. Over the last ten years, data collection and reporting have evolved dramatically, enabled by increasingly sophisticated technology, collaborative efforts to define common standards for reporting, and mounting consumer, shareholder and stakeholder demand for this information. However, the practical reality of collecting and reporting all of the data continues to be a challenge for all involved. **This report is intended to provide a clear view of current reality that can serve as a shared foundation for collaboration to address this problem.**

It is in this context that USFRA is undertaking a data-driven approach to characterize and analyze how food companies and other organizations are using data and metrics to measure and communicate the environmental, social and economic sustainability of food products. The end product will be a report that aims to:

1 **Provide a clear and compelling summary of the range and diversity of data/metrics that downstream foodmakers are using to measure and report sustainability.**

Why: While there have been efforts to align on shared measures and metrics for reporting, our hypothesis is that the actual uptake of these collaborative frameworks has been underwhelming. The result is a very heterogeneous set of metrics across disparate sets of impacts being reported across different companies, with significant implications for upstream foodmakers such as farmers and ranchers, who receive numerous requests to report the same data in different ways.

How this can benefit participants: While business structure heterogeneity will remain, understanding how data is being used and by whom, and how it can inform internal strategies for creativity, innovation, risk management and reporting, could be beneficial.

2 **Illustrate the challenges that stakeholders across the food value chain – from farmers and ranchers to brands and retailers – continue to face in collecting and reporting sustainability metrics.**

Why: Myriad roundtables and metrics initiatives have identified the need for a common understanding around food production metrics without arriving at an optimal solution. While there is an acknowledgement of shared experience in conversations at conferences or other events, there is not currently a resource that documents in a systematic and cross-cutting fashion what is working and not working with food sustainability metrics and reporting.

How this can benefit participants: By collecting lessons-learned and generating a better understanding of what is not working, research findings can lead to improved strategy development and result in longer-term successes.

3 **Create an opening to engage companies and organizations across the food value chain in a pre-competitive conversation about metrics and measurement for sustainability.**

Why: This report will provide a platform through which to leverage all stakeholders' voices in the food value chain to jointly work to achieve sustainable food systems. By identifying all parties' challenges and opportunities, together we can illuminate the path towards food security and improved nutrition that also drives positive social, environmental and economic outcomes for all.

How this can benefit participants: Once identified, stakeholders can determine how and if to implement the findings to serve as a differentiator in their operations.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

We will conduct a landscape review and assessment of the sustainability metrics being reported by approximately 40 U.S. food companies based on their publicly available reports and data disclosures and then interview the companies for further insight. We will also gather insights from a representative group of farmers and ranchers around reporting to their downstream customers. The results will be presented in a 32-page report. Organizations who participate in the interview process will receive a copy of the final report and will also be given access to a detailed data appendix.

IN SUMMARY

This report will be used to convene a shared dialog and to inform stakeholders on current use of metrics, including roundtable metrics. It is our hope that the report will create a platform for a solutions-oriented dialogue among all stakeholders, with the goal of a more collaborative and successful approach to measuring sustainability in agriculture. We thank all in advance who take the time to speak with the USFRA team about company metrics and reporting processes. We look forward to hearing insights and ultimately to driving scalable solutions in this process.