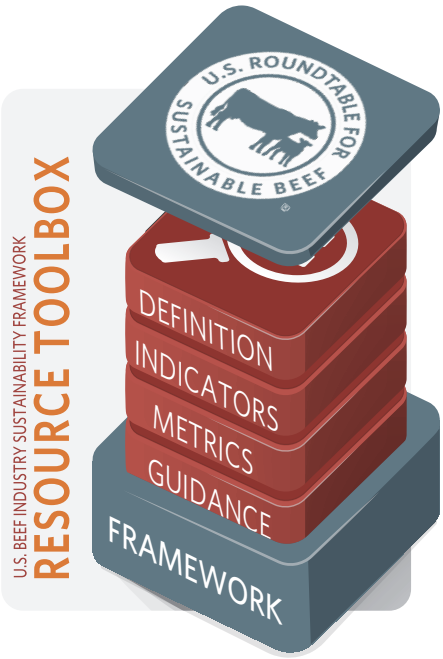
U.S. BEEF INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK



DEFINING SUSTAINABLE BEEF

The U.S. Beef Industry Sustainability Framework is a voluntary resource developed by the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB), a multi-stakeholder organization comprised of farmers and ranchers who raise beef, companies who process, distribute, and serve beef, environmental organizations, academic institutions, allied industries, and many others throughout the beef community.

Aligning to a singular definition for sustainable beef was the first task of the Roundtable. We agreed sustainable beef is socially responsible, environmentally sound and economically viable. This means sustainable beef comes from profitable farmers, ranchers, and businesses committed to optimizing resources and caring for animals, employees, and communities.

We look at sustainable beef through a lens of continuous improvement. We understand there are many facets to sustainable beef, and we do not believe in a one-size-fits-all approach. To us, sustainability is meant to be a personal journey; one that commits itself to responsibly meeting the needs of today while improving the ability of the next generation to responsibly meet their future needs.

Learn more at www.BeefSustainability.us or at www.USRSB.org

DEVELOPING THE U.S. BEEF INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

The U.S. Beef Industry Sustainability Framework is an extension of our definition of beef sustainability. The Framework is comprised of high-priority indicators, sector-specific metrics and sustainability assessment guides. It was intentionally developed to explore opportunities for continuous improvement in everyone's individual sustainability journey. The hope is that the Framework will connect consumers to the beef community, answer questions they may have about beef production and provide them with confidence that U.S. beef is raised in the most sustainable system in the world.

Engaging every member of our organization was a critical component of the Framework development. From cattle production to supply chain sourcing and from veterinary science to soil health, diverse backgrounds served the organization well. We worked together to develop drafts and collected constant feedback from our members. Once the document was published, feedback was solicited publicly through two comment periods. Feedback was reviewed and considered, ultimately resulting in the final product we have today – a set of resources the entire beef community can be proud of and use to advance sustainability in the beef supply chain.

HIGH-PRIORITY INDICATORS

Six High-Priority Indicators were developed: water resources, land resources, air and greenhouse gas emissions, efficiency and yield, animal health and well-being, employee safety and well-being. These indicators are the foundation of the Framework and define the areas most important to beef sustainability across the entire supply chain.

METRICS

Metrics are activities connected to each of the High-Priority Indicators. Metrics are unique to each segment of the supply chain. They outline ways an operation or company can measure progress. The approach and development of metrics was put forth by each supply-chain sector with an expectation to actively engage other stakeholder groups, including civil society and allied industry members.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT GUIDES

The sustainability assessment guides are technical guidance documents that provide additional tools and resources for the supply chain. Much like the metric development process, supply-chain sectors led the development of these resources. These documents outline the purpose, approach and practical application of each metric.

HIGH PRIORITY INDICATORS:

WATER RESOURCES:

The volume of water consumed and any impacts on water quality.

LAND RESOURCES:

The stewardship of terrestrial and aquatic habitat in relation to water, soil and biodiversity in an area. Impacts of land use and land use conversion, both caused by and prevented by ranching and farming activities.

AIR & GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS:

The cumulative emissions of pollutants, including particulate matter, greenhouse gases and other gaseous emissions from a sector for each process.

EFFICIENCY & YIELD:

Efficiency is the unit of input required to produce a unit of output and yield is the total product generated per unit of time or space. Both concepts address waste as a negative characteristic and drive toward improved profitability.

ANIMAL HEALTH & WELLBEING:

The cumulative effects of cattle health, nutrition, care and comfort.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY & WELLBEING:

The implementation of safety programs and training to provide a safe workplace and help to prevent workplace accidents and injuries associated with production, processing, and distribution of beef and the relative prosperity of workers employed in those activities.