

National Index on Agri-Food Performance



MAY 2023 | **PHASE 3 FINAL REPORT** | PART 1

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

Summary



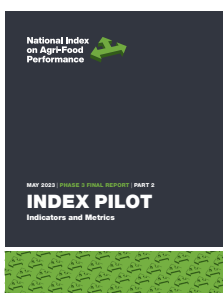
National Index on Agri-Food Performance



**The Phase 3 final report
includes four parts:**



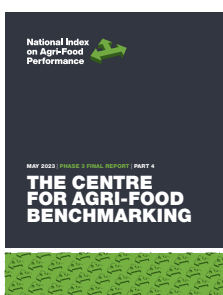
Part 1 | *What
was Achieved:
Summary*



Part 2 | *Index Pilot:
Indicators and
Metrics*



Part 3 | *Seven
Papers on Index
Results*



Part 4 | *The Centre
for Agri-Food
Benchmarking*

Published May 2023



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We want to build on the leadership of an unprecedented coalition to define agri-food sustainability in Canada.

IN BRIEF | In short

This is about...

- 1 A coalition**
Building on the leadership of an unprecedented coalition to define agri-food sustainability.
- 2 A tool**
Leveraging a novel tool (Canada's first agri-food sustainability index) to present the sector's overall sustainability picture, to show improvement over time, and derive value from doing so.
- 3 A plan**
Acting on a solid plan to set up a 'center' to improve the Index and be truly globally leading.
- 4 A need**
Attracting support now to help deliver on sectoral, Canadian, and global food sustainability-priorities.

IN BRIEF | Solutions

The challenge: the “why.” Countries and food systems worldwide are expected to address one of the most pressing issues facing humanity: producing food more sustainably – and showing it.

By launching Canada’s first agri-food sustainability index, “3 solutions” are being handed to the sector, governments, and the broader food system and there is “1 ask” (see Figure 1):

1

A coalition – the “who.”

An unprecedented coalition of 129 partners have defined for the first time what the breadth of agri-food sustainability means – as presented by the National Index on Agri-Food Performance. Being more aligned on measuring sustainability is vital.

2

A tool – the “what.”

The Index can be a versatile tool to create new value. Portraying the sector’s overall sustainability credentials and marking progress over time as a benchmark responds to a changing marketplace. It offers the sector a reference roadmap for adoption.

3

A plan – the “how.”

The partners have a concrete plan to improve the Index. Setting up a proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking can ensure the Index’s utility and relevance.

4

A need / the ask – the “when.”

As the importance of demonstrating sustainability rises, there is a compelling need for immediate and longer-term financial support for such a Centre and to evolve the Index.

Setting up a proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking can ensure the Index’s utility and relevance.

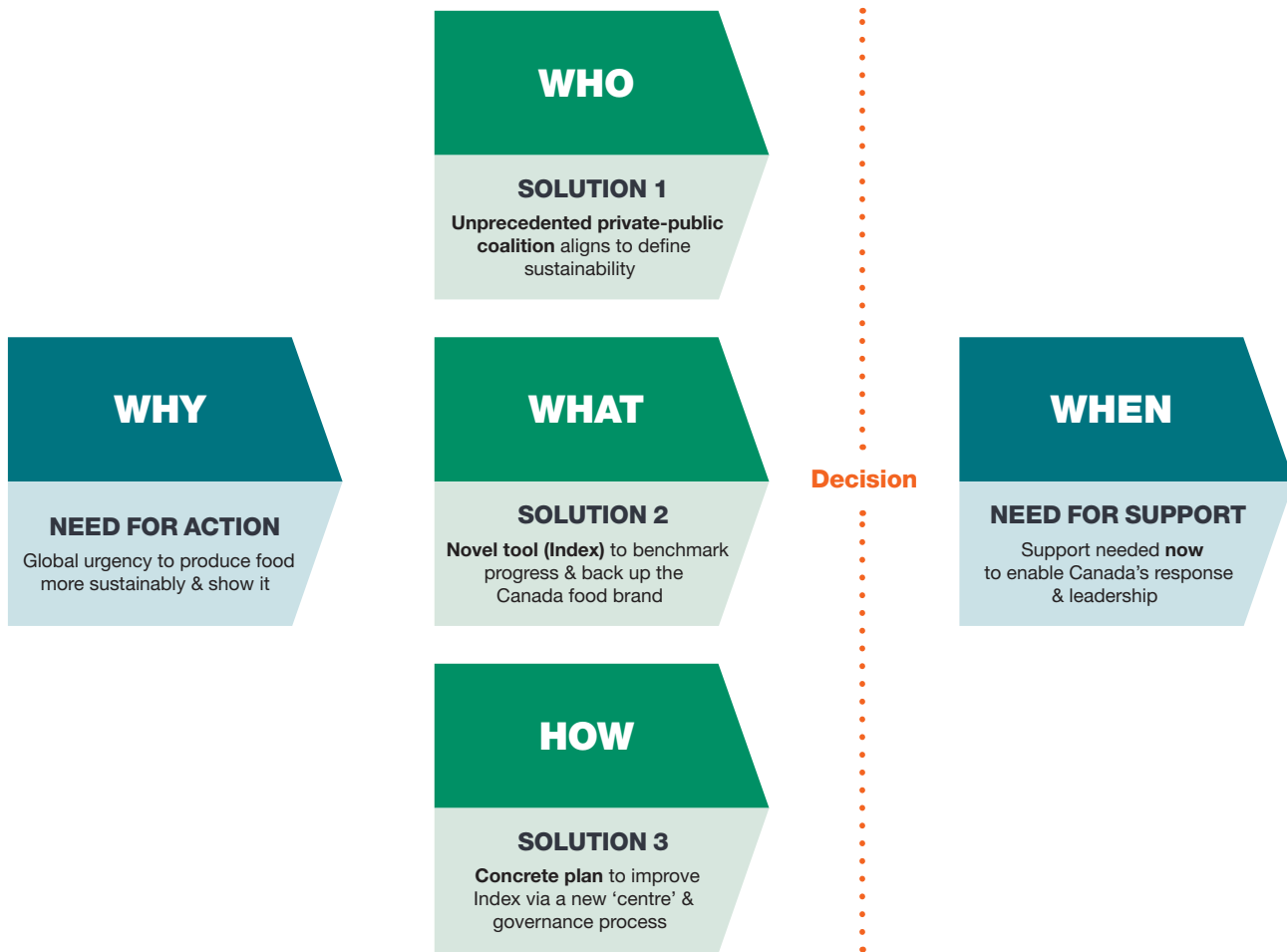


Figure 1: Three solutions

IN BRIEF | Elaboration

To elaborate on the “3 solutions” and “1 ask”...

1

A coalition – the “who.”

- The coalition is an unprecedented bottom-up driven and pre-competitive initiative.
- The coalition is led by producers and industry in deep collaboration with governments, NGOs, academia, and many adjacent food system sectors.
- The coalition agreed on 20 indicators of sustainability and over 130 metrics spanning the environment, food integrity, economic and societal well-being.

2

A tool – the “what.”

- The Index could inspire and align the sector to step up reporting on sustainability relevant to national and global goals and emerging mandatory ESG¹ requirements.
- The Index can help back-up the trusted Canada food brand for use in the domestic and global market and be a novel tool to advance sector competitiveness, including to enable commodity and value-added exports.
- The Index could inform policy, strategy, and research and innovation priorities.

3

A plan – the “how.”

- The plan to set up a Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking is shaped by the coalition’s track record of collaboration and an inclusive governance process.
- The plan is about sourcing new and better data for the Index metrics. Making the Index more robust and improving its sustainability picture is desired.
- The plan is driven by the desire for the Index to be globally leading and respected.

4

A need / the ask – the “when.”

- The coalition has essentially *de-risked* the case for support by having a diverse coalition in place, by designing the Index and by setting out the Centre’s foundation, its mandate, structure, and work plan.

The Index can help back-up the trusted Canada food brand for use in the domestic and global market.

¹ Environment, social, and governance (ESG) factors being advanced in capital markets and in supply chains. See Climate-related Disclosures, The International Financial Reporting Standards Foundation: <https://www.ifrs.org/projects/work-plan/climate-related-disclosures/> See also: *ISSB standards to be rolled out January 2024*, ESG Clarity, February 23, 2023: <https://esgclarity.com/issb-standards-to-be-rolled-out-january-2024/>

IN BRIEF | **Executive Summary** | What was achieved

Over the past year, an unprecedented coalition of 129 private-public agri-food partners (see list, Appendix 1) have worked together to launch the National Index on Agri-Food Performance pilot, the latest step of a deliberate process to position the sector and Canada for a more demanding food world.

The coalition has...

■ **Attracted an ever-increasing diversity of partners to address one of the most pressing issues facing humanity: producing food more sustainably – and showing it.**

Increasing in number by some 50% since May 2022, this growing coalition reflects the widening interest in benchmarking sustainability across one of Canada's largest economic sectors, agriculture (including fisheries), and food ("agri-food"). By defining how to credibly measure the breadth of sustainability for the sector at a high level, the coalition offers a ready-made solution for many players in the marketplace, in society, in capital markets and among regulators here and abroad. All seek a suitable frame of reference to present and assess the sector's sustainability credentials and progress.

■ **Created a Canadian first by reporting on a breadth of sector sustainability priorities.**

Aligned with many global and domestic food goals and benchmarking schemes, the Index presents an initial consolidated picture of sustainability from food production to retail. It also broadly aligns with ESG factors which will soon become mandatory for all publicly listed companies (and has implications for their supply chains and commodity and ingredient suppliers). By launching its pilot, Canada is now among a handful of such initiatives in play worldwide. Despite data and scope limitations, the Index takes a holistic view of measuring production and food sustainability with 20 indicators and some 130 metrics spanning environment, food integrity, economic and societal well-being priorities.

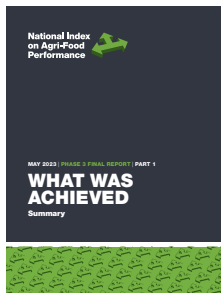
■ **Revealed that having suitable data about sustainability could have value for conceivably every player; getting better aligned around how to use and improve such data could become a discernable advantage.**

The coalition published seven short papers on Index results, including outcomes on reducing emissions and ensuring food safety. These interpretations and more detailed Index findings could be used to supplement sector and government reporting on a variety of sustainability goals. This is important to support export market access and reassure domestic consumers about the sector's sustainability. Marking progress on social and environmental priorities also helps to back-up claims, further building trust. As well, with better data and metrics in hand, the Index could inform policy and strategic priorities as attention to sustainability intensifies. It is already being deployed to step-up sustainability assessments and reporting by several partners, initial evidence of its broader utility.

■ **Presented a plan to improve the Index as part of a robust process to ensure its credibility and relevance.**

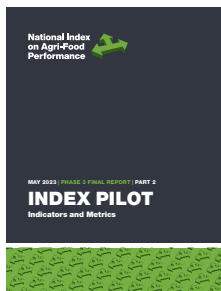
The coalition is looking forward to evolve the Index. It has defined how a new Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking can address key data gaps so to improve the metrics. The partners have agreed that a balanced governance structure must guide this work to ensure its integrity. The Centre will be virtually housed within the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute once funding is secured.

A. Intent of phase 3



Since 2020, the partners have been on a journey to develop Canada's first agri-food sustainability index, the National Index on Agri-Food Performance. Developing an Index pilot is the most recent work – known as phase 3 from May 2022 to May 2023 – as summarized below.

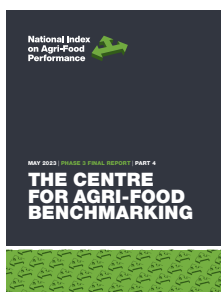
This document (Part 1 of the final report) is a summary of what was achieved.



The pilot details the metrics for 20 indicators spanning four blocks of sustainability (see Figure 1, ahead) and identifies data limitations. The work also assesses the Index's alignment with several existing global benchmarking initiatives for additional context. **See Part 2 of this final report, separately published, for the pilot metrics.**



The work includes seven short interpretative papers on key Index findings. Selected indicators are profiled as well as commentaries on interpreting and designing the Index. **See Part 3 of this final report, separately published, for those papers.**



The phase also lays the foundation for a proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking to manage and evolve the Index going forward. The work outlines the need for the Centre, presents its governance structure and how it proposes to operate and source new and better data in the future. **See Part 4 of this final report, separately published, for a description of the Centre.**


The larger intent of this phase is to enable phase 4, launching the proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking, expected later in 2023.

The larger intent of this phase is to enable phase 4, launching the proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking.

B. The need for the National Index on Agri-Food Performance

Since 2020, momentum has been building for the Index as more and more sector and food system players acknowledge the need for it.² A sense of urgency has galvanized the growing coalition to respond to a convergence of major drivers of change:

- 1. Global & national sustainability agendas:** For many, the global food system is not regarded as sustainable, healthy, or inclusive. Expectations are rising fast for producing and supplying food more sustainably. Global and national goals express targets for net-zero emissions, improving biodiversity, lowering food waste, reducing plastic waste, addressing social exclusion, responding to food insecurity, among other priorities. Addressing these matters (here and abroad) requires better data and benchmarking and greater sector alignment.
- 2. Regulatory requirements:** Domestic and global market access rules are requiring proof of sustainability to operate and to enter markets.
- 3. Sector targets & standards:** Food companies and retailers, and increasingly producers, are setting targets to meet various sustainability goals to support marketplace claims. Standards have been created and continue to be developed to meet supply chain compliance requirements to access market channels, facilitate trade and fulfill sustainability expectations.
- 4. Global benchmarking:** Various benchmarking schemes are measuring company, supply chain and national progress on a host of sustainability priorities. The metrics do not necessarily reflect the Canadian context and some measures are not complementary of Canadian practices. In short, “if we don’t credibly measure ourselves, we will continue to be measured from abroad.”
- 5. Competitive positioning:** Many of Canada’s peer countries (i.e., customers, suppliers, and competitors) are declaring that their respective food systems are trusted and sustainable. Backing up sustainability claims is a matter of market differentiation and national branding.
- 6. ESG disclosures:** Capital market regulators, lenders and investors are requiring companies to disclose their sustainability risks and opportunities based on ESG (environment, social, governance) factors. This is prompting greater collaboration across supply chains to measure and demonstrate progress. Mandatory ESG disclosures from securities regulators are coming.
- 7. Public/consumers:** Being accountable to consumers and the public (electorate) on climate change and broader sustainability expectations and performance is increasingly important.



If we don’t credibly measure ourselves, we will continue to be measured from abroad.

² The “sector” includes agriculture and food supply chain players; the “food system” includes supporting players, such as governments, transportation, technology and innovation organizations, advisory services, financial institutions, social and environmental NGOs, academia, and others.

C. The response: Developing the Index

In response to these developments, above, the coalition has developed a novel tool to present Canada's agri-food sustainability credentials.³

■ Defining a clear purpose

A comprehensive national picture is unavailable of the broad impacts, positive and negative, of the agri-food sector's performance across the breadth of sustainability. The Index now presents this picture from food production to retail on a consolidated basis.

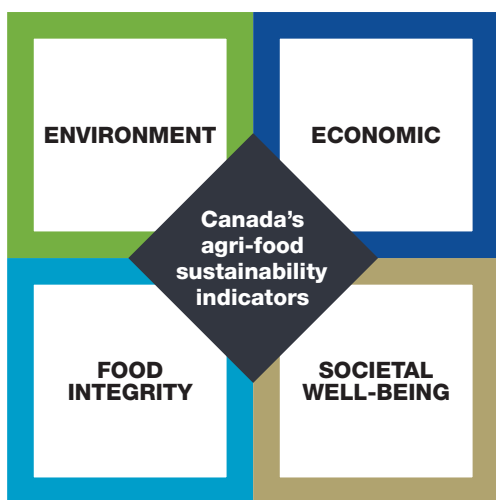


Figure 2: The Index's four blocks of sustainability.

■ Acting on a common intent

The Index intends to inspire and increase voluntary reporting across the sector. Demonstrating the current state of sustainability – which reflects producers' and companies' efforts to continuously improve – and showing the progress being made to be more sustainable is a shared objective of the coalition.

■ Taking a holistic approach

The Index reports on four sustainability blocks (see Figure 2): the environment, food integrity (including food safety), economic, and societal well-being.

The Index intends to inspire and increase voluntary reporting across the sector.


■ Being relevant

The metrics are designed to be relevant to Canada's agri-food context, but the Index broadly aligns with key national and global food goals and investor driven environmental, social, governance (ESG) factors.

■ Acknowledging what's out of scope

The Index does not score individual producers or food companies. It is not prescriptive (i.e., stating how they should be more sustainable). The Index does not rank Canada's comparative performance domestically or against other countries, although it could become an essential frame of reference. The Index is not meant to be a consumer-facing label nor assess the sustainability of individual commodities or products presented to the consumer. It does not measure consumer diet choices or consumption trends.

³ The complete published work of the coalition is found at www.agrifoodindex.ca



It is becoming very clear that practically every player in the food system has an interest in data about sustainability.

D. The advantage of a made-in-Canada Index

■ Getting aligned

The Index achieves what few other countries have done: align nearly every part of a country's food system to portray how it *ought* to be measured. The work has been driven by the partners, a bottom-up collaboration.

■ Creating a shared ambition

Demonstrating sustainability presents an immense economic opportunity for the sector, for advancing the country's food ambition and for improving societal and environmental outcomes.

■ Harnessing data is the opportunity

It is becoming very clear that practically every player in the food system has an interest in data about sustainability.⁴ The Index initiative presents a collective opportunity. The proposed Centre on Agri-Food Benchmarking will focus on sourcing and collecting suitable data – data that is aggregated, anonymous, preferably outcomes-based and satisfies the Index scope. Working with partners, the Centre will deploy a process to tap into existing data and seek out new data to improve sustainability metrics. In short, the Index initiative is the conduit to leverage data for a sector and broader food system that increasingly needs to harness it to meet societal and marketplace requirements. (Refer to the final report Part 4, *The Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking*.)

■ Deriving value (desired outcomes)

With better aggregated data and metrics in hand, the Index could be used generally to enhance sector competitiveness at home and abroad, build greater consumer trust, and inform policy and strategy, and innovation and research priorities. As well, as ESG reporting requirements for companies and their ingredient supply chains becomes mandatory, the Index offers a common high-level reporting framework to ready the sector for this major development.

■ Recognizing the gaps

The Index also faces many data gaps. One unexpected positive outcome was identifying these gaps. Over time, the coalition intends to improve the Index, source better data and address priority gaps and become a more robust benchmarking tool. As data within the Index improve, greater insights can be reported by sub-sector and province.

⁴ For instance, proprietary and/or publicly shared data are needed to meet buyer requirements for accessing market channels (to get on the shelf), fulfill ESG assessments, satisfy regulatory approvals to access some markets, and to mark progress on government and sector sustainability goals; as well, sustainability data could be of growing interest to inform government programming.

E. A First Nations, Inuit, and Métis perspective on agri-food sustainability

For a meaningful and accurate agriculture Index, there must be a distinction between Canadians, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. The indicators considered within the Index need to account for lived realities of First Nations as a separate and distinct experience.⁵

Within this Index, some indicators can be expanded to include First Nations experiences, worldviews, and best practices to accurately reflect First Nations sustainability. Some of the factors to be included are highlighted below:

■ Better data

As with many aspects of measuring and understanding sustainability, data is often inadequate, including on First Nations. The comparison between Canada and First Nations needs to be more fully presented. The National Index would benefit from reflecting the insights of lived experiences of First Nations.

■ Healthy environment

Industrialization and resource extraction in general has contributed to pollution and unclean drinking water on First Nations. Improving the environment on a First Nation, including soil health and water quality, is important. Identifying suitable measures of these impacts should be explored to gauge agricultural conditions on First Nations.

■ Economic sovereignty

Indicators regarding the economic sovereignty of First Nations needs to be expanded. This can include cultivating their own farmlands, providing community gardening, or renting land to non-First Nations farmers. There is a need to explore how renting and non-capitalistic resource sharing from communal farming impacts the economic indicators when presenting metrics about First Nations agriculture.

Next steps should include specific consultations to obtain the lived realities of First Nations experts in agriculture. As well, developing a dedicated “First Nations index” defined by First Nations could better reflect the points made above, among other matters, and better accommodate lived realities that may not be reflected in a pan-Canadian index on agri-food. In addition, better data is required, and data gaps need to be addressed relating to First Nations’ agriculture and food within the National Index on Agri-Food Performance, itself, as expressed across several indicators as found in Part 2 of this final report.

⁵ Along with some input on the Index metrics in Part 2 of this Final Report, this section has been contributed by the Assembly of First Nations.

F. Projects undertaken in this phase – and outcomes

Phase 3 includes ten projects presented in Figure 3. The following section outlines the projects and their outcomes.

PHASE 3 PROJECTS IN BRIEF

1. Managing the phase	Project 1-A:	Administration
	Project 1-B:	Engage stakeholders
	Project 1-C:	Engage partners
2. Positioning the Index	Project 2-A:	Plan for a permanent organization* to house and evolve the Index
	Project 2-B:	Develop the governance model* for future decision-making
		* Proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking
3. Compiling the Index	Project 3-A:	Source suitable data to populate Index metrics; methodologies
	Project 3-B:	Draft a process to expand data sourcing in the future so to enhance the sustainability picture
4. Communicating the Index	Project 4-A:	Develop messaging and communication tools; express how the Index aligns with selected global practices
	Project 4-B:	Develop several short narratives to interpret selected Index results
5. Applying the Index	Project 5-A:	Producers: Develop use of environmental metrics (in one province)
	Project 5-B:	Producers/sector: Consider how the Canadian Agri-Food Sustainability Initiative and Index are linked
	Project 5-C:	Food processors: Adapt Index as a template for use by food processor SMEs (in one province)
	Project 5-D:	Researchers: Use Index to inform genomics research outcomes (by one organization)

Figure 3: Projects undertaken in phase 3.



Making meaningful change requires broadly engaging the sector. Canada's approach has been to bring a community of partners together – an unprecedented coalition – to take a 360o perspective to measuring sustainability."

STEVEN R. WEBB

Executive Director & CEO, Global Institute for Food Security

Project outcomes in brief

Project 1 is about managing the phase. This included working with the program funding applicant (the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, a partner) on behalf of the coalition, and the Steering Group⁶ to fulfill funding program requirements.⁷

PROJECT 1. MANAGING THE PHASE

Project 1-A: Administer the phase

OUTCOME

- The phase completed its work plan from May 2022 to March 2023 (highlighted in this section) and met the terms of the AgriAssurance funding requirements. (Note completing the phase required publishing the final work in May 2023.)⁸

Projects 1-B & 1-C: Engage stakeholders & partners

OUTCOME

- The coalition attracted new stakeholders, increasing by some 50% from 86 to 129 partners in the phase.
- A hallmark of this growing coalition was maintaining its diversity from the food sector and broader food system.
- Partners' pre-competitive and collaborative work was guided by adhering to operating principles.⁹
- Partners were involved in working groups and/or "All-partner" virtual meetings over the course of the phase.

The coalition attracted new stakeholders, increasing by some 50% to 129 partners.

⁶ See Acknowledgements for participating partners of the phase 3 Steering Group.

⁷ AgriAssurance is administered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

⁸ See Appendix 1 for list of financial contributors to phase 3 (the list does not include in-kind support provided by the partners).

⁹ See Appendix 1 for list of partners. For the list of operating principles, see the final report Part 4, *The Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking*.



The National Index has been a tremendous platform to advance the discussion on the important role agriculture in Canada plays in meeting environmental targets. Ducks Unlimited Canada has been pleased to participate and support the very productive discussion that created a true roundtable of all relevant stakeholders."

PAUL THOROUGHGOOD

National Manager – Sustainability, Senior Agriculture Advisor, Ducks Unlimited

Embedding the Centre in CAPI is expected to enable certain operational efficiencies while allowing the Centre to retain its branded identity.

The following projects involved dedicated working groups of partners and other invited experts and, ultimately, with the concurrence of the partnership as a whole:

PROJECT 2. POSITIONING THE INDEX

Project 2-A: Plan for the future

OUTCOME

- Secured an agreement with the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) to house the future Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking.
- While expected to operate virtually, embedding the Centre in CAPI is expected to enable certain operational efficiencies while allowing the Centre to retain its branded identity, website, and maintain a dedicated governance structure to engage partners.
- Having the Centre in place enables the coalition to proceed with phase 4, launching the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking. Funding is needed to do so – not reported on here.¹⁰

Project 2-B: Governance structure

OUTCOME

- With the assistance of an external consultant, the partnership confirmed the governance structure for the proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking.
- The approach delineates the Centre's committee structure to evolve the Index and continue to engage partners in a balanced and participatory decision-making process.
- The model denotes the reporting relationship between the Centre and CAPI.¹¹

¹⁰ See final report Part 4, *The Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking*.

¹¹ See final report Part 4, *The Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking*.

This project draws together a wide variety of important stakeholders to focus attention on how the Canadian agri-food sector is reducing the environmental impact of food production. We at the University of Guelph, Canada's Food University, are looking forward to continuing to drive this work forward through our strengths in data, research, knowledge mobilization, and education."

DR. EVAN FRASER

Director, Arrell Food Institute, University of Guelph



Canada doesn't have a shortage of food, but we do have a shortage of benchmarks looking at how we manage and produce it. The National Index on Agri-Food Performance aims to address this in an important and novel way, tracking sustainable performance and establishing a meaningful framework for measurement – a much-needed step.”

LORI NIKKEL

Chief Executive Officer, Second Harvest

PROJECT 3. COMPILING THE INDEX

Project 3-A: Sourcing data for Index pilot

OUTCOME

- With the May 2022 Index framework as the reference,¹² data was sourced for 20 indicators and some 130 metrics and published as version 1.0, the Index pilot, the major outcome of this phase.¹³
- Consultants and experts engaged partners on preparing the measures and developing the context, sourcing suitable data, and addressing data limitations.
- Gauging how Canada's Index aligns with or differs from global practices is helpful to understand what is being measured. (Differences do not necessarily imply being better or worse but reflects the context and suitability of chosen measures.) The Index indicators includes a commentary about the “global context”. With the assistance of an external consultant, six global sustainability standards and indices were assessed in terms of how they typically address comparable indicators and metrics for each of the 20 indicators.¹⁴



Data was sourced for 20 indicators and some 130 metrics and published as version 1.0.

12 Refer to Index Indicators, Poised to Showcase Canada's Agriculture and Food Sustainability Credentials, Phase 2C Final Report, Part 2, May 2022, agrifoodindex.ca

13 Note that the pilot presents an initial inventory of data for a consolidated picture of sector sustainability from food production to retail. Improving the Index over time (in phase 4) will enable it to become a more complete reference framework and comparative tool of national performance.

14 The intent of canvassing several major global standards and indices was to determine how Canada's metrics generally align with or differ from global practices. The global schemes: World Benchmarking



The National Index is uniquely positioned to provide a trusted and transparent “whole-of-system” view of Canada's sustainability performance. Not only will the Index help inform the broad claims being made in the marketplace, but it will also continue to serve as a guide to areas of focus for improvement as industry collaborates to make change.”

JULIE DICKSON OLMSTEAD

Managing Director, Corporate Responsibility and Public Affairs, Pattison Food Group

A Data Sourcing Protocol was developed for use as part of the future work of the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking.

Project 3-B: Sourcing data in the future

OUTCOME

- The partners want to improve the Index and get a better view of sector sustainability and progress. This project outlines the steps required to work with trusted data providers in the future to identify and source more suitable and aggregated data. A *Data Sourcing Protocol* was developed for use as part of the future work of the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking.¹⁵

PROJECT 4. COMMUNICATING THE INDEX

Project 4-A: Communicating the Index

OUTCOME

- This project supported the development of the final report and messaging. A four-part final report was published along with related material:¹⁶
 - Part 1: *What was Achieved: Summary* (this document)
 - Part 2: *Index Pilot: Indicators and Metrics*
 - Part 3: *Seven Papers on Index Results*
 - Part 4: *The Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking*
 - Press release
- Such content, above, is feedstock for presentations and other communications tools, as well as a refreshed website so to enhance transparency and for outreach with partners, stakeholders, and the media.
- Over 25 formal invitations for presentations were conducted during the phase.¹⁷ (Does not include individual partner and stakeholder updates and consultations.) As well, many media interviews were conducted.¹⁸

Alliance, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems (UN), the Environmental Performance Index (Yale University), the United Nations' Sustainable Development Report, and the Sustainability Food Index (Economist Impact). A host of other standards and indices received occasional mention as well as reported part 2. See also final report, Part 3: *Seven Papers on Index Results*, including Paper 3.2: *Designing the Index*.

15 See final report Part 4, *The Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking*.

16 See all parts of this final report and press release: agrifoodindex.ca.

17 Examples include the CropLife Grow Canada Conference, the Keystone Agricultural Producers Annual General Meeting, and the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy Workshop on Data and Measurements (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada).

18 See media coverage of the Index: agrifoodindex.ca.



A common set of indicators needs to be complimented by a common narrative on the sustainability of the agri-food sector.”

TYLER MCCANN

Managing Director, Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute



The National Index on Agri-food Performance provides an opportunity to communicate canola farmers' sustainability story while also expanding past the farm gate to include the larger agri-food sector. Through an inclusive, collaborative manner, this made-in Canada index will help advance our sector's sustainability nationally and with our trading partners."

RICK WHITE

President & CEO, Canadian Canola Growers Association

Project 4-B: Narratives of Index results

OUTCOME

■ While the published Index pilot results can be interpreted by any stakeholder, the coalition offers a series of commentaries on selected indicators.¹⁹ The papers present perspectives on the sustainability of Canada's agri-food sector:²⁰

- Paper 3.1: *Interpreting the Index*
- Paper 3.2: *Designing the Index*
- Paper 3.3: *Climate Change*
- Paper 3.4: *Sustainable Food*
- Paper 3.5: *Sustainable Production*
- Paper 3.6: *Sustainable Supply Chains*
- Paper 3.7: *Sustainable Growth*

19 Special thanks to the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, a partner, for facilitating a series of dialogues with all partners and for developing the narratives. This material was also given a contextual review by representatives of the Deans Council of the Association of Canadian Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, a partner.

20 See final report Part 3: *Seven Papers on Index Results*, a compilation of 7 individually published papers.



For fruit and vegetable growers, this will provide a benchmark of sector progress to meet national and international goals, as well as a basis to show leadership in the global produce marketplace. Furthermore, it will provide a basis for capturing better metrics to inform supporting policy, innovation, and research priorities."

REBECCA LEE

Executive Director, Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada

PROJECT 5. APPLYING THE INDEX

The following projects were conducted with partners to consider how the Index could be applied, a mutually learning opportunity. Other partners and stakeholders were also involved in this work. The project themes and lead partners are noted below:

- 5-A: For producers and government: Manitoba Agriculture
- 5-B: For producers and broader sector: Canadian Agri-Food Sustainability Initiative
- 5-C: For processors: Food and Beverage Manitoba
- 5-D: For researchers and innovators: Genome Alberta

Project 5-A: Applying environmental indicators

This project focused on how to source three environmental indicators (i.e., greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), biodiversity, and water) to measure sustainability at a provincial level (Manitoba) and assess data collection implications for the province and the Index.

GHGs

- Like the Index's experience, sourcing GHG data beyond production and along the supply chain is more challenging to obtain.
- Seeking out such data provincially and nationally, often held privately, requires system-wide partnerships with industry, governments, and academics.

BIODIVERSITY

- More detailed information is available at the provincial (regional/local) level than the national.
- Considerable work is underway by several stakeholders (industry associations, environmental organizations, research organizations and government) to enhance and develop data collection to more accurately characterize biodiversity situations and change over time.
- These initiatives can become feedstock sources for aggregating at the national level. A formalized process would be helpful to catalogue, characterize and collaborate on this work.



The Fisheries Council of Canada is a proud partner in the National Index. We wanted to contribute to the development of this comprehensive framework. It was especially important for us to see that fish and seafood was recognized as a critical component of Canada's food system. We are proud of our sustainability performance and need to be measured along with the rest."

PAUL LANSBERGEN

President, Fisheries Council of Canada

WATER

- Manitoba, as with other provinces, has relatively good water data.
- Water (like biodiversity) is very regional/local in nature; consequently, it is easier to obtain meaningful data provincially than nationally.
- Further work is required to ascertain meaningful data (such as for water stresses) for purpose of benchmarking agri-food sustainability, and to develop better mechanisms for data collection and analysis. For instance, there is an opportunity to use administrative data (i.e., government data that is collected for the purpose of administering programs) to complement survey data.²¹

Note, the reference to “Partner Testimonials” in the next three projects, below, speaks to an initiative to present how a diversity of partners are using or could use the Index. These are posted on the Index website.

Project 5-B: The CASI-Index link

- The Canadian Agri-Food Sustainability Initiative (CASI) has been exploring how producers might efficiently adhere to sustainability standards.²² As such, there was a mutual interest in understanding how this work might also inform the Index’s work. Conceptually, CASI’s work could ultimately enable aggregated data to be collected to improve sustainability reporting. Two CASI-Index joint dialogues were undertaken on this matter which may inform future work in this area.
- CASI is considering how standardizing the collection of farm level data related to sustainability best management practices could facilitate communication throughout the supply chain as companies increasingly look to align with global sustainability reporting requirements. While the Index is aiming for outcomes-based data, CASI’s work could be used to determine how to collect and collate aggregated, verifiable farm level data to support the Index’s evolution. This idea could be part of the future work plan of the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking.²³

CASI’s work could be used to determine how to collect and collate aggregated, verifiable farm level data to support the Index’s evolution.

²¹ The findings affirm the need for better data sourcing; see final report Part 4, *The Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking* and, notably, its reference to the *Data Sourcing Protocol*.

²² See CASI at <https://www.agrifoodsustainability.ca>


²³ See the Canadian Agri-Food Sustainability Initiative (CASI) *Partner Testimonial*: agrifoodindex.ca



The Index will provide the data required to help drive better decision making, inform policies and align the training, capacity building and collaboration required to create a more competitive, resilient, responsible and sustainable food system.”

MICHAEL MIKULAK

Executive Director, Food and Beverage Manitoba



The work has implications for companies nation-wide.

Project 5-C: Applying the Index to food processing SMEs

- Food and Beverage Manitoba (FBM) is examining how the Index may enable food processors to apply the Index to enhance their respective sustainability reporting. The work has implications for companies nation-wide. FBM is now scoping out its own pilot to develop a “how-to-guide” to do so. This is not intended to be prescriptive but to offer guidance for companies on how to assess their sustainability practices and to report on priorities using the Index as a frame of reference. FBM is now advancing a pilot work plan.²⁴

Project 5-D: Applying the Index to research & innovation

- Genome Alberta applied the Index to its work with researcher funding applicants. Researchers are requested in their Letters of Intent to evaluate how the Index could inform their prospective research plans to maximize translational impact. The Index offers researchers a frame of reference to do so.
- In the future, researcher outcomes may enable linking-up different genomic data sets. This might allow researchers to demonstrate the progress being made to address sustainability priorities, such as using genomics innovations to reduce GHGs and help the agriculture sector to meet the country’s net-zero carbon target. Such outcomes could help build greater societal trust as scientific research advances by demonstrating positive economic, social and/or climate and environmental impacts.²⁵

²⁴ See the Manitoba Food & Beverage *Partner Testimonial* at agrifoodindex.ca

²⁵ See the Genome Alberta *Partner Testimonial* at agrifoodindex.ca



The emerging National Index on Agri-Food Performance offers genomics researchers a means to align their work and data so to better show how genomics is advancing sustainability and meeting ever-changing expectations within society and the marketplace.”

GIJS VAN ROOIJEN

Chief Scientific Officer, Genome Alberta


G. Next steps

With the publication of this work from phase 3, the partners have now produced the Index pilot and its measures. They have decided on where to virtually house the Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking. They have determined how the Centre will be governed and outlined the process needed to source new and better data to improve the Index in the future. These and other operational matters are essential pieces in the overall plan to move forward.

The coalition is now ready to move to phase 4, the next step in a journey to advance the National Index on Agri-Food Performance.

Phase 4 would result in launching and operating the proposed Centre for Agri-Food Benchmarking. Working with partners, the Centre would take the pilot *version 1.0* of the Index and evolve it to *version 2.0* and beyond so that this tool can become more relevant to meet the needs and expectations of a changing food world. The need for evolving the Index is compelling. The importance of demonstrating sustainability will persist so to meet global climate, environmental and other goals from 2030 to 2050 and rising ESG requirements.

The coalition is now in the process of determining the funding plan to make phase 4 happen and looks to formally launch the Centre in the fall of 2023.



The coalition is now ready to move to phase 4, the next step in a journey to advance the National Index on Agri-Food Performance.

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- Enabling the application: Canadian Federation of Agriculture
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- Substantive in-kind support from all partners (see Appendix 1)

B. Steering group

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (*ex-officio*)
Canadian Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef
Chicken Farmers of Canada
Global Institute for Food Security
Manitoba Agriculture
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Protein Industries Canada
Pulse Canada
Statistics Canada (*ex-officio*)

C. Project management

David McInnes, Founder & National Coordinator, National Index on Agri-Food Performance; and Principal, DMci Strategies

Sharon Savoie, Financial Administrative Assistant

D. Consultant team

Project 2-B: Governance review

Karen Haugen-Kozyra, President, Viresco Solutions

Rebecca Johnson, Sustainability Specialist

Project 3-A: Sourcing the Index metrics & methodologies

Susie Miller, Executive Director, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops

Jean-Michel Couture, Partner & Senior Consultant, Groupe AGÉCO (Including for the “global context” analysis; for administrative purposes, this was part of project 4-A); the Groupe AGÉCO team also included:

- Bertrand Montel, Director Scientific Affairs
- Hugues Imbeault-Tétrault, Scientific Affairs Advisor
- Ryan Jonhson, PhD. Candidate, Analyst
- Simon Nadeau, Analyst

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Tirtha Dhar, Chair and Associate Professor; Chair, Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies, University of Guelph

Byomkesh Talukder, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Planetary, York University; Smart City and Food Systems, McGill Centre for the Convergence of Health, and Economics

E. Service provider team

Report & website design

Janice Van Eck

Reports & website update translation

Megalexix



Appendix 1 | List of partners, Phase 3

A&W Food Services of Canada Inc.	Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada	Canadian Wildlife Federation
Agropur Dairy Cooperative	Catalyst Agri-Innovations Society
Alberta Agriculture & Irrigation	Cereals Canada
Albert Barley	Chicken Farmers of Canada
Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute, University of Alberta	Cleanfarms
Alberta Wheat Commission	Corteva
Alltech	CropLife Canada
Animal Nutrition Association of Canada	Dairy Farmers of Canada
Arrell Food Institute, University of Guelph	Dairy Processors Association of Canada
Association of Equipment Manufacturers	Danone
BASF Canada Inc.	Deans Council - Agriculture, Food & Veterinary Medicine
Bayer Crop Science	Deloitte
BC Food & Beverage	Dietitians of Canada
Bioenterprise Canada	Ducks Unlimited Canada
BMO	EggTech Ltd.
Bonnefield Financial Inc.	Emerging Ag Inc.
Botaneco	Enterprise Machine Intelligence & Learning Initiative
Canada Grains Council	Environment & Climate Change Canada
Canada Organic Trade Association	Export Development Canada
Canadian Agri-Food Automation & Intelligence Network	Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan
Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute	Farm Credit Canada
Canadian Agri-Food Sustainability Initiative	Farm Management Canada
Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council	Federated Co-operatives Limited
Canadian Animal Health Institute	Fertilizer Canada
Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance	Field to Market Canada
Canadian Canola Growers Association	Fisheries Council of Canada
Canadian Centre for Food Integrity	Food & Beverage Atlantic
Canadian Federation of Agriculture	Food & Beverage Canada
Canadian Food Innovation Network	Food & Beverage Manitoba
Canadian Forage & Grasslands Association	Food Banks of Canada
Canadian Pork Council	Food Processing Skills Canada
Canadian Produce Marketing Association	Fresh Hemp Foods Ltd
Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef	Food, Health & Consumer Products Canada
Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops	Fruit & Vegetable Growers of Canada
	Gaia Protein

Genome Alberta
 Global Food Lead
 Global Institute for Food Security
 Grain Growers of Canada
 Grand Valley Fortifiers
 Greenfield Global
 Indigenous Works
 Innovation, Science and Economic Development
 Canada
 Keystone Agricultural Producers of Manitoba
 Lassonde
 Le Conseil de la transformation alimentaire du Québec
 Loblaw Companies Ltd.
 Manitoba Agriculture
 Manitoba Forage & Grassland Association
 Maple Leaf Foods
 McGill University, Desautels Faculty of Management,
 Centre for Convergence of Health & Economics
 Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Québec)
 Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Saskatchewan
 Mushrooms Canada
 National Research Council Canada
 National Zero Waste Council, an initiative of Metro
 Vancouver
 New Brunswick Department of Agriculture,
 Aquaculture and Fisheries
 Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture
 Nutrien
 Olds College (Alberta)
 Ontario Cattle Feeders' Association & Ontario Corn-
 Fed Beef
 Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
 Osler Hoskin & Harcourt LLP
 Pet Food Association of Canada
 Plant Nutrition Canada
 Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture
 Protein Industries Canada
 Pulse Canada
 Régénération Canada
 Restaurants Canada
 Retail Council of Canada
 Roquette Canada Limited
 Royal Bank of Canada
 Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission Board
 Saskatchewan Forage Seed Development
 Commission
 Save-on-Foods LP (Pattison Food Group)
 Second Harvest
 Smart Cities (Guelph-Wellington)
 Standards Council of Canada

Statistics Canada
 Syngenta Canada
 Team Alberta Crops
 Telus Agriculture & Consumer Goods
 The Semex Alliance
 TheoryMesh
 TrustBIX Inc.
 United Farmers of Alberta Co-operative Ltd.
 University of British Columbia
 University of Ottawa

- Faculty of Health Sciences
- Smart Prosperity Initiative

 University of Toronto
 Vineland Research and Innovation Centre
 Waterpoint Lane
 Wine Growers of Canada
 WinField United Canada

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