GRI Project Working Group for the Agriculture and Fishing Sector Standard

Terms of Reference

10 December 2019
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Contact

Agriculture and Fishing Sector Project inbox – agriculture@globalreporting.org

For more information, visit the project webpage and sign up here to receive regular updates.
Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference outline the mandate of the GRI Project Working Group for the agriculture and fishing sector including its selection and appointment, commitments and project timeline.

Background

The Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), GRI’s independent standard-setting body, has identified the agriculture and fishing sector as a priority sector for developing a Sector Standard. The Project Working Group is to contribute their expertise to identify issues and develop issue descriptions for sector impacts and stakeholder concerns from a sustainable development perspective.

The project will be carried out following the GSSB’s Due Process Protocol. In line with this protocol, a multi-stakeholder Project Working Group will be formed to develop draft recommendations.

See the project proposal for more information.

Project Working Group mandate

The overall work of the Project Working Group (PWG) should support sustainability reporting as promoted by the GRI Standards. More specifically, the work of the PWG should support an organization’s practice of reporting publicly on its economic, environmental, and/or social impacts, and hence its contributions – positive or negative – towards the goal of sustainable development. Within the context of this program, sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987, p. 43).

GRI Sector Standards create a common language for organizations and stakeholders, with which the economic, environmental, and social impacts of organizations can be communicated and understood. They are designed to enhance the global comparability and quality of information on these impacts, thereby enabling greater transparency and accountability of organizations, and informed decision-making by internal and external stakeholders.
Scope of work

The PWG will be responsible for developing a Sector Standard for the agriculture and fishing sector, for the consideration of the GSSB. Within the context of the GRI Sector Program, the agriculture and fishing sector is defined as business activities related to crop production, livestock production, fishing and aquaculture. These business activities are cross-referenced against external classifications systems GICS, ICB, and ISIC in Table 1 below.

Note that though the primary focus is on the upstream activities, it will also be considered relevant to companies further down the value chain. This includes those involved in food trading, food processing, food distribution, and food retail. As well as those companies in non-food sectors, including those in manufacturing, retail and wholesale of tobacco products, textiles and wearing apparel, leather and related products, and financial activities related to agricultural commodity trading, investment in agriculture and fishing companies, and other activities.

Table 1: Sector key for the agriculture and fishing sector project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification Standard</th>
<th>Classification No.</th>
<th>Classification Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GICS</td>
<td>302020</td>
<td>Food Products</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICB</td>
<td>3573</td>
<td>Farming, Fishing &amp; Plantations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISIC</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Crop and animal production (excluding hunting)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Fishing and aquaculture</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As part of the Sector Standard development, the PWG is tasked with providing recommendations on:

- the **identification and description of issues** that represent significant impacts or stakeholder concerns for agriculture and fishing sector (e.g. biodiversity);
- authoritative **evidence of the sector’s impacts** or stakeholder concerns;
- relevant **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and/or SDG targets** for the sector;
- **significant issue and/or disclosure gaps** not sufficiently covered within the existing GRI Standards, and the feasibility/utility of developing disclosures for these.

The Standards Division will draft the text according to the recommendations of the PWG. The GSSB will review the drafted contents and may ask the PWG to conduct further research and/or develop the draft recommendations further. PWG members should be committed to support the revision of draft contents in addition to the development of these contents.

If during content development the PWG determines that the sector key needs revision (e.g. it becomes clear that some subgroup of the sector is not covered within content development as expected), the Project Working Group can recommend changes to this sector key for the GSSB’s consideration.
Additional considerations

The work of the PWG is part of the second pilot project, which means that discoveries will be made during the project on the details of content and structure to be developed. The Standards Division will provide the PWG with templates as needed to refer to in developing recommendations and will actively solicit feedback from the PWG on the usefulness of these templates and suggested features of the Sector Standard, which may be amended during the course of the project.

The PWG should ensure that the sector name and key accurately describe the organizations that are meant to use the Sector Standard; that the produced content is applicable to the sector as described; and that produced content is accessible and practicable for a global user base.

The PWG should aim to develop issue descriptions that are clear, consistent, and focused on impacts from a sustainable development perspective. The PWG should seek to produce content in line with key authoritative inter-governmental instruments (such as instruments of the UN, the ILO, and the OECD) and consider the content of other business and human rights reporting frameworks, such as the UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework.

The Standards Division will draft, style and edit the content, applying house rules for text and presentation. The PWG will not be responsible for editing the stylistic and grammatical presentation of the deliverables. Such edits will be undertaken by the Standards Division to ensure consistency with existing GRI documents.

Project Working Group composition

The PWG will aim to have at least one person drawn from each of the constituencies on which the membership of the GSSB is based: Business Enterprise (or reporters more generally), Investment Institution, Labor, Civil Society Organization, and Mediating Institution (including Standard Setters). In addition, geographical, gender and cultural diversity will be considered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Enterprise</th>
<th>a) an enterprise (other than a Mediating or Investment Institution) that has been established in order to generate a profit for the benefit of its investors or owners or, b) an organization representing the collective interests of those falling into category ‘a’.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investment Institution</td>
<td>an enterprise that is primarily concerned with the direct or indirect, long-term investment of funds in business – including, but not limited to, asset owners, asset managers, development banks, exchanges, ratings agencies and market information brokers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>an organization established independently of employers and governments to represent the interests of workers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
<td>an organization established in order to promote or secure a public good relating to sustainability (environmental, social and governance) and that does not fall into any of the categories defined above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediating Institution</td>
<td>an individual or organization that provides goods and/or services associated with the reporting process and derives benefit from doing so.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
It is anticipated that the PWG will have up to 15 members. There can only be one representative per organization in the PWG.

**GSSB subcommittee** – A GSSB subcommittee will (at a high level) follow the progress of the PWG and represent the work of the PWG back to the GSSB.

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**Project Working Group selection criteria**

In line with the [GSSB’s Due Process Protocol](#), Project Working Group (PWG) members are appointed by the GSSB. The principal criterion for selecting PWG members shall be relevant knowledge and experience of a broad range of sustainable development issues for the agriculture and fishing sector.

In addition, the following criteria will be considered:

- relevant knowledge of sustainability reporting for the sector;
- familiarity with the needs of users of sustainability reports;
- related experience with multi-stakeholder initiatives;
- understanding of and willingness to work in a consensus-based, multi-stakeholder PWG;
- ability to participate in PWG meetings held in English and provide written English feedback when requested.

These criteria will be considered by the GSSB in making a final decision on membership of the PWG.

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**Project Working Group commitments**

PWG members are expected to:

- act in an individual capacity, exclusively in the public interest, and according to due process as defined in the [GSSB’s Due Process Protocol](#);
- review the materials provided by the Standards Division in advance of the online and in-person meetings, to be able to actively participate;
- provide timely feedback on the documents distributed by the Standards Division;
- work in the manner that aims at achieving consensus on the discussed topics.

PWG members commit to attending one in-person meeting in Amsterdam of 2 days (excluding travel time) and 3-4 teleconferences (of 1.5 hours each) during the drafting of contents. Additional meetings may be required for revising drafted contents after the public exposure.

Teleconferences are normally held between 1:00-2:30 pm Central European Time (CET), so that members in most time zones can join (although this can be adjusted due to the final geographical representation).
PWG members also commit to plan sufficient time to prepare for meetings and review materials in order to meet the project deadlines (see ‘Project timeline and time commitment’ for estimated time commitments).

PWG members volunteer their time. There is no fee or compensation associated with participation in the PWG. Upon request, PWG members will be eligible for travel and accommodation reimbursement for in-person meetings, in accordance with GRI policies.

**Project timeline and time commitment**

Most of the Project Working Group (PWG)’s work is expected to be carried out between May and October 2020 through a series of one in-person meeting (in Amsterdam) and 3-4 virtual meetings. PWG members will be expected to spend 10 hours reviewing content materials before the in-person meeting, and 3-4 hours to prepare for virtual meetings reviewing and commenting on draft documents.

Additional work may be required in February - April 2021 to revise draft contents, including 2-3 virtual meetings.

The table below outlines the high-level project timeline and expected time commitment from each PWG member. See the Annex for a more detailed project timeline.

Availability to travel to Amsterdam for the in-person meeting July 2020 is expected. Specific dates for virtual and in-person meetings will be defined based on the availability of PWG members within the time frames indicated below. This timeline is subject to change due to, for example, PWG members’ availability or changes to the project scope.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Time Commitment</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>#1 PWG Meeting (virtual)</td>
<td>2 hours meeting + 2 hours review of preparatory materials</td>
<td>May 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2 PWG Meeting (in-person)</td>
<td>14 hours meeting + 10 hours review of documents prior to the meeting</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3 PWG Meeting (virtual)</td>
<td>1.5 hours meeting + 2 hours review of documents</td>
<td>September 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4 PWG Meeting (virtual)</td>
<td>1.5 hours meeting + 2 hours review of documents</td>
<td>October 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public comment period starts</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>December 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up PWG Meeting 1 (after public comment period)</td>
<td>1.5 hours meeting + 2 hours review of documents</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up PWG Meeting 2 (after public comment period)</td>
<td>1.5 hours meeting + 2 hours review of documents</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up PWG Meeting 3 (after public comment period)</td>
<td>1.5 hours meeting + 2 hours review of documents</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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</table>
The time commitment for draft development is estimated at 45 hours, with roughly half related to preparation for and attendance at the in-person meeting. This time commitment excludes travel time for the in-person meeting.

**Project Working Group meetings**

Project Working Group (PWG) meetings are convened and chaired by the Standards Division. PWG meetings are not open to the public. The GSSB subcommittee may join the PWG meetings.

Meeting agenda and materials will be typically circulated to the PWG at least 10 working days in advance of each meeting. Meeting summaries will be normally circulated within 5 working days following the meetings.

PWG meeting materials are confidential and shall not be distributed to anyone outside the PWG without prior permission from the Standards Division.

The PWG seeks to reach decisions by consensus. Where unanimity cannot be achieved, minority opinions will be documented for consideration by the GSSB. A PWG should report to the GSSB and seek guidance whenever it requires further advice in order to advance the project or when its members cannot reach consensus.

**Project management**

The Standards Division is responsible for overall project management and implementation, according to due process. This includes:

- preparing meeting agendas, meeting materials, and meeting summaries, for all Project Working Group (PWG) meetings;
- providing logistical support for in-person PWG meetings and teleconferences;
- producing working versions of draft recommendations, based on PWG input;
- conducting ad-hoc research, as needed;
- conducting an initial ‘field test’ or expert roundtable before public comment, as needed;
- maintaining an online collaboration platform for the PWG work;
- collecting and summarizing public inputs on the exposure draft(s);
- managing all internal (with GSSB) and external communications about the project and its outcomes.
The Standards Division will supervise the formatting and production (as well as the stylistic and grammatical presentation) of the final deliverables. GRI will hold the copyright of the deliverables.

Public communications protocol

Public communication on issues related to the activities of the Project Working Group (PWG) and the development of the GRI Standards is the responsibility of the GSSB. PWG members may publicly express their personal opinions and views, but may not speak on behalf of the PWG, GSSB or GRI.

The names and bios of the PWG members will be published on the GRI website. PWG members are welcome to publicize their participation in the PWG, and the activities of the PWG, in channels such as press releases or on social media. PWG members are asked to work with the GRI project lead to coordinate any such activity ahead of time together with the GRI communications team.

PWG members are advised to use the following formulation when referring to their participation in this process:

“[name of member] has been appointed by the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), GRI’s independent standard setting body, to serve on a Project Working Group to produce a Standard for the agriculture and fishing sector.”

How to apply

Once the open call is launched, all interested experts will be able to nominate themselves to be part of the PWG, by submitting their CV and the application form to agriculture@globalreporting.org.

Note: This timeline is subject to change due to, for example, PWG members’ availability or changes to the project scope.

| Key: |
| GSSB Approvals | ◆ |
| Project Working Group Meetings (Virtual) | ★ |
| Project Working Group Meetings (In-person) | ○ |

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<td>GSSB approves Sector Pilot Project Proposal and Terms of Reference</td>
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<td>GSSB approval of Project Working Group membership</td>
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<td>Content development by Project Working Group</td>
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<td>GSSB approval of draft Sector Standard for public exposure</td>
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<td>Analysis of public comments and revision of draft</td>
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<td>GSSB approval of final draft Sector Standard</td>
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