Principles for Sustainable Beef Farming

SAI Platform Beef Working Group
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The aim of this document is to provide a set of Principles for Sustainable Beef Farming that applies to mainstream producers in all areas of the world. The adoption of these Principles by beef producers should ensure the **efficient production of safe, high quality beef, in a way that protects and improves the natural environment, the social and economic conditions of farmers, their employees and local communities, and safeguards the health and welfare of beef cattle**.

The purpose of these Principles is to define the required **outcomes** that must be achieved if beef cattle production is to be defined as sustainable. The Principles must be considered in their entirety; outstanding achievement in one principle cannot offset poor performance in other areas. Achieving the required outcomes in all Principles can be considered an aspirational goal for all mainstream producers; a philosophy of continuous improvement towards this goal, with demonstrable annual progress, can be expected from all producers committed to good agricultural practice.

Whilst it is expected that the practical means by which farmers may fulfil these principles may be adapted to reflect local conditions (including the region and its climates, ecological variables, farming systems, cultures etc.) and **to ensure compliance with national laws and regulations**, it is intended that the essence of each Principle shall remain unaltered. It is intended that specific guidelines and practical tools will support the implementation of these Principles on the farm.

This document's scope is limited to what farmers or groups of farmers themselves can achieve. **It applies from birth to farm gate, including the production of forage and/ or maintenance of pastures.** Transport of live animals off the farm is excluded. **Production** of feed is also excluded from the scope of this document. However, it is expected that any feed used by the beef enterprise, whether this is produced on-farm or bought in, is produced/ sourced in accordance with the Principles & Practices for the Sustainable Production of Arable & Vegetable Crops. Additionally, the protection of consumer and cattle health through the provision of safe feedstuffs is considered to be within the responsibility of all cattle producers and has therefore been included in the Principles for Sustainable Beef Farming.

This document will be revised regularly on the basis of practical experience and as the science evolves.

The **Basic Framework** of the document looks as follows:

1. An **Item** refers to an object of management.
2. **Principles**: identify the objective/ end state of what should be accomplished with regard to an item, in line with current best practice and knowledge. There are generally multiple Principles under each Item.

The following headings and bullets summarise the sections and objectives. The individual sections in the document contain greater detail.

Sustainable Farming Systems (Chapter 1)

- Are individual/groups of animals fully traceable from birth?
- Are the Principles being applied with a philosophy of continuous improvement?
- Is feed produced/ sourced in accordance with the Principles & Practices for the Sustainable Production of Arable & Vegetable Crops?
- Is land use optimised?

Economic Sustainability (Chapter 2)

- Are effective biosecurity measures in place?
- Are there long term business plans in place that consider, amongst other things, the long term viability of the farm?

Social Sustainability (Chapter 3)

- Is the health of both consumers and the general public protected?
- Is cattle health and welfare safeguarded?
- Is the breed of cattle and choice of production system suited to the local climate, soil, pests & diseases?
- Are the health, safety and rights of all workers protected?
- Are all workers sufficiently competent?
- Is business conducted with integrity?
- Does the farm positively contribute to the local community?
- Does the farm manager act as a responsible steward of the rural environment?

Environmental Sustainability – including forage production (Chapter 4)

- Are the natural resources soil, water and air being managed responsibly?
- Are greenhouse gas emissions being measured and is action being taken to reduce them?
- Are farm wastes managed responsibly?
- Is biodiversity on the farm enhanced?
- Are High Conservation Value lands (HCV) protected?

In this document the term ‘farm’ applies to all elements of the farm’s geography (i.e. all land, buildings, livestock pens and related infrastructure) that are directly relevant to the scope defined above, irrespective of whether or not the farm manager has legal ownership of these or the elements are geographically connected. The terms ‘farm’ and ‘enterprise’ are used interchangeably throughout this document under this definition

Item		Sustainable Farming Systems Principles
Traceability	**1**	All cattle on the farm are individually identified and registered in such a way as to provide the ability to follow the animal or group of animals during all stages of its life.
Sustainability Management System for Continuous Improvement	**2**	A sustainability system is maintained on the farm, defined as: 1. Farmers shall apply the principles to the farm system within a philosophy of continuous improvement. 2. Progress in all areas of sustainability is regularly monitored.
Site Selection	**3**	Pre-existing site specificities do not inherently compromise the ability of the farm owner/manager to fulfil the Principles of Sustainable Beef Farming.
Animal Feeding	**4**	Feedstuffs bought off the farm are fully traceable. Where feed is purchased, the farm manager aims to source from producers who are compliant with the Principles & Practices for the Sustainable Production of Arable & Vegetable Crops. Where feed is produced on the enterprise, the farm manager complies with the Principles & Practices for the Sustainable Production of Arable & Vegetable Crops. (On-farm forage production is included within the scope of this beef document)
Animal Feeding	**5**	Direct and indirect land use is optimised – through efficient farming practices, utilising areas for forage/ pasture that are unsuitable for crops, good pasture management and by making use of by-products as feed wherever practical, safe and competitive to do so.
Inputs	**6**	Store, select, handle and apply agricultural inputs with great care to safeguard the environment, and protect worker, animal and consumer health.
Item		**Economic Sustainability Principles**
Biosecurity	**7**	Preventative measures are taken to minimise the risk of entry and spread of diseases on the farm. Please also see Principles 12, 13, 14 and 18.
Long Term Economic Viability	**8**	The efficiency of the enterprise is continually improved, with key performance metrics regularly benchmarked against the rest of the industry to monitor progress.
Long Term Economic Viability	**9**	Market requirements and desirable specifications for animals are taken into account.
Long Term Economic Viability	**10**	Costs of production are known and managed, whilst also ensuring the remaining Principles of Sustainable Beef are not compromised
Short and Long Term Business Planning	**11**	Business planning objectives take into account current and future needs
Item		**Social Sustainability Principles**
Human Health and Welfare	**12**	Veterinary medicines are used responsibly; consumer health is protected and their effectiveness for human medicine is preserved. The specific responsibilities of food-animal producers as part of the 'Responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in veterinary medicine' in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the OIE are fulfilled. See also Principles 14 & 18.
Human Health and Welfare	**13**	Feed and forage is sourced/ grown and stored in such a way as to protect the health of consumers and the cattle themselves. Relevant responsibilities under 'The control of hazards of animal health and public health importance in animal feed' in the

		Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the OIE are fulfilled.
Human Health and Welfare	**14**	Zoonotic disease risks are minimised and appropriately managed.
Human Health and Welfare	**15**	All animals are healthy and free from physical, chemical, biological and radiological contaminants when they are sent for slaughter. See also Principles 12 & 13.
Animal Health, Welfare and Genetics	**16**	**Good feeding:** 1. Animals should not suffer from prolonged hunger, i.e. they should have a diet that maintains full health and vigour. 2. Animals should not suffer from prolonged thirst, i.e. they should have a sufficient, accessible and clean water supply.
Animal Health, Welfare and Genetics	**17**	**Good housing and environment:** 1. Animals should have comfort when they are resting. 2. Animals should have thermal comfort, i.e. they should neither be too hot nor too cold. 3. Animals should have enough space to be able to move around freely.
Animal Health, Welfare and Genetics	**18**	**Good health:** 1. Animals should be free of injuries e.g. skin damage and locomotory disorders. 2. Animals should be free from disease, e.g. animal unit managers should maintain high standards of hygiene and care. 3. Animals should not suffer pain induced by inappropriate management, handling, or surgical procedures (e.g. castration, dehorning).
Animal Health, Welfare and Genetics	**19**	**Appropriate Behaviour:** 1. Animals should be able to express normal, non-harmful, social behaviours (e.g. grooming) and should have company of their own kind (unless isolated on veterinary advice). 2. Animals should be able to express other normal behaviours, i.e. it should be possible to express species-specific natural behaviours. 3. Animals should be handled well in all situations, i.e. handlers should promote good human-animal relationships. 4. Negative emotions such as fear, distress, frustration or apathy should be avoided.
Animal Health, Welfare and Genetics	**20**	Genetic selection of cattle over both the short and the long term must balance the needs of productivity with animal health and welfare
Animal Health, Welfare and Genetics	**21**	The breed(s) of cattle is appropriate for the particular facilities, environmental conditions and market requirements of the enterprise.
Human Rights	**22**	Business activities are conducted in a manner that respects human rights as set out in The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Workplace Environment	**23**	The safety, health and security of all workers are protected.
Business Integrity	**24**	Business activities are conducted with integrity, in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, and with these Principles.
Worker Competence	**25**	All employees or workers hired by the cattle enterprise have sufficient training and/or experience to ensure that those Principles of Sustainable Beef Production relevant to their duties are met.
Worker Competence	**26**	The enterprise supports the training of farm employees and workers on the Principles of Sustainable Beef Production, contributing towards continuous improvement in the sustainability of the cattle enterprise. See also Principle 2.
Landscape Management	**27**	The farm owner/ manager acts as a responsible steward of the rural environment, ensuring that the rural landscape and

		associated ecosystems are managed in such a way as to ensure their health and cultural value over the long as well as the short term.
Community Investment	**28**	Contribution to the local economy and community reflects the scale of the enterprise
Item		**Environmental Sustainability Principles**
Soil	**29**	Good biological and physical soil health is maintained both in the short as well as the long term; soil erosion, compaction, nutrient depletion and contamination with harmful physical, chemical, biological or radiological substances are prevented whilst good soil biodiversity, fertility and structure are maintained.
Grasslands	**30**	Grasslands and pastures should be managed to avoid over-grazing and limit damage caused by grazing cattle. Areas of permanent pasture / grassland should be protected and maintained in a productive state.
Water	**31**	The quantity of water withdrawn from the environment is minimised and its removal should not adversely impact water availability.
Water	**32**	The beef enterprise does not pollute any water body that is present on, or that flows through, the farm with nutrients or other contaminants (such as pesticides) at concentrations harmful to human health or the environment. This applies to wastewater, surface runoff, groundwater flows, stationary bodies of water (such as lakes and wetlands) and free flowing water bodies (such as rivers and streams).
Air	**33**	Levels of dust, ammonia and other gases produced by the beef enterprise do not adversely affect local, national or regional air quality in such a way as to negatively impact the health of humans, animals or ecosystems. Odours are kept within acceptable levels for the local community.
Climate Change	**34**	Efforts are made to continually reduce the direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions per unit of output that arise from the beef enterprise.
Waste	**35**	Animal excrement is managed in such a way as to prevent/minimise any direct and indirect environmental impacts, and to protect human health.
Waste	**36**	Hazardous waste (waste possessing chemical, physical, or biological characteristics that represent a threat to either the environment or human health) is responsibly managed, stored and disposed of to protect human and animal health as well as prevent environmental contamination.
Waste	**37**	The general waste generated on the farm is continually reduced, or increasingly reused or recycled – in accordance with local legislation.
Biodiversity	**38**	Biological diversity on the farm is maintained and in the longer term enhanced.
Land use	**39**	Site selection and expansion is not at the expense of areas designated as High conservation value land (HCVL). HCVL are areas of outstanding and critical importance due to their environmental, socio-economic, biodiversity or landscape values – this includes forested areas that play a role in controlling climate change through photosynthesis and carbon storage.