

# Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture (SAFA Tool)

GLOBAL VALUE tool showcase



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 613295

## Introduction

## The GLOBAL VALUE tool showcase series

### GLOBAL VALUE tool showcases: your guides to using tools

Understanding a company's impact on sustainable development, and finding ways to manage it best, is not an easy task. With so many tools available, choosing one to invest time in is even more difficult. GLOBAL VALUE tool showcases will make this task easier.

We selected and tested 15 leading tools in different categories to help understand how each of them can help you achieve your assessment goals. Our tool showcases are meant to support you in deciding which tool best fits your company's needs. The tools were tested in collaboration with multinational companies from different sectors to give you practical tips on how to get the most from using each of the showcased tools.

### Tools for managing impact on the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the north star for global development for the next 15 years. Adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, these Goals have been developed in extensive consultation with the business community. For companies across the globe, the SDGs are both a challenge and an opportunity to serve global populations in a manner that is sustainable in the long-term. Each tested tool has also been screened for how many and which SDGs it may help companies tackle.

Find more tool showcases on the [GLOBAL VALUE Toolkit](#).

### Tool selection

The tool showcases feature [15 tools](#) that were selected from over 200 tools collected during three years of research in the context of the [GLOBAL VALUE project](#). These tools were shortlisted through an iterative consultation with GLOBAL VALUE consortium experts, who evaluated the strengths and weaknesses, feasibility and usability, methodology and added value of different tools in order to narrow down the list of tools to 15 for testing in an actual company setting.

The SAFA Tool was selected as one of the most widely used assessment tools applicable to the agricultural and food sector. An agro and food sector specific tool was chosen to be tested, as one of our collaborating companies in GLOBAL VALUE – Olam International, is operating in agri-business.

### Tool testing process

The tool showcases are based on the experiences of three GLOBAL VALUE tool testers, who have implemented these tools in collaboration with [three multinational companies](#). The tools were tested with a specific focus on their operations in developing countries, in order to understand how each of them can help companies measure and manage their impacts on global sustainable development. The tool testing assessed each tool's feasibility and usability, user friendliness, content and context, methodology, data required and results provided.

This showcase will guide you through the main benefits and limitations, ease of use, tool adaptability to different geographical and company contexts, scope of value chain and SDG coverage, methodology for assessing impact, and the usefulness of output or results that the tool provides.

# An introduction to the SAFA Tool

SAFA is a globally applicable guiding framework for **sustainability assessments in the food and agricultural sector**. It has been prepared so that enterprises, whether companies or small-scale producers, involved with the production, processing, distribution and marketing of goods have a clear understanding of the constituent components of sustainability and how strength, weakness and progress could be tackled.

By providing a transparent and aggregated framework for assessing sustainability, SAFA seeks to **harmonize sustainability approaches within the food value chain**, as well as furthering good practices. Because existing schemes remain fragmented on what constitutes a sustainable food and agriculture system, SAFA aims to fill the gap between specific sustainability tools, while fostering partnerships for the long-term transformation of food systems. For large multinational corporations, the tool is meant to help in identifying hot-spots for improving sustainability performance.

SAFA consists of 21 themes and 58 sub-themes (+116 indicators) that were defined through expert consultations. Thematically, it focuses on good governance, environmental integrity, economic resilience, and social well-being.

## At a glance

Web: <http://www.fao.org/nr/sustainability/sustainability-assessments-safa/safa-tool/en/>

Developer: FAO

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is an intergovernmental development cooperation institution. It was established with the aim of leading international efforts to achieve food security for all. The strategic objectives of FAO include the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; making agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable; reduction of rural poverty; enabling inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems; and increasing the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.


















Use the SAFA assessment when you want to:

- **Assess a company's sustainability strength and weakness** in the food and agricultural sector
- **Use a harmonized sustainability assessment approach** in the food and agricultural sector
- **Identify gaps and hot-spots** for sustainability performance improvement

## Features

## What you need to know about the SAFA

This section gives you an overview of the key features of the SAFA. All important information that can help you decide on whether this is the tool for your needs is presented in a condensed format in the table below. For more elaborate information on the [icons](#) and to explore other tools please visit the [GLOBAL VALUE tool navigator](#).

Purpose	Scope	Output	Requirements	Access
   <p>The main purpose of the tool is to support <b>management control</b> and to help companies <b>learn more</b> about their sustainability performance.</p>	    <p>The <b>whole value chain</b> is assessed upstream and downstream. However, assessment is limited to one industry and one geographical location.</p>	     <p>Results are provided in a <b>traffic light system</b> and a <b>polygon</b>. The <b>final report</b> is a synthesis of the SAFA assessment, including definition of scope, boundary setting, qualified themes' ratings, hotspot issue details, irrelevant sub-themes justified, and areas for improvement identified.</p>	   <p><b>Implementation time</b> depends on completion accuracy and available data. Stakeholder engagement is not obligatory, but is recommended for the contextualization of indicators.</p>	  <p>The tool is <b>free</b> to use and is available online after registration. Assessment is <b>confidential</b>.</p>

### What the tool testers say - Overall experience

The purpose of a SAFA is to support the implementation of effective sustainability management and communication in the food and agriculture sector worldwide. The tool can be complementary to an organization's monitoring and certification processes and can be linked to existing management systems. It provides clear and transparent results, including suggestions on where actions are need and recommends improvements.

SAFA is a holistic framework that helps assessing performance in terms of governance, economic, environmental and social sustainability. The tool can be implemented at any level (national, supply chain or operational unit), and it can be used by food and agriculture enterprises, NGOs, the sustainability standards and tools community, as well as governments, investors and policy-makers.

### Want to explore other tools?

[GLOBAL VALUE tool navigator](#) features over 220 tools that all screened for the same features as the SAFA.

## Benefits

## Key benefits and added value of the SAFA

### Key benefits you can expect

- **Comprehensiveness**

The SAFA assessment is a holistic framework that comprehensively covers sustainability.

- **Transparency**

Very high clarity and transparency of results helps prioritize action with a traffic light system and visualisation. Both the tool and the results are systematic and well-structured.

- **Complementary**

Can complement monitoring and certification processes and link to existing management systems.

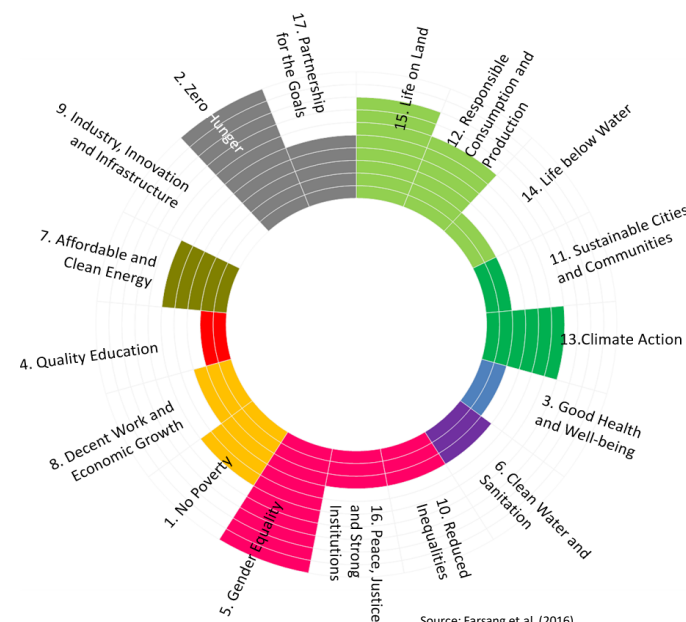
- **Customizability**

Users can define the geographic area, the scope, and select indicators. The SAFA framework can be applied to small and medium sized enterprises and large-scale organizations, as well as other stakeholders that participate in the food and agriculture value chains.

Learn more about the SDGs and what they mean for your business on the [GLOBAL VALUE Toolkit](#).

### Sustainable Development Goal coverage

The graph below shows the extent to which SAFA addresses the different issues covered by the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Under each SDG, there are a number of different targets that are related to the individual goal. Some SDGs have more targets, while others have fewer. During our testing, we screened the tool to determine how many of the targets the tool covers under each SDG. The graph below is normalised and can tell you not only which SDGs the tool addresses, but also to what extent. The higher the SDG's coloured column, the more targets the tool addresses (read more about the testing process [here](#)).



## How to

## Implementation steps

### **STEP 1: Setting up the assessment team**

As the SAFA tool is holistic and comprehensive, setting up a team or having experts available for data collection or provision in the different areas to be measured can be of invaluable help – both for the ease of implementation and reducing assessment time.

### **STEP 2: Mapping - goal and scope setting**

The mapping step aims to collect basic information about the company, setting the scope and boundaries of the assessment, and identify the organization's sphere of influence.

### **STEP 3: Contextualisation – Identification of main and sub-themes**

Step 3 focuses on collecting a wide range of information on the context factors of the entity being measured, such as geographical, political, economic or environmental factors. Sub-themes need to be reviewed based on the boundaries and objectives set for the assessment, which then need to be selected or deselected accordingly.

### **STEP 4: Contextualisation and customization of indicators**

After reviewing and selecting the sub-themes, the indicators are reviewed in the selected sub-themes and the metrics are also customized, in order to calculate the performance of the entity measured in the different themes.

### **STEP 5-6: First round of data collection and identification of data gaps**

At the first round, it is recommended to answer as many questions as possible with data that is easily available. It helps to get a good overview on specific data to be collected and identify the sources for the missing data. The data gap identified based on the first round also helps to identify what type of data is missing, what areas lack larger amounts of data, and how to prioritise their collection.

### **STEP 7: Second round of data collection**

The second round of data collection and review should aim to refine the answers and provide additional data. Here, specific focus should be given to the missing data that has a significant role in measuring the given sub-topic and provide information on the strengths and weaknesses in the given topic.

### **STEP 8: Analysis and reporting**

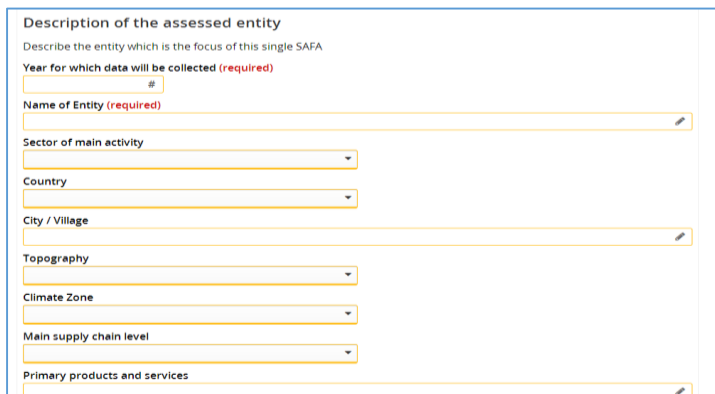
The final report is a synthesis of the SAFA assessment, including definition of scope, boundary setting, qualified themes' ratings (with the Accuracy Scores), hotspot issue details, irrelevant sub-themes justified, and areas for improvement identified. The tool uses a traffic light system (red-yellow-green) to help in the prioritization of actions needed regarding policies, practices and procedures at companies. The results are indicative, as they suggest where actions are needed and help locate areas of improvement. This is done through colour indications. SAFA also uses a polygon to illustrate the results.

## How to

## Implementation steps (cont.)

### Illustration for Step 2:

The second step will ask you questions about the entity you are assessing.



**Description of the assessed entity**  
Describe the entity which is the focus of this single SAFA

Year for which data will be collected (required)  
#

Name of Entity (required)

Sector of main activity

Country

City / Village

Topography

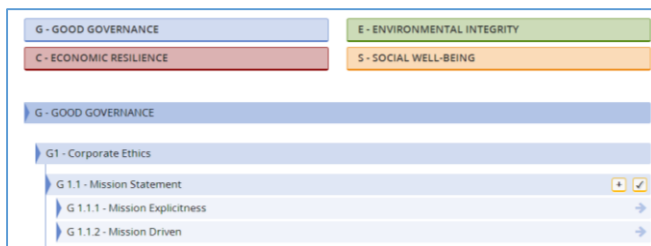
Climate Zone

Main supply chain level

Primary products and services

### Illustration for Steps 3-4:

In step 3-4 the contextualization of indicators will allow your assessment to be tailored to local issues.



**G - GOOD GOVERNANCE**    **E - ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY**

**C - ECONOMIC RESILIENCE**    **S - SOCIAL WELL-BEING**

**G - GOOD GOVERNANCE**

**G1 - Corporate Ethics**

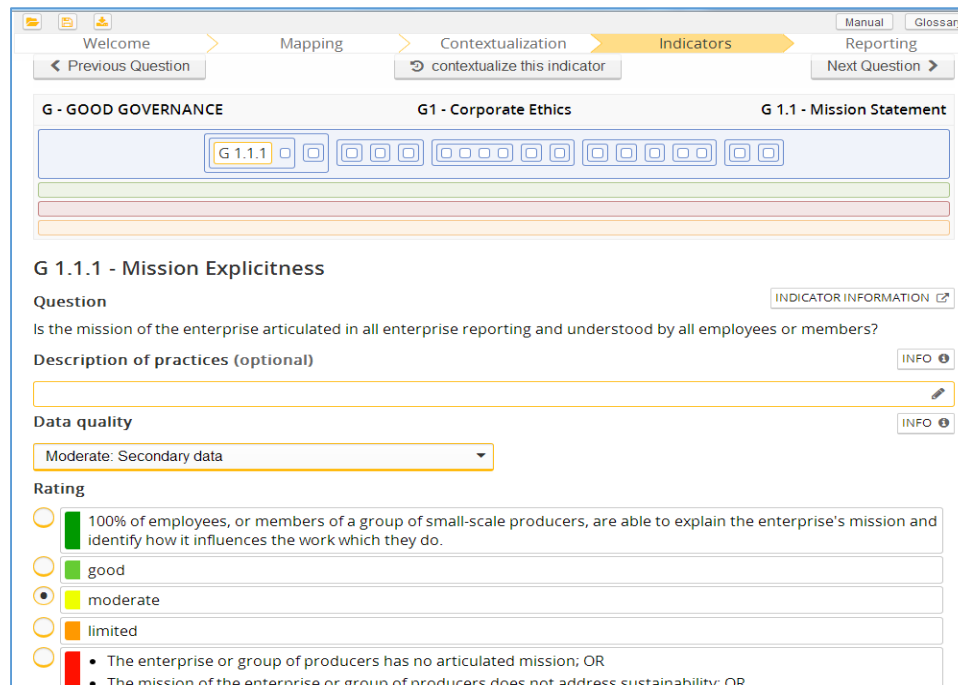
**G 1.1 - Mission Statement** [ ] [x]

**G 1.1.1 - Mission Explicitness** [ ] [x]

**G 1.1.2 - Mission Driven** [ ] [x]

### Illustration for Step 5:

The below illustration depicts how the questionnaire that the SAFA tool is based on is organized.



Welcome > Mapping > Contextualization > **Indicators** > Reporting

< Previous Question    contextualize this indicator    Next Question >

**G - GOOD GOVERNANCE**    **G1 - Corporate Ethics**    **G 1.1 - Mission Statement**

**G 1.1.1 - Mission Explicitness**

Question    [INDICATOR INFORMATION](#)

Is the mission of the enterprise articulated in all enterprise reporting and understood by all employees or members?

Description of practices (optional)    [INFO](#)

Data quality    [INFO](#)

Moderate: Secondary data

Rating

☐ 100% of employees, or members of a group of small-scale producers, are able to explain the enterprise's mission and identify how it influences the work which they do.

☐ good

☒ moderate

☐ limited

☐ • The enterprise or group of producers has no articulated mission; OR

☐ • The mission of the enterprise or group of producers does not address sustainability; OR

## Suitability

## Tool testing insights: SAFA for MNCs

### **SAFA for Multinational Corporations**

The SAFA framework can be applied to small and medium sized enterprises, large-scale organizations, and other stakeholders that participate in crop, livestock, forestry, and fishery value chains. However, SAFA is also relevant to government strategies, policy and planning. The tool operates on the basis of the entire company, and can be applied by companies of all sizes. The SAFA maintains a supply chain perspective.

The purpose of a SAFA is to support the implementation of effective sustainability management and communication in the food and agriculture sector worldwide. Through voluntary assessments, the goal is to holistically assess an enterprise performance along the four dimensions of sustainability. Using harmonized approaches contributes to making sustainable food chains more transparent, measurable and verifiable.

SAFA builds on existing sustainability tools, with the goal of integrating and relating current systems through the common framework. The SAFA Guidelines that the Tool is built on put existing guidelines into the perspective of an overarching common sustainability language for the food and agriculture sector. An underlying principle of SAFA is to avoid duplication and to not add complexity to a market already full of regulations and standards that serve different purposes. The structure and methodology draw specifically upon: ISO 14040:2006, the ISEAL Code of Good Practice, the Reference Tools of the Global Social Compliance Programme and the Sustainability Reporting Guidelines and Food Sector Supplement of the Global Reporting Initiative (version 3.1).

### **Ease of use**

The tool is comprehensive, yet very user-friendly, visually appealing and supported by comprehensive and detailed guidance. The time needed to implement this tool can vary quite significantly depending on the accuracy of the completion and data availability. Some data is very concrete and specific and it can be difficult for an organization to provide it immediately.

The tool provides a helpful guidance system which includes the following interactive or supportive features: explanation for each question and indicator, FAQ section, guideline, manual, glossary, indicator description, detailed pop-up indicator description within the tool, pop-up windows explaining the methodology of data, and data collection guidelines. The tool itself is generally easy to understand and operate. However, the tool requires substantial knowledge of company practice/policies and about where to locate relevant data. Some questions also need a thorough understanding of the issue and context.

SAFA builds on existing sustainability tools, with the goal of integrating and relating current systems through the common framework. An underlying principle of SAFA is to avoid duplication and to not add complexity to a market already full of regulations and standards that serve different purposes. SAFA serves this principle by providing a common understanding of the elements of sustainability and partnering with other initiatives for shared resources, such as methodologies, information and indicators.



## Review

# The SAFA approach to measuring and managing impact

### Managing for global value

All the tools GLOBAL VALUE tested exhibit a different approach to managing a company's impact on sustainable development. Tested approaches include tools that assess a company's management system, monetize sustainability impacts or map impacts and build strategies for mitigating negative impacts and enhancing positive impacts.

In order to capture these differences, and what each of these approaches brings to a company wanting to measure and manage its impacts, each of the tools tested were evaluated against a set of criteria developed by the GLOBAL VALUE consortium. Find out more about the criteria we used [here](#). An online [Expert Crowd](#) of more than 260 experts from a variety of organisations and stakeholder groups globally has also been involved in developing the criteria to ensure that the most important concerns of science, businesses, civil society and policymakers are reflected.

This section will provide insights into the underlying assumptions of how SAFA evaluates the impact of a company using the tool, and the usefulness of the results that the SAFA provides for managing business impacts on sustainable development.

Learn more about how to use tools for managing your impact on the SDGs on the [GLOBAL VALUE toolkit](#) !

### SAFA assessment approach

The SAFA tool is a performance and process-oriented assessment tailored to the agriculture and food system. Users can define the geographical area and the scope, which makes the tool customizable.

The tool considers all four sustainability dimensions: Good governance, Environmental integrity, Economic resilience, and Social well-being. The four dimensions cover 21 themes, 58 sub-themes and 116 indicators. There are three types of indicators: policy, procedure, and performance level. The indicators are both qualitative and quantitative. The tool is performance and process-oriented, as it provides a checklist of relevant areas and aspects related to the agriculture and food system. Many data collection methods can be used, which depends on the data that is already available and on the level of precision the company strives for.

### SAFA assessment output

Results are provided through a traffic light system that prioritises the issues and actions needed. The final report is a synthesis of the SAFA assessment, including definition of scope, boundary setting, qualified themes' ratings, hotspot issue details, irrelevant sub-themes justified, and areas for improvement identified. SAFA results are further processed in a sustainability polygon, over a traffic-light colour coding that depicts the performance of each of the 20 themes that are crucial to the environmental, social, economic and governance dimensions of sustainability. The clarity and transparency of the results are very high and the results clearly indicate where actions for improvement are needed. SAFA results can be used for internal management, as well as for learning and communication purposes.

## Resources

## Further resources

- SAFA: <http://www.fao.org/nr/sustainability/sustainability-assessments-safa/en/>
- FAO: <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>
- GLOBAL VALUE Project: <http://www.global-value.eu/toolkit/project/>
- GLOBAL VALUE Toolkit: [www.global-value.eu/toolkit](http://www.global-value.eu/toolkit)
- GLOBAL VALUE Tool Navigator: [www.global-value.eu/navigator](http://www.global-value.eu/navigator)
- GLOBAL VALUE Expert Crowd: [www.global-value.eu/toolkit/expert\\_crowd](http://www.global-value.eu/toolkit/expert_crowd)
- Farsang, A.; Reisch, L. A.; Temmes, A.; Wiman, A.; Munrat, S. H. A.; Jenkins, A.; Schönherr, N.; Martinuzzi, A. (2016) GLOBAL VALUE Deliverable 4.03. Final Comparative Assessment Report.



Coordinated by



In collaboration with



## Authors

Andrea Farsang, Adele Wiman, Armi Temmes, Norma Schönherr, and Lucia Reisch

Institute for Managing Sustainability  
Vienna University of Economics and Business  
[www.sustainability.eu](http://www.sustainability.eu)

## Impressum & Disclaimer

GLOBAL VALUE is co-funded by the European Union Seventh Framework Programme under grant agreement no 613295. Sole responsibility for the project lies with the participating organisations. The European Commission is not responsible for use that may be made of any material arising from this project.