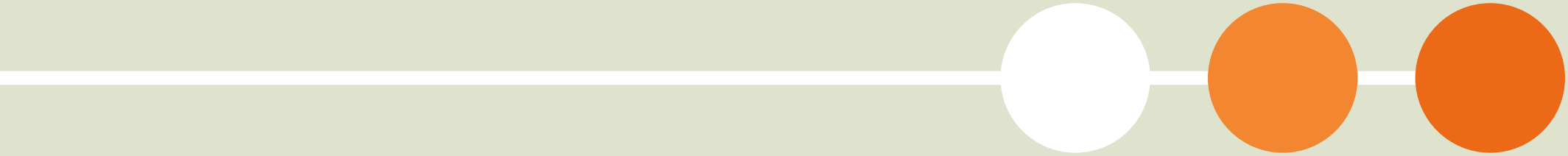
Sourcing Better

A pathway to less and better meat and dairy



Eating Better

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Mapping the steps towards ‘better’ sourcing

What is ‘better’ meat and dairy, and how can we track progress? Different organisations measure progress towards better food systems differently, from lower environmental impact, benefits for nature, animal lives improved, through to improved human health outcomes. As businesses report outcomes in different ways, tracking progress is complex.

This resource presents a clear pathway towards sourcing ‘better’ for food service and food retail. Our framework has broad support. It draws on the collective civil society expertise of Eating Better, an alliance of over 60 civil society organisations on public health, sustainable farming, food waste, social justice, animal welfare, environment and conservation.

Our joint vision for less and better sourcing focuses on three things:

1. What key impacts need to be addressed?
2. Which better farming outcomes would help address each impact?
3. What steps need to be taken and how can they be measured to reach the outcome?

The Better by Half Roadmap

We are calling for an average 50% reduction in meat and dairy consumption by 2030.

All animal products have high impacts, and the path towards more sustainable meat and dairy means, primarily, taking steps to consume and produce less. **Our 'Better by half: A roadmap to less and better meat and dairy' sets out steps to accelerate a 50% reduction in meat and dairy consumption in the UK by 2030, and for a transition to 'better' meat and dairy as standard**.

It provides 24 actions for 5 key sectors, including government, food businesses, retailers, producers and investors, to work towards a food system where everyone eats sustainably for health and well-being, while halting and reversing climate change and nature loss.

For food businesses and retail, improving sourcing and transitioning to 'better' production as standard depends on a clear commitment and strategy to rebalance the food offer to include more plants and less meat and dairy. For retailers, this means putting sustainable diets at the core of their strategy and embedded across the business. For the full set of actions, for food businesses, retailers and beyond, please take a look at our Better by Half Roadmap.

This resource specifically addresses 2 roadmap actions, food business and food retail should develop a sourcing policy that delivers 'better'.

8 Key impact areas

We have drawn on Eating Better's 2017 Principles for more sustainable meat and dairy, developed in consultation with our members, to draw out 8 key impact areas to be addressed in sourcing policies. 'Better' meat and dairy comes from animals reared within healthy ecosystems, favouring more natural diets from sustainable sources, in well managed farms that deliver high standards of animal welfare. Farming in this way helps to maintain good soil health and fertility for crop production, manage landscapes and support biodiversity.

Our key impact areas apply specifically to how animals are raised on farms and fed.

Animal Welfare

Antibiotic Use

GHG Emissions

Land Use Change

Biodiversity

Soil Health

Local Pollution

Water Scarcity

Raising the bar: steps towards progress

So far, the simplest and most comprehensive way of identifying 'better' meat has been whether it meets a credible certification. Schemes such as Organic and Pasture for Life offer significant benefits over standard production across a number of issues, including animal welfare, soil health, biodiversity and antibiotic use.

This remains the case. However, production under suitable certifications covers only a very small fraction of the meat we consume. We want to see the standards raised across all meat sold, produced in a way that delivers for nature, animals, the climate, and is profitable for farmers. For retailers and food service, this means a comittment to sourcing better. We want to see all food service businesses and retailers in the UK move to sourcing 'better' as standard, and work towards integrating the 'best' standards of production in their sourcing policies.

We have outlined the desired outcomes and suggested a breakdown of the steps needed to get there, from standard UK production towards real progress:

BASIC

Standard UK production.
The current status quo. We want to see all food businesses and retailers in the UK commit to, at the very least, sourcing meat that complies with current UK production standards.

BETTER

A first step to better.
We would like to see standard production move up to this level.

BEST

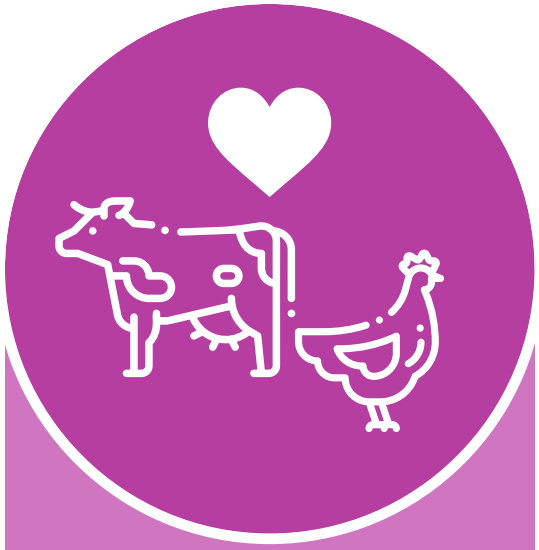
Raising the bar.
These are further steps necessary to reach our desired outcome.

TARGETS AND INDICATORS

We have suggested suitable metrics to measure performance across each issue. Existing indicators may not be perfect at this stage, but we have selected those that will get us moving in the right direction whilst better ones are developed.

ANIMAL FEED

spotlight on animal feed: animal feed production has implications across several impact areas. We highlight impacts related to animal feed throughout the document.



Animal Welfare

OUTCOME

Good animal welfare.

REQUIREMENTS

Sourcing policies require no close confinement systems and species-specific breakdown of practices that cover housing and management. Policies require reporting on animal health and behaviour, including positive welfare.

HOW WE MEASURE

The percentage of a food business's supply chain for a particular animal product offering that either:

- Complies with the 'higher welfare' requirements of the Global Animal Welfare Assurance (GAWA) evidence-based framework of higher welfare for the different species.
- Falls under the BASIC (standard UK production), BETTER (minimum standard), or BEST categorization of commonly available certifications set out below, or equivalent.

BASIC

Target: Meets minimum legal guidelines or produces inadequate animal welfare outcomes.

Indicator: Minimum EU production standards (poultry, pigs, & dairy); minimum UK standards; Red Tractor [broiler chickens and poussins (V4.2), pigs, beef, dairy].

BETTER

Target: Exceeds standard UK production, primarily higher welfare indoor production. Scoring in the higher range of the impact performance section of Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW) can be used to inform placement as achieving better minimum standards.

Indicators: RSPCA Assured (all species, indoor production), British Lion Barn Eggs (laying hens), Red Tractor Indoor Enhanced Welfare (broiler chickens, V1); Organic Farmers & Growers (laying hens, broiler chickens, & pigs); EU Organic (pigs). EU Organic (dairy).

BEST

Target: Meets or exceeds EU Free range or Organic criteria for poultry and pigs. Pasture-reared or extensive systems for cattle with strong welfare monitoring.

Indicators: EU Free range or Organic (poultry & pigs), Pasture for Life (beef & dairy), Soil Association (poultry, pigs, beef & dairy), Label Rouge (broiler chickens). RSPCA Assured (all species for free range/ organic production) .

Antibiotic Use

OUTCOME

Responsible use of antibiotics in farm animals. In practice, this means very low use.

REQUIREMENTS

Sourcing policies promote lowering the antibiotic footprint of products, with critical antibiotics as a priority, by driving a shift to extensive systems with good animal welfare outcomes. Full transparency in the use of antibiotics in the supply chain.

HOW WE MEASURE

Publishing the volume of antibiotics in the supply chain, by species and antibiotic family. Options:

- Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics annual benchmarking scores.
- % of sourcing under Organic certification, which provides robust assurance on antibiotics.
- LEAF Marque indicator (in development, for launch in 2021)

BASIC

Target: Meets antibiotics regulation.
Indicator: Red Tractor.

BETTER

Target: Transparency and targets: publish technical targets and performance against them.
Indicators: publishes volume of antibiotics in supply chain.

Target: For pigs, cattle and sheep, a majority of antibiotic use is used for individual treatments and not group treatments.
Indicators: Reports on target. Organic.

Target: No antibiotics for growth or routine disease prevention or any form of routine treatment.
Indicators: Reports on target. Organic.

BEST

Target: Completely avoid last-resort antibiotic colistin.
Indicators: Reports on target. Organic.

Target: Drastically restrict the use of 'critically important antibiotics' (modern cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones).
Indicators: Reports on target. Organic.

Target: Lower use of non-medically important antibiotics.
Indicators: Reports on target. Organic.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

OUTCOME

Lower GHG emissions from livestock farms.

REQUIREMENTS 1

Raising fewer animals. Lowering stocking densities must be coupled with a commitment and strategy to drive down the volume of meat and dairy sold within the broader 'less and better" framework.

HOW WE MEASURE

Sourcing policies require suppliers have a commitment to diversification with specific reference to progressive reductions in the number of livestock per area of land.

BASIC

Target: Legal stocking densities.
Indicator: Red Tractor or equivalent.

BETTER

Target: Sourcing policies require suppliers have a commitment to diversification with specific reference to progressive reductions in the number of livestock per area of land.
Indicators: Requires commitment to lowering livestock numbers per area of land, in line with carrying capacity of the land.

BEST

Target: Stocking density.
Indicators: Requires commitment to reduce stocking densities to level of Free Range, Organic, or beyond.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

OUTCOME

Lower GHG emissions from livestock farms.

REQUIREMENTS 2

Improving on-farm performance to lower GHG emissions.

HOW WE MEASURE

Commitment to driving better GHG farm performance by requiring producers to use a reputable carbon calculator tool. There are a number of tools available, i.e. Cool Farm, Farm Carbon Cutting Toolkit, and others.

BASIC

Target: There is no legal requirement to monitor or reduce GHG emissions.
Indicator: Red Tractor or equivalent.

BETTER

Target: Requires producers to measure emissions and have measures in place to reduce them.
Indicators: Requires usage of carbon calculator tool.

BEST

Target: Emissions low with respect to comparable product benchmark.
Indicators: emissions footprint.

Target: Integrates agroforestry/ silvoculture methods.
Indicators: Tree and shrub planting.

Land Use Change

OUTCOME 1

Minimising habitat loss: protecting forests and other high value ecosystems from land use change.

REQUIREMENTS 1

ANIMAL FEED

No deforestation in the supply chain. Reducing reliance on imported feeds and eliminating any soy and palm kernel meal without physical certification.

HOW WE MEASURE

Percentage of uncertified soy and palm kernel meal in feed. No soy from moratorium areas.

BASIC

Target: No legal requirements.
Indicator: Red Tractor.

BETTER

Target: Reducing the volume of uncertified soy and palm kernel meal in feed.
Indicators: Percentage of uncertified soy and palm kernel meal in feed. No soy from moratorium areas.

BEST

Target: Favouring locally sourced feed and mixed farming.
Indicators: 100% Pasture-based systems and certifications. Organic.

Target: No uncertified soy and palm kernel meal in feed.
Indicators: Percentage of uncertified soy in feed.

Land Use Change

OUTCOME 2

Reducing the use of land suitable to grow human-edible foods, ie legumes and cereals, for animal feed.

REQUIREMENTS 2

ANIMAL FEED

Lowering the amount of soy, grain and palm kernel in feed (weight) per g of protein produced. Reporting on feed use.

HOW WE MEASURE

Percentage of feed coming from alternatives to soy, grain and palm kernel.

BASIC

Target: No legal requirements.
Indicator: Red Tractor.

BETTER

Target: Reducing amounts of soy and cereals in feed.
Indicators: % of feed coming from alternatives to soy and grains or from food waste. Organic.

BEST

Target: Exclusively pasture-based systems.
Indicators: Pasture-based systems and certifications.

Target: Use of waste, agricultural bi-products or unwanted biomass as the main source of animal feed, or as supplement to pasture.
Indicators: % of feed coming from agricultural bi-products or food waste. Volume of soy and cereals in feed.

Biodiversity of the Farmed Landscape

OUTCOME

Protecting existing wildlife habitats, and promoting the creation of new ones. Livestock farming supports a biodiversity rich farming landscape, with a high proportion of species rich semi-natural vegetation and natural elements on farm.

REQUIREMENTS

Production is aligned with the carrying capacity of the land in order to provide space for nature[1] and support a high proportion of wild species. Sourcing policies promote the creation and maintenance of nature-friendly habitats and monitoring of on-farm wild species. Level of inputs, stocking densities and grazing rotations are appropriate for promoting biodiversity on-farm.

HOW WE MEASURE

Good biodiversity outcomes. Indicator options:

- Minimum 10% farmland devoted to wildlife.
- Wild species/habitat monitoring.
- Compliance with agri-environment or certification schemes which require management for biodiversity, and where relevant a grazing plan.
- % of supply chain under Organic certification or equivalent.

BASIC

Target: Meets minimum legal requirements.
Indicator: Red Tractor.

BETTER

Target: Specified management for biodiversity, where relevant including grassland management and livestock grazing requirements.
Indicators: LEAF Marque standard. Meets higher baseline regulations to access public support payments. Organic.

BEST

Target: Low inputs, in particular farming with minimum use of synthetic pesticides and/or fertiliser.
Indicators: Organic.

Target: Takes measures to protect and enhance biodiversity on-farm and surrounding landscape, by adding or maintaining structural elements such as species-rich hedges, woods, and meadows.
Indicators:

- At least 10% of land on-farm dedicated to biodiversity elements, assured via suitable schemes or agri-environment plans which require specific biodiversity management (e.g. Fair to Nature, Farm Wilder).
- Requires semi-natural elements to be species rich, i.e. contain at least 5 species.
- No. wild species supported/no. rare species supported – measured through farm surveys (Natural England or verified auditing body standards).

Soil Health

OUTCOME

Livestock farming supports the health and fertility of soils.

REQUIREMENTS

Improving soil quality, with appropriate stocking densities, grazing rotations and management responsive to weather and soil conditions. Sourcing policies require monitoring and improvement of soil fertility and structure.

HOW WE MEASURE

Soil compaction and organic matter. Indicator options:

- Producer uses LEAF Marque soil module.

BASIC

Target: There is no legal requirement to monitor soil quality.
Indicator: Red Tractor.

BETTER

Target: Good management to improve or maintain soil fertility and structure.
Indicators: Soil bulk density and organic matter, LEAF Marque soil module or equivalent.

Target: Management of organic matter and avoidance of synthetic fertilisers.
Indicators: Organic.

BEST

Target: Lower stocking densities.
Indicators: Stocking density at Organic level or beyond.

Target: Restricted use of insecticidal veterinary medications that remain present in manure fertilisers, such as avermectin, triclabendazole and deltamethrin.
Indicators: Low use or no use of avermectin, triclabendazole and deltamethrin in farm animals.

Local Pollution

OUTCOME

Lowering the pollution footprint of livestock systems. Minimising toxic elements in the local environment, including pesticides, pharmaceuticals or nutrients at harmful levels, resulting in a measurable reduction in soil, air and water pollution.

REQUIREMENTS 1

Reducing pollution potential and eutrophication risk.

HOW WE MEASURE

Nutrient balance and protection measures implemented for water, soil and air[2].

BASIC

Target: Meets legally required best practice with regard to waste management, air and water quality.
Indicator: Legal air, water, ground pollution level.

BETTER

Target: Nutrient balance and protection measures implemented for water, soil and air (eg manure covers, protection for water courses).
Indicators: LEAF Marque.

BEST

Target: Lower stocking densities.
Indicators: stocking at Free Range densities or beyond.

Target: Requires feed to be primarily obtained from local sources.
Indicators: Organic.

Target: Integrates trees to trap pollutants, i.e. tree belts around sheds or tree cover for free range areas.
Indicators: Tree and shrub cover.

Local Pollution

OUTCOME

Lowering the pollution footprint of livestock systems. Minimising toxic elements in the local environment, including pesticides, pharmaceuticals or nutrients at harmful levels, resulting in a measurable reduction in soil, air and water pollution.

REQUIREMENTS 2

ANIMAL FEED

Reducing the amount and toxicity of pesticides used to grow feed crops.

HOW WE MEASURE

Producer uses Integrated Pest Management. Indicator options: Meets LEAF Marque or alternatives.

BASIC

Target: Meets pesticide use regulation.
Indicator: Red Tractor.

BETTER

Target: Reduced use of pesticides through integrated pest management (IPM).
Indicators: LEAF Marque.

BEST

Target: Low pesticide use.
Indicators: Organic.

Water Scarcity

OUTCOME

Minimising water scarcity and run-off.

REQUIREMENTS 1

Sourcing from areas with sustainable water management and minimising use of irrigated crops/plants for animal feed.

HOW WE MEASURE

% of sourcing (by volume) that comes from catchments with sustainable water management.

BASIC

Target: No legal requirements.
Indicator: Red Tractor.

BETTER

Target: % of sourcing (by volume) that comes from catchments with sustainable water management.
Indicators: Regional sustainable water management indicators, e.g Water Framework Directives (EU) or WWF Water Risk Filter (global).

BEST

ANIMAL FEED

Target: % of animal feed (by volume) that comes from catchments with sustainable water management.
Indicators: Regional sustainable water management indicators, e.g Water Framework Directives (EU) or WWF Water Risk Filter (global).

Target: Pasture or forage based systems in catchments with sustainable water management.
Indicators: Pasture-based and forage-based systems and certifications, i.e. Pasture for Life.

Water Scarcity

OUTCOME

Minimising water scarcity and run-off.

REQUIREMENTS 2

Requires good water management on-farm.

HOW WE MEASURE

Target for water use reduction in operations.
Indicator options: LEAF Marque, or equivalent standard.

BASIC

Target: Meets legal requirements.
Indicator: Red Tractor.

BETTER

Target: Implements measures to reduce water use and protect water sources.
Indicators: LEAF Marque.

BEST

Target: Reduce use of mains or abstracted water, by, for instance capturing water from shed roofs to use in water troughs.
Indicators: reports on target.

Where next?

This is the first iteration of our ‘better’ sourcing framework. It presents a clear pathway towards sourcing ‘better’ for food service and food retail. As an alliance, we have broad agreement that the set of impact areas we present, and the vision of farming included in the outcomes and requirements is better for nature, climate and farm animals.

We recognise that existing indicators may not be perfect at this stage, and we expect they will change. For this iteration, we have selected those that will set the right direction whilst better ones are developed, taking care to minimise unintended consequences. We welcome feedback and comments.

If you are interested in helping shape the next phase of this work, do get in touch.

As next steps, we will:

1. Work with the Sustainable Food Trust to incorporate their framework of on-farm sustainability assessment with this resource
2. Translate this framework into guidance for ‘better’ meat and dairy purchases by the public sector
3. Assess retailer progress towards better minimum standard.

Acknowledgements and endnotes

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This resource presents the views of Eating Better. It has been prepared by Elena Salazar, Policy and Knowledge Manager, and Simon Billing, Executive Director, at Eating Better, in collaboration with Liam Walsh, Sustainable Diets Manager at WWF; Jeff Doyle, US Head of Food Business, Hilary Dalton, Animal Welfare Specialist, and Laura Strangeway, Senior Project Manager, at Compassion in World Farming; and Will Nicholson, Project Lead - Investor Metrics at the Food Foundation. It has benefited from comments from:

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1 The conservation of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems is closely related to land use. Intensive land use is considered to be a major cause of biodiversity loss. Intensive land use is usually defined in terms of both production and use of inputs per area of land, and exists on a gradient between most intensive (highest production, highest level of inputs) to agroecological (least need for inputs, usually substantially lower production). In practice, lower intensity farming means raising fewer animals, with fewer inputs, on the same area of land, aligning production with the carrying capacity of the land. In the UK, extensive farming with species-rich meadows and hedgerows and small farm woodlands benefits landscape connectivity and our native wildlife.

2 Farming alters the balance of nutrients in ecosystems and has led to a nutrient overload. This has led to soil degradation, biodiversity loss and pollution of freshwaters. Nutrient balances provide information about environmental pressures. A nutrient deficit (negative value) indicates declining soil fertility. A nutrient surplus (positive data) indicates a risk of polluting soil, water and air.

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