



Sustainable Beef - FAQ

1. Why is WWF working with the beef industry?

WWF works with industry leaders because we believe we can be more effective at protecting and conserving critical resources if we engage with the stakeholders who have direct influence over how those resources are impacted. We care about the beef industry for a number of reasons. First, beef is grown in many of the most sensitive environmental areas around the world. Second, beef production has important social and economic impacts that must be considered when discussing sustainability. And, finally, as an important source of protein and nutrients for many of the world's population, we recognize that global demand for beef will only continue to increase in the coming years. With the [United Nations](#) forecasting that global population will exceed 10 billion by the end of the century, it is essential to improve the sustainability of beef production globally.

2. What experience does WWF have working with industry on sustainability?

This initiative is aligned with the programmatic objective of WWF's Market Transformation Initiative: engaging with businesses to help create market incentives for better environmental performance using science-based, measurable outcomes. We have broad experience working with businesses around key commodities to help ensure the commodities are sourced and managed in a sustainable way. Examples of these initiatives include:

- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- Roundtable of Responsible Soy (RTRS)
- Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)
- Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
- Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)
- BonSucro – Better Sugarcane Initiative (BSI)
- Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)

3. How is WWF engaging with industry to advance sustainable beef production?

WWF works with a diverse group of stakeholders across the beef supply chain to ensure that beef is produced and processed in a way that is socially responsible, economically viable and environmentally sustainable—preserving and restoring critical habitats, helping to protect watersheds, and improving soil health and water quality.

Our first major initiative related to this work was the Global Conference on Sustainable Beef, held in November 2010 in Denver, Colorado. Approximately 300 stakeholders from across the beef system met to address the environmental, economic and social impacts of beef production. The goal of this forum was to develop and promote greater adoption of sustainable beef practices that lead to science-based, measurable outcomes through a global multi-stakeholder initiative. For more information on the forum, please visit www.sustainablelivestock.com.



4. What issues must be addressed in order to improve the sustainability of the global beef system?

To advance sustainability of the global beef supply chain, key issues such as land use, conversion and efficiency; greenhouse gas emissions; and water use need to be better understood. Also, voluntary market-based regional standards that address those issues need to be developed and adopted to ensure better performance within the industry. Stakeholders across the beef system, including processors, retailers, restaurants, ranchers, farmers, scientists, government officials, investors and NGOs, all play a critical role in making this happen.

5. What management practices could improve the sustainability of the global beef system?

While a better understanding of science is needed, initial research shows that there are a number of better management practices that can measurably reduce environmental impacts. These include maintaining vegetative cover, avoiding overgrazing, protecting riparian areas, selecting for cattle that are more efficient, reducing waste and disposing of waste in the least harmful ways, judicious use of chemicals and antibiotics, reducing wastewater, improving water effluent quality, and reducing soil compaction.

There are several specific ways to address many of these issues. However, some of the important, more general approaches include aligning production needs with natural processes, improving the feed conversion of animals from any feed source, producing and marketing cattle with more meat and less fat, and integrating beef production with other activities to increase overall carrying capacity and productivity.

While academic research can produce an initial list of practices, stakeholders from across the industry must work together to prioritize and agree upon a suite of better management practices that contribute to increased sustainability.

6. What role will WWF play in expanding sustainable beef production that is economically viable?

WWF does not buy or sell beef, or any other commodity. However, we draw upon our market transformation expertise to help demonstrate the economic importance of sustainability. By integrating sustainable practices into the supply chain, producers can drive efficiencies, save on costs and conduct their business in a more responsible way. In order for sustainable practices to be widely adopted and have a measureable impact, they must be economically viable.

7. Some national organizations across the WWF Network are asking people to eat less beef. How do you reconcile that effort with advancing sustainable production?

Faced with the pressing concern that the Earth's resources are being used faster than they can be replenished, national organizations across the WWF Network have adopted different solutions to bring our planet back in balance. We believe that there are multiple tactics to achieve the results that



can lead to a healthier planet for people and nature.

For beef, studies such as the [Food Ethics Council's Livestock Consumption and Climate Change Report](#), have found that production is the primary driver of greenhouse gas emissions from the livestock industry. Therefore, and in accordance with WWF's Market Transformation Initiative, we believe the most significant gains can be made by driving efficiencies and minimizing impact along the beef supply chain, with a focus at the farm level. While that report addresses consumption, WWF is committed to working with the global beef industry to address a broader range of production issues in ways that are socially responsible, environmentally sustainable and economically viable.

8. What does WWF envision for the beef industry over the long-term?

WWF envisions a global marketplace in which all beef is sustainable. By working with producers as well as companies and their supply chains to improve the sustainability of beef production, WWF is working to ensure that consumers have sustainable choices to foster a safe, affordable and wholesome diet.