

Land Management Commitment

April 2024 progress update

What is the Land Management Commitment?

The Australian beef industry exports over 70% of its beef production. Increasingly, our international markets and their companies are aligning Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting to meet shareholder and consumer interest in demonstrating sustainable food production, and global commitments to the Paris Agreement.

Over 6000 global companies have aligned with the Science Based Target Initiative (SBTi). SBTi is a European-driven not-for-profit organisation that requires companies to set public reporting targets for reduced emissions, zero deforestation, and demonstrated improvements to biodiversity within their supply shed. Importantly, these global companies will be required to report their progress against their targets by 2024 via mandatory public disclosures.

The Australian landscape is one of the driest in the world and has some of the oldest soils in the world. Given our incredibly old landscape which has evolved over the last 50 million years, our landscape, its plants, animals, and ecological systems are incredibly unique.

Whilst we haven't always got it right, we have learned and evolved our practices as science and research and development improve. Australian producers have a strong history of innovating and developing land management practices to suit the environment. Given the unique nature of the Australian landscape, we must provide regionally specific indicators for global reporting that recognises the inherent ecological differences within Australia.

What are the commitments?

1. Develop a national definition on deforestation for the Australian context – to be globally accepted for use in the supply chain and by financial institutions.
2. Develop a voluntary and market-driven minimum sustainability standard on environmental stewardship to be used in the traceability system to inform consumers.

Rockhampton Industry Roundtable

An Australian beef industry meeting was held in Rockhampton, Queensland, on November 7 and 8, 2023. The goal of this meeting was to seek a commitment that a clear evidence-based definition of deforestation and biodiversity for the Australian landscape is required. The group of 50 industry leaders from across the supply chain - including leading producers, corporate agricultural companies, peak industry bodies, government, state farming organisations, processors, retailers, and finance industry representatives - discussed a national approach to international reporting requirements. This provides transparency and traceability to our customers and gives confidence to consumers and stakeholders in the scientific validity of land management practices in Australian beef production systems.

What happened in April?

In April, the Advisory Board met twice to review the applications for the request for proposal. This meeting included important discussions around the Governance, communications, funding, risk register, and webinar planning.

After closing a Request for Proposal (RFP) process seeking interested parties to submit an RFP for the required consulting work, Cattle Australia along with key funding partners undertook a review of the proposals submitted against the outlined criteria. These criteria review assessments were anonymously presented to the Advisory Board to review and select the successful candidate. The Advisory Board made a selection and the successful candidate moved to project contracting.

Cattle Australia met with several industry stakeholders including research and development bodies, Government departments and supply chain partners to update them on the Land Management Commitment and seek their support.

With the support of the Advisory Board, Cattle Australia elected a Technical Working Group consisting of technical specialists from across the value chain. The key purpose of the technical working group is to support the consultants in the development of a policy that meets the needs of the supply chain while encompassing state and territory nuances. The Technical Working Group had their first meeting on April 16, during which time key ways of working and project deliverables were addressed.

Cattle Australia held meetings with key industry stakeholders to gain insights into information provided through the scoping considerations process undertaken in January. These meetings have been highly valuable in understanding the priority areas to base draft principles to support the development of a draft policy on.

What are the next steps?

- Continued engagement with other agricultural commodities to ensure we maintain cross-commodity alignment.
- Update the communications plan that supports the Land Management Commitment work.
- Continue key stakeholder engagement activities at Beef Australia during May 5-11 in Rockhampton, Queensland.
- Seek feedback and consultation on draft principles to support the next project phase; development of a draft policy for consultation.