



CATTLE AUSTRALIA

Land Management Commitment Strategy

September 2024



Agricultural land is land that is used for the production of food and fibre including the grazing of livestock.

Agricultural land is defined and demonstrated under the National Australian Land Use Management Classification (ALUM) system.

For the production of grassfed beef in Australia, the majority is produced on Classification 2 land type: Production from Relatively Natural Environments, grazing native vegetation.

Forest means an area, that is dominated by trees having a stand height exceeding 2 metres and crown cover or 20% or more, excluding land that is predominantly under agricultural use including the grazing of livestock.

Deforestation is the illegal clearing of trees on land, used for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes, that violates vegetation management laws and where trees exceed forest thresholds.

Cattle Australia does not endorse or support activities that violate environmental and biodiversity legislation or that jeopardises market access.

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Cattle Australia

Cattle Australia (CA) represents the interests of all 52,000 Australian grassfed beef producers. CA leads the direction for the grassfed beef industry by developing and driving contemporary policy, advocating on matters important to grass fed levy payers and guiding research, development and adoption, and marketing investment for the sector.

Our Values



Driven -

We lead, support and protect livelihoods in the cattle industry



Visionary -

We are advocates to create a sustainable industry for future generations



Courageous -

We are front and centre in our discussions representing 30% of Australia's agricultural production with pride



Authentic -

We demonstrate our passion and commitment through engaging our team, our members and all our stakeholders

Key points

- The Australian grassfed beef industry grazes on 325 million hectares of native vegetation, which is largely unmodified and 46.7 million hectares of grazing on modified pastures.¹
- Cattle producers manage their land responsibly and take their responsibility to have a positive influence on the environment and biodiversity seriously.
- The total legal land clearing and re-clearing of native forests and wooded agricultural land was 0.134% in 2020-21. This is covered by strict State, Territory and Commonwealth legislation.
- There has been a net positive change in forest area on agricultural land for the past 16 years since 2008.
- 36% of Australia's forest is on land managed for conservation purposes, this places Australia in the top 10 countries globally for total protected forest area.
- Australian producers and landholders operate under more than 136 State, Territory, and Federal vegetation management laws and State Government's prosecute unexplained, illegal vegetation clearing in Australia.
- Invasive plants, pests and diseases is now the number one issue impacting biodiversity loss in Australia, which producers spend \$5.3 billion annually managing.
- The Australian beef industry plays a crucial role in addressing the world's food security and climate challenges by exporting 70% of our product annually to over 100 countries globally and while managing over 50% of the Australian landmass.
- In 2021-22 the value of Australian beef and veal exported was over \$10.4 billion, contributing to red meat and livestock turnover of \$75.4 billion employing over 430,000 people.

¹<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/environment/environmental-management/national-land-account-experimental-estimates/latest-release#land-use>

Executive Summary

The Land Management Commitment (LMC) provides the necessary assessment of the requirements of voluntary international frameworks, like the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and Accountability Framework Initiative (AFI), the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and the Australian regional context.

This work created a decision tree model and educational information through case studies on the routine land management practices embedded in Australian State, Territory and Federal legislation.

In a modern global context where Australia is a key player in the global beef trade, the alignment of Australian definitions with global definitions to ensure equivalency is important. Globally the measurement of naturally forested areas, deforestation and carbon accounting are measured in terms of land use and land use change (LULUCF stands for land use, land use change and forestry).

Australian definitions enable us to demonstrate the Australian regional context and highlight vital land management practices to maintain food production, healthy landscapes and biodiversity.

Key definitions are as follows:

Agricultural land use is a core feature of international frameworks. In Australia it is land used for the production of food and fibre including the grazing of livestock and is demonstrated in two ways:

1. The Australian Land Use Management (ALUM)² owned by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES)
2. The Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999. Section ss43B

In Australia grassfed beef production predominantly takes place on Classification 2 landscapes whereby production occurs on *Relatively Natural Environments*, this includes grazing native vegetation.

The ALUM Classifications are broken into 6 classification categories that can be identified by mapping technology:

ALUM Classifications (Version 8)



Class 1. Conservation & Natural Environments

e.g., Rehabilitation area wilderness area, traditional Indigenous uses



Class 2. Production from Relatively Natural Environment

e.g., Grazing native vegetation, wood production forestry



Class 3. Production from Dryland Agriculture & Plantations

e.g., Plantation forests, cropping



Class 4. Production from Irrigated Agriculture & Plantations

e.g., Irrigated tree fruits, irrigated cotton



Class 5. Intensive uses

e.g., Dairy sheds, glasshouses, poultry farms



Class 6. Water

e.g., River, Marsh/wetland

²<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/aclump/land-use/alum-classification>

To see a complete breakdown of each ALUM classification visit: Australian Land Use and Management Classification Version 8 (October 2016)³.

Legality Test: Australia has over 136 existing vegetation laws embedded in State, Territory and Federal Legislation that protects the environment and biodiversity and enables best practice land management with positive environmental and social outcomes. This is representative of the complexity and variation of the 89 bioregions within the Australian landscape.

Forest: An area, incorporating all living and non-living components, that is dominated by trees having usually a single stem and a mature or potentially mature stand height exceeding 2 metres and with existing or potential crown cover of overstorey strata about equal to or greater than 20%.

The determination of forest by measure of tree height and canopy cover percentage is used as a measure of biodiversity and climate. In Australia 2 metres tall and 20% canopy cover is used to represent the diverse landscapes in our 89 bioregions; it does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural use or urban land use.

Deforestation: Deforestation is the illegal clearing of trees on land, used for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes, that violates vegetation management laws and where trees exceed forest thresholds.

Under all international frameworks (FAO, AFI, EUDR), *Forest* does not include 'land that is predominantly under agricultural use'. The above provides clarity on how Australia's land management practices align with international requirements through the definition of Agricultural land use in the Australian context and the definition of Deforestation that is internationally credible and fit-for purpose in Australia.

It is important to acknowledge the significance and potential of the Australian beef industry's role in global food security and climate sustainability. Australia exports 70% of the beef it produces annually and manages approximately 50% of the country's landmass. This enables the sector to play a vital role in the sustainability of the landscape with best practice management through our ability to offset national emissions by sequestering carbon in soils and vegetation.

Australian beef production is largely unique in that cattle often graze in areas with varying degrees of above ground vegetation. Currently, livestock grazing occurs on 325 million hectares of native vegetation, which includes 58 million hectares of native trees and native grasses. Whilst in other parts of the world landscapes have been heavily modified for centuries. Australian vegetation actively grows and evolves with natural biological cycles. Livestock grazing in these landscapes provides both food production and environmental benefits. This is achieved through livestock maintaining a healthy balance of tree and grass cover in areas that would otherwise hold a considerable fire risk⁴, weed infestation and/or biodiversity loss.

Australia is a leader in improving efficiency of agricultural land through adoption of technology and science. From 1970 to 2020, agricultural output increased by 104% while land used by agriculture decreased by 28%. This gradual and sustainable intensification of production has been important in helping deliver on the multiple objectives demanded of producers around production and environmental impact.

It is vital that there is recognition for the role the Australian beef industry plays in food security both domestically and globally to over 100 countries that we export our beef to. The Australian beef industry has much to offer the world and should be supported by both government and the Australian people; it is vital to recognise that climate and hunger are global issues and need action at both a global and local level⁵.

Trees and their active management have many important facets in global agriculture such as healthy ecosystems, bio fertilisers, agro forestry, fodder and tree crops. This is a core reason why agricultural land is excluded from global forest definitions.

To enable the demonstration of beef production co-existing with biodiversity outcomes industry and Government tools must be available to support producers to measure and report on biodiversity metrics via access to low to no-cost tools and resources.

³<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/aclump/land-use/alum-classification/alum-classes>

⁴<https://fennergchool.anu.edu.au/research/research-stories/untapped-potential-animals-help-reduce-bushfire-risk>

⁵[https://www.mla.com.au/news-and-events/industry-news/australia-exports-record-\\$17-billion-worth-of-red-meat-in-2023/](https://www.mla.com.au/news-and-events/industry-news/australia-exports-record-$17-billion-worth-of-red-meat-in-2023/)

⁶<https://cattleaustralia.com.au/australian-beef-key-to-cutting-global-hunger-and-carbon/>

To empower producers to achieve equitable outcomes there needs to be demonstrated commercial market benefits for the provision of environment and sustainability data, not just through additionality but decades of effective land, pest and weed management.

To ensure the Australian beef industry can continue to develop sustainably there needs to be a greater focus on supporting strategic agricultural growth through sustainable development plans. This will ensure that food security, regional communities, agricultural production and the economy are not compromised.

To demonstrate the Australian beef industry's environmental credentials and verify land use compliance for market requirements, the Federal government needs to ensure producers and industry have access to an accurate and up-to-date national dataset to demonstrate agricultural land use, nature and biodiversity.

The following recommendations represent core requirements to demonstrate sustainable beef production that attracts incentives for biodiversity, market access, and strategic growth, so that Australian beef producers can be recognized as world leaders in environmental and biodiversity management practices.

Recommendations:

1. Australian government to manage an accurate and up-to-date (updated annually) national dataset to demonstrate through satellite mapping agricultural land use, nature and biodiversity

2. Ensure equivalency with international standards that support producers operating within the Australian context in maintaining access to both domestic and international markets and ensure technical barriers to trade are compliant with World Trade Organisation rules
3. Industry and government tools must be accessible to enable producers to demonstrate the benefits of the co-existence of beef production and biodiversity outcomes
4. Empower strategic agricultural growth through sustainable development plans that detail strategies to ensure food security, regional economies, communities and local ecosystems are not compromised

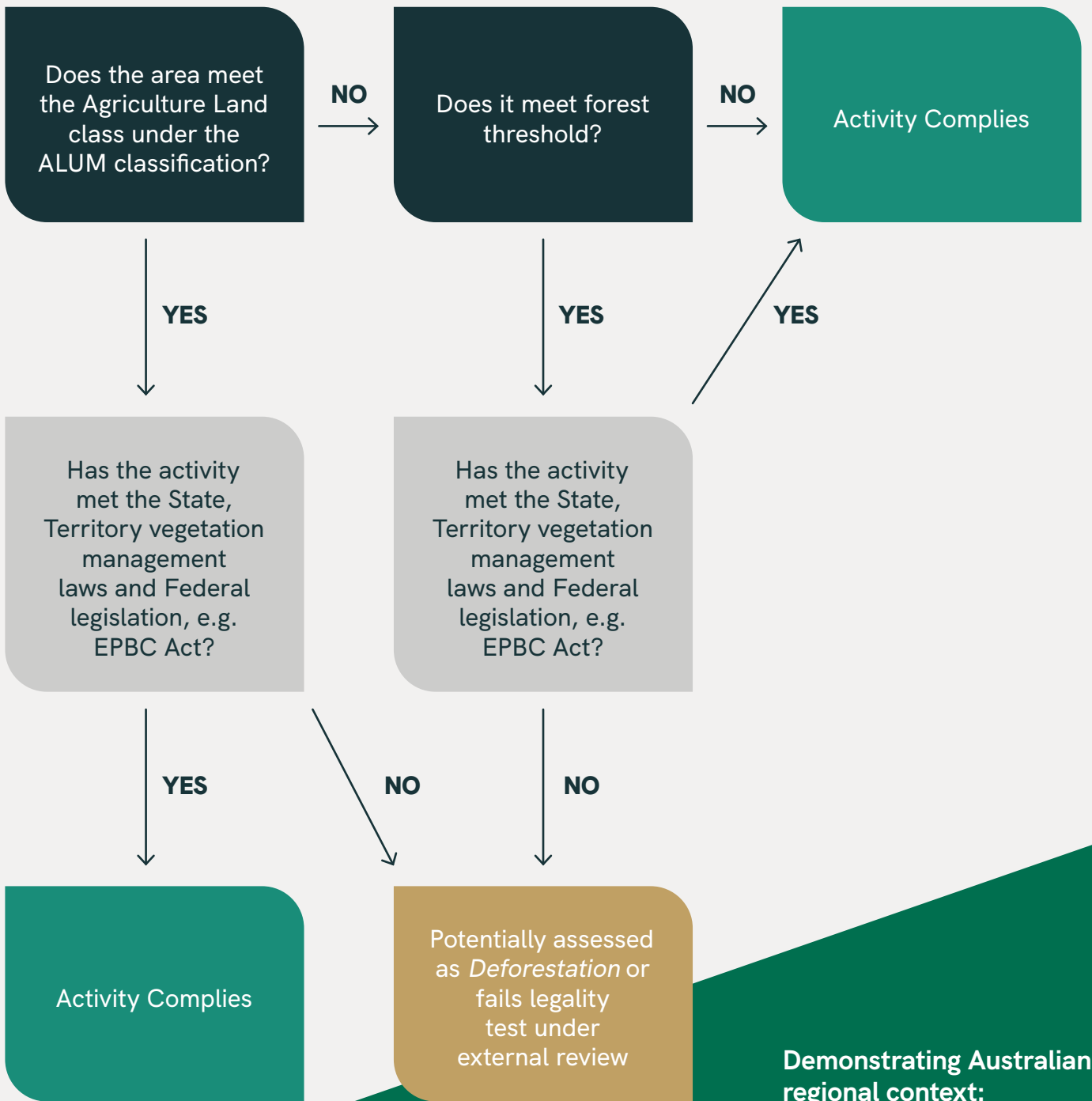
Conclusion:

Cattle Australia promotes active land management for the benefit of livestock production, the environment, biodiversity and active participation in all market opportunities.

CA will continue to promote the Australian beef industry's strong credentials as world leaders in food production, agricultural land management and biodiversity outcomes by participating in key events and partnering with organisations for a united voice for Australian agriculture.



Land Management Decision Tool



Demonstrating Australian regional context:

- Agricultural land use classification/s
- Forest thresholds
- State, Territory and Federal legislation

Recommendation One:

Australian government to manage an accurate and up-to-date (updated annually) national dataset to demonstrate through satellite mapping, agricultural land use, nature and biodiversity.

For producers and industry this will provide clarity and consistency on Australian Land Use Management (ALUM) classifications, forest thresholds and other environmental data. It simplifies implementation for producers, as they do not have to navigate different standards and data requirements from multiple organisations.

The impact and value in utilising ALUM will be more accurate assessments of land management practices, and the demonstration of agricultural land use for meeting market access requirements and showcasing sustainability credentials.

To progress, this requires for:

- Government to provide accurate and timely data to support industry and market decisions, including yearly updates to the ALUM
- Industry and governments to collaborate in processes whereby metrics and methods are being determined for the industry to demonstrate its land management and biodiversity credentials and agricultural land use verification
- Producers and Government to be able to correct the data and mapping in the instance that inaccuracies are found

This work is required to ensure Government is the regulator of environmental performance that supports market access negotiations and is viewed domestically and internationally as the most credible source of information.

This ensures that:

- Government information is consistently applied and supports equitable outcomes for producers at the lowest cost
- Government information provides the necessary transparency that verifies market claims and enables the greatest amount of market options for producers

- Government information facilitates educating the next generation of beef consumers and people residing in urban areas on the role producers play in managing agricultural land, local ecosystems and its biodiversity
- Improvements are made in data lags as some existing environmental information is back-dated by three years and does not empower producers to verify routine and necessary land management practices
- Agricultural land use can continue to be a distinguishing feature in significant frameworks, legislation and regulation such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The value in accurate data:

- Australia's clearing and re-clearing rate was 0.134% in 2020-21, with a net positive change in forest area since 2008 (see appendix A)
- Invasive plants, pests and diseases is now the number one issue impacting biodiversity loss in Australia⁷. In an average year established vertebrate pest animals and weeds are estimated to cost Australian agricultural producers at least \$5.3 billion

⁷<https://ausenv.tern.org.au/aer/biodiversity/index.html>

Recommendation Two:

Ensure equivalency with international standards that support producers operating within the Australian context in maintaining access to both domestic and international markets and ensure technical barriers to trade are compliant with World Trade Organisation rules.

Domestic and international markets are increasingly seeking assurances on the sustainability credentials of Australian beef production. The Land Management Commitment (LMC) provides this assurance specifically for land management practices undertaken by grass-fed beef producers, supporting ongoing market access requirements now and into the future.

Any misalignment of global and domestic definitions will cause adverse outcomes for the environment and for producers. Common routine Australian land management practices are outlined through case studies in the Land Management Commitment information paper⁸. If routine agricultural land management practices are framed as deforestation this will have three main impacts:

1. Perverse outcomes on the environment through the lack of active management of fire, weeds and pests
2. Add business cost of compliance to the industry and producer
3. Negatively impact global and domestic food security

Ensuring that the Australian Government and the beef supply chain is strongly committed to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and its frameworks of rules, which helps promote and protect the open global trading system is vital to a thriving export-dependent Australian beef industry.

Supporting producers to operate within the Australian regional context by actively managing their landscapes for beef production and biodiversity outcome, whilst maintaining market access globally, ensures the industry will be sustainable. This includes supporting producers in navigating information requests and understanding their compliance requirements with market specifications and confidently engage in conversations with supply chain partners.

To progress, this requires:

- The implementation of regulations such as the EUDR to be delayed until clarity is provided on compliance requirements, attestation systems and dispute resolution process for exporting beef, beef products and leather/hides into the European Union (EU)
- The Australian government to act accordingly if a breach of the WTO rules is suspected
- Strategic communication by industry, financial institutions and supply chain partners to provide support to producers in understanding market opportunities and information requirements
- Industry to develop further market claims through the setting of language standards and ensure there are simple mechanisms that evidence market claims
- Equivalency be adopted for international trade negotiations

Demonstrating sustainable practices is becoming essential for conducting business domestically and globally. It is crucial that the Australian beef industry emphasises its contributions and improvements to the environment and biodiversity, with government incentives such as the Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) and the Nature Repair Market and new market opportunities through product claims.

⁸https://cattleaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/240613-Land-Management-Commitment_Information-Paper_FINAL.pdf

Recommendation Three:

Industry and Government tools must be accessible to enable producers to demonstrate the benefits of the co-existence of beef production and biodiversity outcomes.

Accurately measuring biodiversity across a landscape is notoriously difficult, and there is currently no agreed, consistent way to do this. For producers this will inform decisions and demonstrate sustainability and social license within industry and the greater supply chain.

To progress, this requires:

- Further development and maturity of the Australian Beef Sustainability Framework
- The Australian beef industry's sustainability credentials to be promoted
- The development of a sustainability module within the Livestock Production Assurance program
- Encouragement and support to producers to measure and report on biodiversity metrics via access to low to no-cost tools and resources
- Clear demonstration of return on investment for producers

This will better utilise platforms and programs such as The Environmental Credentials of Australian Grassfed Beef platform⁹ developed by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) in response to the growing demand from the supply chain to report on the industry's sustainability credentials.

This ensures that:

- Grassfed beef producers are empowered and enabled to demonstrate positive biodiversity outcomes, with Australia having the most extensive biodiversity in the world
- Producers can continue to appropriately manage their land under State, Territory and Federal vegetation laws and measure the role of beef production and positive biodiversity outcomes

- The diversity of natural environments must be considered in policymaking with more empowerment to producers to promote their land management practices
- Key management practices can be demonstrated such as fodder harvesting, management of regrowth, weed and pest control, prescribed burning, revegetation, erosion control, and fencing for spelling or protecting waterways

The value of accurate data:

- Producers are environmental stewards of 325 million hectares of grazing native vegetation
- Biodiversity in Australia is maintained and protected through active land management practices that includes invasive weeds, pests and diseases. These practices are embedded in 136 pieces of State, Territory and Federal legislation
- Cattle-producing land in Australia is managed for biodiversity outcomes through active management. These types of measures include weed and pest control, prescribed burning, revegetation, erosion control, and fencing for spelling or protecting waterways
- 7,600,000 ha of cattle-producing land is set aside for conservation protection purposes¹⁰. Industry is well aware conservation of significant sites is important, and is continually finding the correct balance of land set aside and land used for production

⁹<https://www.envcred.com.au/>

¹⁰<https://www.sustainableaustralianbeef.com.au/resources/news/absf-explained-biodiversity/>

Recommendation Four:

Empower strategic agricultural growth through sustainable development plans that detail strategies to ensure food security, regional economies and communities and local ecosystems are not compromised.

By 2050 the global population will reach almost 10 billion, which is an increase of almost 3 billion more people to feed and clothe. To sustainably meet these food and nutritional requirements producers and landholders need to be supported with tools and measures that demonstrate sustainable land management outcomes.

For producers, sustainable development plans will inform and identify opportunities to develop their businesses and landscapes sustainably and efficiently. The impact will be viable development within the Australian agriculture sector to advance production through geographic disbursement, regional and local food security and growth of rural communities.

To progress, this requires:

- Australian, State and Territory governments to endorse the forming of sustainable development plans and processes
- Industry to work with the governments to guide the template for these sustainable development plans and ensure they are suitable for our producers and their businesses

This ensures that:

- The Australian beef industry can continue to play a strong role in ensuring food security both domestically and internationally to the 100-plus countries Australian beef is exported to
- The diversification of Australian agricultural businesses is not delayed or prevented by regulation that does not support and prioritize food security and economic growth and prosperity

The value of accurate data:

- Historically, land clearing has been supported by the Australian, State and Territory governments as an essential component of improved productivity for national economic prosperity
- Australian agriculture covers over half of the nation's land mass and directly employs around 304,000 people across approximately 86,000 farms¹¹. Australia's Indigenous land and forest estate (2020) dataset shows that a total of 134 million hectares of land in Australia (17%) is Indigenous owned

¹¹<https://www.climateworkscentre.org/land-use-futures/australias-land-use/>

Appendix

A.

- To measure clearing percentage of the total forest in Australia, the DCCEEW, National Inventory Reports, is used for the source for the clearing, regrowth and re-clearing figures and Figure 1.1a. iv-3 of *Australia's State of the Forests Report* at: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/forestsaustralia/sofr/criterion-1/indicator-1.1a.iv-forest-area-change>

⁹<https://www.envcred.com.au/>

¹⁰<https://www.sustainableaustralianbeef.com.au/resources/news/absf-explained-biodiversity/>



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**LAND
MANAGEMENT
COMMITMENT
STRATEGY**

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