



**SHEEP
SUSTAINABILITY
FRAMEWORK**

Strategic Plan

2025–2030



Contents

Plan on a page 3

Background 4

Governance 5

Situational analysis 6

Industry feedback 7

Moving the SSF forward 7

The strategy 8

Stakeholder engagement 9

Data collection and reporting 10

Responsiveness to industry needs 11

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Plan on a page

ROLE		
The role of the Sheep Sustainability Framework (SSF) is to monitor, measure and report industry performance against sustainability priorities.		
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE		
Be a trusted and reliable source for reporting on the Australian sheep industry's sustainable production of world class sheep, meat and wool.		
STRATEGIES		
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ■ Raise awareness and improve understanding of the SSF through promotion – to both producers and the entire value chain. ■ Provide regular engagement opportunities for industry stakeholders via authentic, accountable consultation. ■ Support the development of mechanisms to enable the SSF to be used in influencing practice change/industry investment. ■ Maintain, foster and build trust in the SSF and build on our existing strong relationships with industry.	DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING ■ Implement and maintain robust and transparent data collection protocols for both existing and new metrics. ■ Continue the transition to an agile, web-based visual insights dashboard. ■ Regularly undertake extensive materiality assessments to define and prioritise sustainability issues and investment. ■ Report to industry on a regular basis.	RESPONSIVENESS TO INDUSTRY NEEDS ■ Undertake evaluation of SSF progress and relevance every 12 months. ■ Review responses to contemporary and emerging trends in sustainability. ■ Continuously refine the SSF to meet market needs. ■ Ensure ongoing collaboration and alignment with other agricultural commodity frameworks.

Background

The Sheep Sustainability Framework (SSF), launched in April 2021, is a food and fibre framework.

The role of the SSF is to monitor, measure and report industry performance against sustainability priorities. It helps define sustainability for the Australian sheep industry and articulates the key themes and priorities on which the industry should focus.

In the time since its launch, the SSF has been considerably refined and promoted to industry. Its direction was initially covered by the 2022–2024 Strategic Plan, much of which remains relevant for the 2025–2030 plan¹.

The SSF is designed to assist the industry to better define and articulate its opportunities, challenges, and impacts by reporting on sustainable practices and identifying areas for improvement. The SSF must remain forward-thinking and agile to effectively address emerging challenges and opportunities. By doing so, it can be used by industry to help protect and grow access to investment, finance and customers by providing credible evidence of performance and improvement.

The SSF recognises that industry sustainability encompasses the environment, animals, people and their collective prosperity. Further, it is acknowledged that each sheep producer and woolgrower operate under their own specific conditions and will have their individual sustainability goals which reflect their geographical, climatic, and operating environment.

The SSF does **not**:

- set industry policies, goals or targets
- audit or certify individual businesses
- impose reporting requirements on individual businesses.

¹ Where applicable, the structure of and wording from the 2022 – 2024 Strategic Plan has been retained.



Governance

The SSF governance structure and objectives are illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Sheep Sustainability Framework governance structure

Sheep Producers Australia (SPA) and WoolProducers Australia (WPA) are the peak industry bodies (PIBs) for the sheepmeat and wool industries, respectively. These bodies form the SSF Board and have the mandate to use SSF outputs as supporting evidence to set relevant industry policy.

The Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) relevant to the sheep industry, Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), support the SSF by providing funding along with strategic and secretariat support. These RDCs can use the Framework's outputs to help in their planning and research investments.

The Sustainability Steering Group (SSG) is responsible for leading the SSF by setting the strategy and implementation plans and representing and promoting the SSF in relevant settings. The SSG features strong representation across sheep-producing regions and the wool and sheepmeat value chain.

A Consultative Committee, made up of representatives from across industry, will provide ongoing input to the SSF. An Industry Forum has also been developed to discuss issues specific to internal stakeholder groups. Expert working groups will also be convened when necessary.

The industry will report progress against the SSF annually. Note that separate performance indicators will be included for the sheepmeat and wool sectors as relevant and where data exists.

Situational analysis

Strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)

A key strength of the SSF is that it was developed and subsequently reviewed through a thorough and inclusive process that brings together key industry bodies in SPA, WPA, MLA, AWI and the broader industry. Its major weakness is the vast number of available metrics which make it complex to simply communicate the primary findings.

The opportunities now are to drive engagement and awareness of the SSF to help industry demonstrate its sustainability credentials and help maintain its social licence. The threats are that in a fragmented industry, there will be a lack of accountability for improving some practices, while others may choose to misrepresent the data.

STRENGTHS

- Excellent consultation in developing the SSF
- Conducts regular materiality assessments
- Forward-thinking and proactive
- Constant revision of indicators for inclusion, removal or refinement
- Evidence-based sustainability reporting

WEAKNESSES

- Too many metrics to simply communicate
- Not a user-friendly report
- Need better understanding of how to leverage information
- Lack of awareness of the SSF throughout the value chain
- Lack of metrics around consumer perceptions

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase awareness of the SSF
- Build the profile of the SSF and use it to prosecute trade agendas
- Align with other agricultural reporting frameworks
- Use of technology to reduce the cost and increase the efficiency and capability of data collection

THREATS

- Deliberate misuse of data
- Sustainability reporting becomes increasingly mandated
- Integrity of data is called into question or scrutinised by external stakeholders
- Aggressive activism, eroding SSF effectiveness
- Relatively fragmented industry

Industry feedback

In developing this new five-year Strategic Plan, considerable industry consultation took place. This included nineteen meetings with industry stakeholders along with meetings with the SSF Consultative Committee Forum, SSG and Board. General findings from that consultation were:

- all were very supportive of the SSF
- some wanted the SSF to go beyond its current remit – for example, establish targets etc
- strong support for the SSF to be a trusted industry reference which helps drive continuous improvement
- the SSF should build to be ‘the source of truth’ and absolutely rebuke greenwashing
- transparency in data collection and reporting were viewed as very important
- SSF is not well known by the grassroots industry yet
- a concise summary of key findings is needed for communication with industry and key stakeholders, and
- connection with other agricultural sustainability frameworks is important, as is the linkage to the Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework.

Moving the SSF forward

This five-year SSF Strategic Plan must continue to evolve the SSF from a document with relatively low exposure to one with a high profile and awareness across the industry.

The SSF must also evolve to cement its position as a trusted and transparent source of industry reporting that clearly articulates our position and improvements regarding sustainability priorities. Adapting to stakeholder needs is important to ensure continued relevance and increased uptake across the breadth of the value chain from producer through to market.

The SSF must have metrics that are simple to collect and understand, are applicable to stakeholder needs, and evolve to changing expectations and science. It should help to inform the industry of required improvements and serve as compelling evidence to drive change.

FROM	TO
Low awareness	High awareness
Unknown	Trusted
Incomplete metrics	Complete metrics
Static	Agile and dynamic
Limited impact	Informing and driving change

Strategic Plan 2025–2030

The strategy

The overall strategic objective is to be a trusted and reliable source for reporting on the Australian sheep industry's sustainable production of world class sheep, meat and wool.

To continue moving the SSF forward and propel it towards its objective, three overall strategies will be implemented.



Strategy 1

Stakeholder engagement

Rationale

The Australian sheep industry comprises many farming enterprises, operates over a vast area in a wide range of environments, utilises a variety of business and production systems, and is overseen and supported by numerous, different-sized organisations. As a result, the stakeholder landscape is both large and complex.

While the stakeholder engagement strategy operated in the first strategic planning period, more still needs to be done to meet the SSF's strategic objective.

Stakeholder engagement encompasses how the SSF will inform, involve, consult, and partner with the breadth of sheep, meat and wool supply chain stakeholders who influence, drive, and implement industry actions.

The supporting RDCs of AWI and MLA have well-established communication channels through which the SSF can extend key messages to the relevant audience. This includes regular e-newsletters, website updates, social media channels and relevant industry events.

Activities

Utilise a range of communication and extension channels to:

- Raise awareness and improve understanding of the SSF through promotion – to both producers and the entire value chain.
- Ensure regular engagement opportunities for industry stakeholders to enable authentic, accountable consultation.
- Support the development of mechanisms to enable the SSF to be used in influencing practice change/ industry investment.
- Maintain, foster and build trust in the SSF and build on existing strong relationships with industry.

Key performance indicators

- The SSF is utilised to inform investment in research, development and adoption activities by MLA and AWI.
- The percentage of sheep producers that are aware of the SSF and its activities increases year on year².
- Industry stakeholders agree that the SSF is a trusted industry reference.

² From a base of 41% in 2024, measured through the annual MLA Member's Survey.

Strategy 2

Data collection and reporting

Rationale

Tracking industry progress with transparent and defensible data is central to the SSF ensuring its credibility, accuracy, and trustworthiness.

Sound reporting is accurate, valid, timely and transparent clearly outlining industry progress, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and identifying areas for improvement to all stakeholder groups.

Defensible and accessible data empowers informed decision making, allows for prioritisation of resources and provides assurance of the sustainability credentials of the Australian sheep industry.

Sound reporting reliably tracks changes over time, showcases performance, and identifies areas that require improvement. Moreover, promotion of the SSF (Strategy 1) will demonstrate industry transparency and a willingness to continuously improve.

Defensible data is accurate, valid, reliable, and timely. Such data, reported in an accessible fashion, empowers informed decision making, and helps prioritise resources. From a strategic point of view, defensible and accessible data increases efficiency while helping to eliminate doubt. The confident evaluation of trending data will inform each strategic phase of the SSF.

Activities

Ensure robust and transparent data collection and reporting by:

- Implementing and maintaining robust and transparent data collection protocols for both existing and new metrics.
- Continuing the transition to an agile, web-based visual insights dashboard.
- Regularly undertaking extensive materiality assessments to define and prioritise sustainability issues and investment.
- Reporting to industry on a regular basis.

Key performance indicators

- The SSF continues to make improvements in its alignment with its reporting principles (transparency, accountability, inclusivity, credibility, practicality and relevance).
- Data is consistently reported for all indicators in the SSF.
- Materiality assessments are conducted every three years.
- Digital accessibility of the SSF's data and reporting continues to improve.

Strategy 3

Responsiveness to industry needs

Rationale

The sustainability landscape that sheep producers and their products exist within is constantly evolving. To maintain its value as an industry leadership initiative, the SSF must be agile and responsive to current material issues and opportunities within this landscape. This may require new data collection methodologies for existing metrics or new metrics to address specific priorities as they arise. Sheep producers are often producers of other commodities so strengthening relationships and collaboration with other agricultural sustainability frameworks will facilitate increased alignment and simplicity when communicating the sustainability of Australian agriculture.

Activities

- Undertake evaluation of SSF progress and relevance every 12 months.
- Review responses to contemporary and emerging trends in sustainability.
- Continuously refine the SSF to meet market needs.
- Ensure ongoing collaboration and alignment with other agricultural commodity frameworks.

Key performance indicators

- Evaluation of SSF relevance is undertaken annually.
- Ongoing refinement of SSF is made to meet market needs.
- Collaboration and alignment with other industry frameworks occurs regularly.



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