

# Fresh Produce Sustainability Charter

Sustainability is not only integral – but increasingly critical – to the success, prosperity and survival of the fresh produce industry globally. The growing complexity and interdependency of social, economic and environmental outcomes makes sustainability the most important challenge facing the fresh produce industry. This is compounded by the fact that sustainability has significant impacts across the fresh produce supply chain – from production and packing to distribution, retail and consumer consumption. Consequently, all partners along the fresh produce supply chain play an essential role prioritizing, maintaining and improving the sustainability of the fresh produce supply chain. Furthermore, the fresh produce industry’s sustainability challenge is global in scope – with the fresh produce industry around the world facing sustainability challenges, be they social, economic or environmental.

As the complexity of sustainability continues to evolve, it is important to question if or how current practices such as audit/compliance are the most impactful strategy for sustainability assurance, and what principles & priorities should guide the industry going forward. An effective and efficient way forward is needed – one that is simple – principles-led, and outcomes based. Furthermore, key barriers should be identified and addressed by way of strategic commitments and actions

## PRINCIPLES

In response to this challenge, International Sustainability Summit participants identified key principles that enable fresh produce supply chain sustainability.

### **Adopt an Integrated Approach to Sustainability**

- Recognize the interconnectedness of the three aspects of sustainability: environmental, social, and governance (ESG).
- Adopt a systems-based view that addresses sustainability holistically rather than in silos.

### **Foster a Culture of Continuous Improvement**

- Set, and work towards ambitious yet realistic sustainability goals and targets that drive continuous progress.
- Regularly measure and report on sustainability performance to identify areas for improvement.

### **Prioritize Global Harmonization and Common Standards**

- Develop harmonized, industry-wide standards and best practices for sustainability metrics, reporting, and certifications.

- Align industry sustainability standards and efforts to globally recognized frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Elevate Industry Leadership and Advocacy**

- Industry, and industry associations must take a proactive role in shaping sustainability narratives and policies within our industry.
- Advocate for supportive government policies, research funding, and infrastructure investments.

By following these principles, the fresh produce industry can drive meaningful sustainability progress in a coordinated, credible, and impactful manner across the entirety of the global fresh produce supply chain.

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

Summit participants also identified key outcomes which should be pursued towards improving sustainability in the fresh produce supply chain, including:

### **Convert to Fully Sustainable Packaging**

- Develop industry-wide standards and best practices packaging enabling sustainable fresh supply chains.
- Invest in research and innovation towards packaging suitable for optimum end-of-life management strategies.
- Improve recycling infrastructure and consumer education for better packaging recovery.

### **Increase Material Use Efficiency**

- Promote the examination of waste hotspots throughout the supply chain and implement targeted solutions.



- Collaborate with waste management partners for diversion from landfills.
- Support the development of technologies and practices that mitigate food loss & waste.

### **Enhance Water Use Efficiency**

- Assess water risks across growing regions and particularly prioritize efforts in high-stress areas
- Adopt precision irrigation, regenerative agriculture and other water-efficient practices throughout the industry
- Invest in technologies that optimize water usage at all stages of the supply chain

### **Embrace Energy Use Efficiency**

- Measure scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions to identify biggest contributors at all stages of the supply chain
- Implement energy efficiency, renewable energy, and transportation optimization
- Develop standardized carbon calculation methodologies specific to produce, but aligned to global frameworks

### **Champion Supply Chain Transparency**

- Increase visibility into labor practices, human rights and social responsibility
- Consider certifications like Fair Trade or Equitable Food Initiative for supply chain due diligence
- Adopt international standards like IRIS or the Global Social Compliance Programme, amongst others
- Leverage technology for traceability and accountability throughout the chain

### **Reinforce Stakeholder Collaboration**

- Engage all stakeholders – supplier, growers, retailers, NGOs, regulators, consumers, and standards bodies
- Participate in industry working groups and sustainability initiatives
- Align our efforts to global frameworks like UN Sustainable Development Goals

## **BARRIERS & RISKS**

By prioritizing these areas through a coordinated industry-wide effort, the fresh produce sector can drive meaningful sustainability improvements

across environmental, social and economic dimensions, responding directly to the leading barriers and risks to achieving sustainability in the fresh produce supply chain, including:

### **Lack of Harmonized Standards and Metrics**

- Proliferation of different sustainability certifications, reporting requirements from customers and/or governments
- Lack of standardized methodologies to measure and report sustainability performance

### **Regulatory Uncertainty and Misalignment**

- Rapidly evolving and sometimes conflicting regulations around plastics, emissions, labor practices etc.
- Regulations shaped by incomplete understanding of produce industry realities against global standards or frameworks

### **Insufficient Infrastructure**

- Inadequate recycling/composting facilities for sustainable packaging and food waste
- Water scarcity and climate change impacts in certain growing regions

### **Cost and Resource Constraints**

- Sustainable packaging and technologies are often more expensive initially
- Limited financial and human resources dedicated to sustainability initiatives

### **Supply Chain Complexity**

- Global nature of produce supply chains with multiple handoffs and stakeholders
- Challenges in data collection, traceability and driving sustainability across the chain

### **Consumer Awareness and Participation**

- Lack of consumer understanding about sustainability impacts of packaging choices
- Difficulty incentivizing recycling/composting behavior changes

Overcoming these barriers will require coordinated industry-wide efforts, investment in sustainability solutions, supportive industry and regulatory policies and infrastructure, as well as education and engagement of all stakeholders in the produce supply chain.