Due diligence guidance for the food industry

Authors :

Boris Verbrugge (HIVA-KU Leuven)

Wim Verbeke (Sustenuto)

Fevia
Federaal Instituut voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling
KU LEUVEN HIVA
ONDERZOEKSINSTITUUT VOOR ARBEID EN SAMENLEVING
sustenuto

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This is a sector-specific complement to the online toolbox due diligence. It was developed as part of a learning network supply chain due diligence in the food industry that was facilitated by HIVA-KU Leuven and Sustenuto on behalf of Fevia, and was supported by the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development (FIDO).

Like other sectors, the food industry is coming under increasing pressure to pay attention to human and environmental risks. Societal attention is no longer limited to risks within your company, but also focuses on risks throughout the supply chain. Both at the level of individual Member States (France, Germany) and at the level of the European Union, there is now a clear push for mandatory due diligence legislation which obliges companies to take action. But even if you are not (yet) facing legal obligations, chances are that you are (or will be) exposed to questions and expectations from clients, public buyers, investors, or financial institutions.

According to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (the centerpiece of international 'business and human rights' regulation) due diligence comprises a set of processes to identify risks, mitigate risks, and report about due diligence. In essence, it encompasses three dimensions, which form the common thread of the online manual, and of this guidance document.

Figure 1: Three dimensions of due diligence

Understanding risk

Broadly speaking, societal attention has mostly focused on a rather select number of risks (notably child labour and deforestation) and products (notably coffee, cocoa, palm oil, and the meat industry). Yet risks in the food industry are much more diverse. The most well-known risks are situated in the agricultural stage, and in countries outside the EU. Yet this does not imply that no risks exist further 'downstream' or inside Europe. Just think of the precarious situation of migrants employed on Spanish strawberry farms or on Italian tomato farms, or the difficult situation facing Eastern European workers in German slaughterhouses.

Annex 1 provides a list of some of the key human rights and environmental risks in the food industry. In the online manual (and more precisely in the excel sheet accompanying this manual), you can find additional resources to help you obtain a more fine-grained understanding of risks for specific products or sub-sectors. to various tools that can get you started in identifying risks for specific products or sub-sectors.

Yet to fully understand risks, and to effectively mitigate them, you need to be aware of their root causes. In other words, what are the factors leading to the emergence and persistence of risks for exploitation, deforestation, water pollution, etc.? Roughly speaking, three categories of 'root causes' can be distinguished.

Geography

The cultivation of a wide range of tropical crops (e.g. coffee, cocoa, tropical fruits, palm oil) takes place in countries with a poor reputation in the domain of political stability, corruption, and (the enforcement of) environmental and labour laws.

Production process

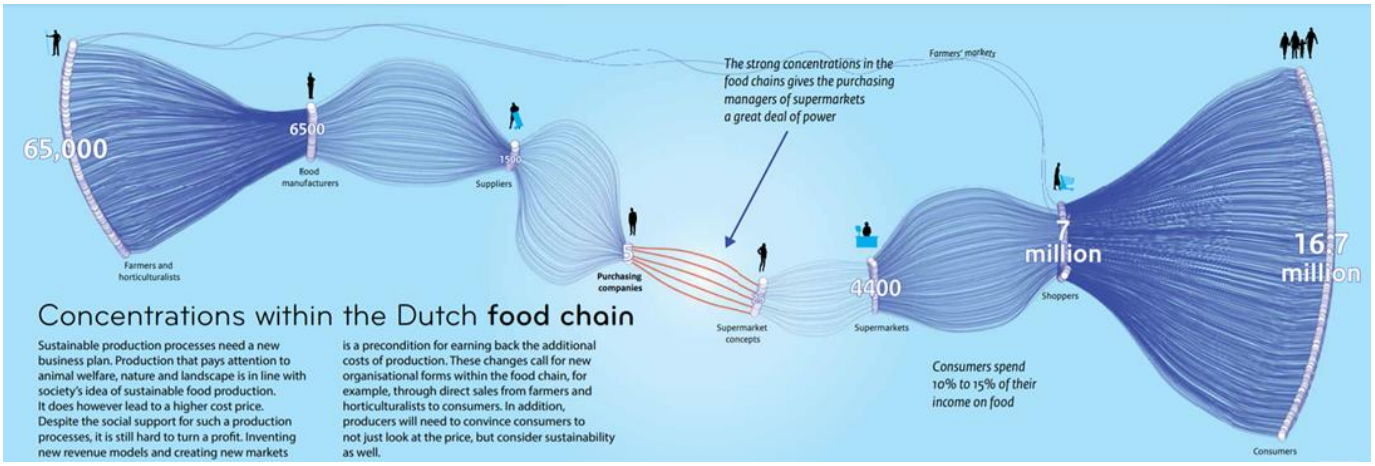
The most risky activities in terms of human rights are more labour-intensive and seasonal activities that rely on cheap and low-skilled labour. Examples include horticulture, the fishing industry, and more labour-intensive branches of food processing, like fruit and vegetable packaging and cutting, or the meat industry. Large-scale, capital-intensive commercial farming, and especially monoculture (e.g. soybean or palm oil), are in turn more often associated with risks for local communities and for the environment.

Structure of supply chain

Several food supply chains involve many intermediaries and smallholders. These supply chains are not by definition more risky, but are often less transparent, creating opportunities for evading social and environmental rules.

In addition, risks may arise from the dominance of certain companies in the supply chain. Large food conglomerates, retailers, and traders can exert pressures (in terms of price, quality, time, etc.) on suppliers, leaving them with no choice but to cut down on labour costs, delay investments in clean technologies, or to increase pressures on their own suppliers.

Figure 3: Concentrations in the Dutch food supply chain (source: data.pbl.nl)



Mitigating risk

The online manual describes various actions you can take as a company to deal with risks in supply chains, which may range from individual actions (e.g. a supplier dialogue) to participation in joint action, in the form of industry- or multi-stakeholder initiatives. A key message in the manual is that collaboration is at all times preferable to 'disengagement' from suppliers.

One step in the online manual involves inventorying existing industry- and multi-stakeholder initiatives. For each of these initiatives, you should also assess inclusiveness (are relevant stakeholders involved?), scope (which risks are addressed?), and monitoring mechanisms. To help you with this step, we have created an overview of existing initiatives in the food industry in Annex 2.

Integrating due diligence

Finally, due diligence should be integrated into your company in a sustainable way. It is not enough to adopt formal policies (e.g. a code of conduct), but you should also strengthen internal due diligence capacity and integrate risk-based due diligence in your procurement policies. The online toolbox explains each of these elements in more detail. Below, we include a case study that details how one of the participants to the learning network kick-started due diligence processes within the company.

Case: piloting due diligence in Milcobel

Milcobel is a cooperative that collects, processes and commercializes the milk of around 2,000 dairy farmers. The farmers are shareholders, and the added value/profit created by Milcobel flows directly back to these farmers. At the same time, Milcobel is a dairy company with sales in over 100 countries. Its activities are divided into 3 business units with various subsidiaries, and production locations in Belgium and France.

Milcobel tries to systematically improve its sustainability performance. For instance, in 2022, it was one of the first companies in Belgium to obtain the SDG champion certificate from VOKA and Unitar (United Nations Institute for Training and Research). To advance to SDG Ambassador, Milcobel is expected to carry out due diligence in its own operations and supply chains.

The starting point

A key challenge for Milcobel consists of collecting and consolidating relevant sustainability information from its supply chains. Milcobel already has a number of embryonical supply chain due diligence processes in place, notably with regard to food safety. Yet these processes had not yet been integrated into a broader due diligence strategy that also looks at human rights and environmental risks.

After an initial round of evaluation, it was decided to pilot due diligence in one of Milcobel's subsidiaries. YSCO is a large private label company that produces ice cream. It purchases products such as dairy, vegetable fats, fruit concentrates, sauces, nuts, chocolate, and vanilla. In total, over 400 ingredients are used that originate from more than 80 countries. Some of these ingredients are associated with clear risks for the environment and human rights.

Specifically, the project focused on the development of a method for supplier risk assessment. This method would focus, first, on inventorying potential risks, before moving on with an assessment of whether these potential risks are effectively present in YSCO's supply chains, and whether suppliers are exposed to these risks.

Supplier risk assessment

When developing a method for supplier risk assessment, we faced two key challenges. First, the main risks are often not located with direct suppliers, but further up the chain. Second, the portfolio consists of a very large number of possible combinations of products and countries of origin.

Step 1: Categorization. Due to the large number of combinations of products and countries, we decided to group YSCO's products into a dozen categories.

Step 2: Risk analysis. Supply chains in the food industry are slightly less complex than in other industries (e.g. technology). This creates opportunities for effectively mitigating risks in the entire supply chain. First, however, product risks need to be understood. A basic product risk analysis was undertaken based on publicly available sources of information (see below). It became immediately apparent that much of this information is rather generic, and is often behind a paywall, which raised both practical and ethical concerns.

Table 1: Resources used for the risk analysis

Global Rights Index 2022	Global Rights Index 2022
World Governance Indicators	World Bank Governance Indicators
Human Development Index	Human Development Index
Labour Rights Index	Labour Rights Index
Our World in Data	Our World in Data - Environmental Impacts
US Department of Labor	https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods
CSR Risk Checker	https://www.mvorisicochecker.nl/en/about-us

Step 3: supplier risk assessment. The product risk information was linked by Ysco to its supplier database. The suppliers themselves were then assigned risk scores based on a number of additional parameters. Via a weighting process, Ysco then managed to implement a risk prioritisation. The parameters used were country risks; existing risk management systems (e.g. EMAS, ISO14001); Participation in industry or multi-stakeholder initiatives; signing of code of conduct.

In addition to this supplier risk assessment, a number of additional initiatives are being undertaken by Milcobel. These include updating policies to strengthen the integration of due diligence, refining and effectively applying a supplier code of conduct, and reporting about due diligence in its sustainability reporting.

What's next?

Due diligence processes will be gradually fine-tuned and integrated into Ysco's policies and processes. Where possible, this will be linked to existing systems of supplier onboarding and evaluation. This includes a decision tree that links risk mitigation actions to risk scores. Additional actions are planned for the coming years. These are broadly aimed at (1) implementing due diligence within Milcobel; (2) shifting the focus from tier-1 towards the entire value chain; (3) strengthening internal processes to limit or reduce risks; (4) reinforcing internal capacity; and (5) setting up vertical integration to ensure adequate monitoring and reporting.

Lessons learned

Based on the learning network and the pilot projects, some key lessons can be formulated, which may be useful for other companies that wish (or need) to carry out due diligence.

1) Build on existing processes and knowledge

A lot of companies already have practices in place that can play a role in due diligence processes. Examples include systems of supplier screening, systems to monitor product safety or quality, implicit attention to health and safety risks during supplier visits, etc. Often, however, these processes, and the corresponding expertise, are fragmented across people

and functions. Make sure to (1) take stock of existing processes and practices; and (2) work on horizontal and vertical integration (see point 2).

2) Integrating due diligence into the business requires a cross-cutting approach

Some horizontal integration across business functions is inevitable. Convening different profiles (e.g. buyers, legal/compliance, quality control, sustainability) can trigger a mutual learning process. Definitely consider vertical integration as well: involve management as much as possible, and make sure there is a clear commitment from the top.

3) A basic understanding of product risks is difficult, but essential

Companies tend to look primarily at risks at direct (tier-1) suppliers. Yet a lot of risks are further up the supply chain, at tier-2, tier-3, ... suppliers. To ensure that these risks receive sufficient attention, it is important to (1) analyze product risks throughout the chain; and (2) pay attention to how suppliers themselves deal with these risks. Importantly, a risk analysis of a supply chain is not the same as an exhaustive supply chain mapping.

4) Learning by doing

Due diligence is a process of continuous improvement. Companies can grow into due diligence by building up experience in risk identification and management, by establishing a broad consultation process with stakeholders, by seeking engagements from business relations, etc.

5) Due diligence as a strategic reflection on sustainability approach

Launching due diligence processes is an opportunity to critically review your existing sustainability approach. It allows you to take a step back, by considering the risks you face, and to better match your actions with these risks.

6) Take care of your suppliers

Well-meant actions to deal with risks at suppliers paradoxically result in an increased workload and costs for suppliers. A good example are audits, where suppliers are often expected to carry the cost. A supplier risk assessment can also put smaller suppliers at a disadvantage, as they struggle to meet the set criteria. It is therefore crucial to engage in dialogue with your suppliers, and to see how progress can be made together.

Annex 1: Overview of key risks

This (non-exhaustive) overview of key risks in the technology industry can get you started with the risk assessment in the section 'understanding risks' of the online manual.

Human rights

Child labour

Agriculture and fisheries together account for over 70 per cent of total child labour. In absolute terms, this means that at least 108 million children are employed in these sectors. Although most of these children are active in small-scale, family-based agriculture and fisheries, child labour is also a risk in commercial farming (both small- and large-scale). As a result of the COVID pandemicwe have seen a global increase in the number of children employed in agriculture.

Examples

Bananas (Ecuador, Nicaragua), nuts (Turkey, Vietnam), shrimps (Cambodia, Bangladesh), cane sugar (Brazil, Philippines), vanilla (Madagascar), cocoa (Ivory Coast, Ghana), coffee (Colombia, Honduras), spices (Indonesia, India), seeds (India).

References

https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2021/2022-TVPRA-List-of-Goods-v3.pdf

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575499.pdf

https://www.imvoconvenanten.nl/nl/voedingsmiddelen/convenant/publicaties

Forced labour

While forced labour is often confused with 'modern slavery', it encompasses a multitude of situations in which individuals experience coercion to work. These may include deception, restrictions on freedom of movement, (the threat of) physical or sexual violence, withholding of identity documents or wages, excessive overtime, and systems of debt bondage. Migrant workers are disproportionately at risk of becoming victims of forced labour. About 13 per cent of forced labour worldwide (>2 million people) occurs in agriculture. Migrant workers, who are often recruited through middlemen, are also the most vulnerable category in agriculture. As is the case for child labour, COVID has caused a global increase in forced labour. Because of the specific context in fisheries (poor regulation, long-distance employment), forced labour is also a real problem in this sector.

Examples

Fisheries (China, Vietnam), tomatoes (Italy, China), palm oil (Malaysia), tea (India)

References

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf

https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/importing-risk/fishing/

Occupational health and safety

According to the International Labour Organisation, agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors worldwide, alongside construction and mining. The high number of occupational accidents and deaths (an estimated 170,000 per year) are due in part to the use of dangerous machinery, a lack of (control of) safety regulations, and the importance of informal labour. This informality ensures not only that existing legislation does not apply to these workers, but also that they are rarely entitled to social protection (e.g. health insurance).

Particularly in seasonal work, the workload is often very high, which further increases the risk of accidents. Muscle and joint disorders are common, and in many countries workers are exposed to heat and dust. In addition, the frequent use of chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, etc.) poses important risks to the health of

workers and local communities. COVID has shown that risks of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions are not limited to non-European agriculture, but also exist within the EU, and in other steps of the food chain. Think of the situation in Spanish horticultural companies or Irish slaughterhouses, where migrant workers are often employed in horrendous conditions.

Examples

Strawberries (Spain, Morocco, Egypt), Tomatoes (Italy, Spain), Citrus (South Africa, Spain), Bananas (Ecuador, Brazil)

References

https://www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/hazardous-work/WCMS_110188/lang--en/index.htm

https://www.osha.gov/agricultural-operations/hazards

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_769864.pdf

https://verite.org/african-migrants-strawberries-spain-pandemic/

Freedom of association

A significant proportion of employment in agriculture is in the informal economy, where union representation is by definition limited. Where trade unions do operate, they are often restricted, for instance through the frequent use of outsourcing and recruitment through middlemen, and in extreme cases even through (the threat of) physical violence.

Examples

Pineapple (Costa Rica, Ecuador), bananas (Philippines, Ecuador), tomatoes (Italy, Spain)

References

https://www.solidar.org/system/downloads/attachments/000/001/090/original/SOLIDAR_Factsheet_on_Agriculture_and_decent_work.pdf?1582203802

https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/2022_oxfam_no_limits_to_exploitation_en.pdf

Discrimination

Vulnerable groups (e.g. migrants, women, ethnic minorities) may be active in different steps of the food supply chain. Discrimination in terms of origin, gender, skin colour, etc. is a common problem, both within and outside the EU. Migrant workers in particular are highly vulnerable, and are frequently the victims of exploitation and sexual violence.

Examples

Wine (South Africa), fish and seafood (Southeast Asia), strawberries (Spain), tomatoes (Italy), nuts (Turkey)

References

https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/2022_oxfam_no_limits_to_exploitation_en.pdf

https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/worldwide-study-women-say-gender-discrimination-persists-in-agriculture/

https://womeninseafood.org/

https://www.ilo.org/africa/information-resources/publications/WCMS_760505/lang--en/index.htm

Local community rights

Large-scale agriculture can create significant risks for local communities. Land grabbing has traditionally been associated with plantation agriculture, and even today, reports continue to emerge about the violation of the land rights of local communities (indigenous or otherwise), for instance for the purposes of large-scale cattle ranching or soybean cultivation. In addition, large-scale agriculture often has far-reaching

environmental impacts, which inevitably leads to impacts on surrounding communities (e.g. access to clean water).

Examples
Palm oil (Indonesia, Malaysia), Livestock (Brazil), Soy (Brazil), Cocoa (Ghana)

References

https://www.maplecroft.com/insights/analysis/palm-oil-cobalt-highest-risk-for-commodity-linked-land-grabs/

Environment

Air quality

Air pollution is harmful to both human health and the natural environment. For instance, emissions of sulphur and nitrogen gases cause toxic compounds in our atmosphere like acids, ozone, and smog. These are harmful to health, lower agricultural yields, and can further weaken or even wipe out already fragile ecosystems. In addition, emissions and dispersion of particulate matter, metals and toxic organic compounds should also be considered in the technology sector.

Throughout the food supply chain, we see the greatest risks of air pollution at the agricultural stage. Both polyculture and field cultivation have a significant impact on emissions of particulate matter, ammonia and methane, among others. Besides agriculture, the food processing industry also has a very significant impact on air quality, including through transport and heat-related processing.

Examples

Nitrogen (Netherlands, Belgium), acid rain (Europe)

References

https://www.earth.columbia.edu/articles/view/3281

https://www.forbes.com/sites/danieladelorenzo/2021/11/02/air-pollution-caused-by-global-food-production-is-killing-more-than-890000-people-a-year-study-finds/

https://www.fairr.org/article/the-dutch-nitrogen-crisis/

Water quality and -availability

Agriculture accounts for some 70 per cent of global freshwater consumption, and is a major cause of water pollution. By far the largest share of total water consumption (> 90 per cent) in the food chain results from the cultivation of vegetables. In particular, fruits and vegetables, wheat and cereals, and oilseed crops are highly water-intensive. The extent to which crops effectively have a negative impact on water availability and quality is partly determined by location. In areas with longer growing seasons and higher temperatures (e.g. Mediterranean), harvests tend to be larger, but water consumption per unit weight also tends to be higher. Combined with rising drought pressures driven by climate change, this can have far-reaching consequences. Besides agriculture, food processors can also have a major impact. Consider, for instance, the production of beverages or the use of steam for certain processes.

Examples

Strawberries and berries (Spain), beer (Mexico), soft drinks (US)

References

https://feedingourselvesthirsty.ceres.org/water-risks-and-food-sector

https://www.unwater.org/news/water-pollution-agriculture-global-review

https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/10/10/pitted-against-profits-spains-biodiversity-haven-collapses

Soil quality and land use

Land and soil are deteriorating dramatically at both the European and global level. Erosion, loss of organic matter, compaction, ealing and desertification have negative impacts on human health, ecosystems, climate, and the economy. The main causes are poor land management (through unsustainable agricultural and forestry practices) and land-use changes (through deforestation or draining of wetlands). Poor waste management also plays a role, e.g. plastic residues ploughed into the soil, the excessive use of fertilizers, or sewage sludge contaminated with persistent chemicals applied to the soil.

The activity that has by far the most visible impact on land and soil is deforestation. Agriculture is a key driver of deforestation worldwide (>90%), but is not always the direct cause. Converting forest or savannah or wetlands to agricultural land is often done from a speculative point of view, without considering the quality of the subsoil. A large proportion of these deforested areas will ultimately never be used for agriculture. This also makes it difficult for actors in the value chain to get a grip on deforestation. The EU is the second largest consumer of agricultural products from deforested, tropical areas after China. In order of importance, this includes soy, palm oil, beef, cocoa and coffee.

Examples

Greenhouse cultivation (Portugal), contaminated sewage sludge in fields (US)

References

https://www.eea.europa.eu/signals/signals-2020/articles/land-and-soil-pollution

https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/09/tackle-deforestation-focus-on-land-use/

https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107342

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/08/us-cropland-may-be-contaminated-forever-chemicals-study

Biodiversity

Global biodiversity loss is accelerating: in the past 50 years, as many species of plants and animals have gone extinct worldwide as in the past 10 million years. The five main causes of biodiversity loss are land and coastal conversion, overexploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species. The global food system is the main cause of this trend. The expansion of modern crop and animal production has come at the expense of existing ecosystems, leading to habitat loss and a decline in biodiversity. In inland waters and oceans, fishing has a major impact on biodiversity through both the quantities of fish caught, and the method used (trawling).

Examples

Fishing (US, East Asia), Soybean cultivation (Brazil), Sale of European bumblebees (Z America), Coral reefs (Australia), Port expansion and global container traffic

References

https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/02/food-system-impacts-biodiversity-loss

https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/red-lobster-latest-seafood-vendor-to-get-hit-with-sustainability-focused-lawsuit

https://www.ft.com/content/c70e8db4-11c4-42b3-808d-016e413253cd

Waste

The average European produces about 5 tonnes of waste a year, of which only a limited part is recycled. What is not recycled ends up in landfills or incinerators. When decomposed, food waste produces greenhouse gases such as CO2 and methane. About a third of all food produced becomes waste; the associated greenhouse gases are about the same as CO2 emissions from all passenger cars combined. The water footprint of wasted food is also very large. According to an EEB study, in 2021, wasted food in the EU (153 million tonnes) exceeded agricultural imports (138 million tonnes).

But waste risks in the food chain are much broader than just food waste. In agriculture, for instance, attention should be paid to (among other things) pesticides surpluses and packaging, or plastic waste from greenhouses. In the case of food processing, risks relate to waste water and sludge flows, packaging waste, and the correct management of coolants.

References

https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241516884

https://www.fao.org/3/bb144e/bb144e.pdf

https://foodprint.org/reports/the-foodprint-of-food-packaging/

https://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/news/mcdonalds-nestle-and-danone-among-nine-food-corporations-on-legal-notice-for-plastic-waste-failures-in-france.html

Greenhouse gas emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions cause increased heat storage in our atmosphere, which has a far-reaching impact on global climate patterns. This gives rise to a wide range of impacts, from melting polar ice and extinction of animal and plant species, to heat waves, floods, prolonged droughts and water shortages. About a third of total greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to the food system. Besides CO_2 emissions from burning fossil fuels, the food industry also contributes to emissions of other greenhouse gases such as methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2 0) and cooling gases (CFCs etc). The main sources of these greenhouse gases are crop and livestock production, and land use changes (including deforestation and peatland degradation).

Less well known, but no less important, are methane emissions from rotting food waste and refrigerant leaks. In each of these cases, we see very serious impacts. Methane has a short but intense lifetime and is just about the biggest contributor to further warming today. Coolants also have a disproportionately high impact on global warming, in about the same order as food waste.

Examples

Food waste (grains and vegetables), refrigerant gas losses (food storage), animal husbandry (methane emissions from cows), heat processes (milk production), ...

References

https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-5/

https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/methane-emissions-are-driving-climate-change-heres-how-reduce-them

https://drawdown.org/solutions/alternative-refrigerants

Annex 2: Overview of key initiatives in the technology industry

This overview of key initiatives in the food industry can help you with the 'inventorying' exercise in the section on 'mitigating risk' in the online manual. It is primarily based on three sources. Wherever additional sources were consulted, please find the reference in footnote.

- *MSI Integrity (2020). Not fit for purpose: The Grand Experiment of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives in Corporate Accountability, Human Rights and Global Governance. https://www.msi-integrity.org/not-fit-for-purpose/*
- *International Trade Centre. ITC standards map. https://standardsmap.org/*
- *Transnational Institute. Mapping MSI in Global Governance Database. https://www.tni.org/en/msidatabase*

The SAI Platform is a network composed of more than 150 companies active in different steps of the food chain. Its members are organized into three working groups: crops, dairy, and beef. SAI Platform supports its members through joint projects, workshops, reports, etc. Since 2014, SAI Platform also has the Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) program, which allows farmers to monitor and report their sustainability performance against a set of criteria and standards.

- Industry-driven, no systematic representation of other stakeholders
- Strong focus on self-assessments.
- More information: https://saiplatform.org/

GLOBALG.A.P comprises a set of standards for safe, socially responsible and ecologically sound farming practices. The best known of these standards is the Integrated Farm Assurance, which is used by more than 200,000 agricultural producers worldwide. The standards are linked to a certification system.

- Industry-driven, but other stakeholders are involved in development of standards.
- Focus on quality, environmental and (to a lesser extent) social criteria. Standards have some shortcomings in terms of compliance with international labour standards.
- Independent auditors ensure compliance with standards, monitored through an integrity system.
- More information: https://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/

Fairtrade International promotes fair trade by building bridges between small-scale producers and workers on the one hand, and end consumers on the other. Central to the fairtrade system are the Fairtrade standards and the premium paid to producer organizations. Producer organizations and companies that meet the standard can use the Fairtrade label on their products. In addition, Fairtrade engages in advocacy together with policymakers, companies, and other civil society organisations. The Fairtrade system comprises (1) three regional networks of producers representing both farmers and workers; (2) 23 national Fairtrade organisations that market and promote Fairtrade products; (3) Fairtrade international, the umbrella organisation; and (4) FLOCERT, the body responsible for monitoring compliance with the standards. To verify compliance with Fairtrade standards, Fairtrade relies on FLOCERT, an independent certification body that conducts audits of producers and other supply chain actors every 1-2 years.

- More information: https://www.fairtrade.net/

Rainforest Alliance (RFA) is a multi-stakeholder initiative involving producers, local communities, businesses, civil society, and governments. Like Fairtrade, RFA is also built around a standard and a certification system, and is active in policy work and support to companies. The major difference is the lack of a premium system for producers. In 2018, RFA joined forces with UTZ, another certification programme. The RFA standard is sometimes criticized for not including some crucial criteria (including international labour conventions).[1] Certification can be used for coffee, cocoa, tea, hazelnuts, and bananas. Supply chain actors other than farmers are not actively monitored, but are expected to declare that they are not involved in labour rights violations.

- More information: https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) seeks to make the palm oil supply chain more sustainable through multi-stakeholder dialogue and through the development, implementation, and verification of a global standard, and an associated certification system.

It is a multi-stakeholder initiative that involves companies from across the palm oil supply chain, but also investors and civil society. Yet critical analyses show that in practice, industry interests are dominant. Palm oil producers are audited by an independent third party every 4-5 years. These audits do regularly face criticism.

- More information: https://rspo.org/

The Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS) seeks to make the soy chain sustainable through multi-stakeholder dialogue and through the development, implementation, and verification of a global standard, and an associated certification system. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative with representation from producers, industry, the financial sector, and civil society. RTRS is regularly criticized for the dominance of corporate interests[2]. Compliance with the RTRS standard should be done by independent, accredited auditors.

- More information: https://responsiblesoy.org/

Bonsucro seeks to make the cane sugar supply chain more sustainable through multi-stakeholder dialogue and through the development, implementation, and verification of a global standard, and an associated certification system. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative with institutionalized representation from producers, industry, the financial sector, and civil society. Compliance with the standard should be verified by independent, accredited auditors. In 2019, an official complaint was made against Bonsucro to the OECD's national contact point in the UK for allegedly failing to hold one of its members accountable for a case of land grabbing in Cambodia[3] .

- More information: https://bonsucro.com/

The global coffee platform brings together a wide range of actors, from coffee producers to large companies and civil society. Through 'pre-competitive' dialogue and joint projects, the global coffee platform seeks to promote sustainability throughout the coffee chain. The global coffee platform is a multi-stakeholder initiative, representing the interests of smaller and larger producers, traders, coffee roasters, retailers, governments, and civil society. No underlying standard, but a

[1] https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/food-drink/questions-about-rainforest-alliance#:~:text=Rainforest%20Alliance%20has%20been%20criticised,price%20offered%20for%20their%20products.
[2] https://aseed.net/growing-opposition-to-round-table-on-responsible-soy-2/
[3] https://www.oecdwatch.org/complaint/idi-ec-and-licadho-v-bonsucro/

Coffee Sustainability Reference Code that can serve as a source of inspiration for the industry.

- More information: https://www.globalcoffeeplatform.org/

IDH (Initiatief voor Duurzame Handel) is a Dutch foundation that seeks to promote sustainable trade through multi-stakeholder cooperation between companies, investors, governments, and civil society. IDH tries to realize these objectives through initiatives in different sectors, all based on the principles of 'convening, co-financing, learning, and innovating'. Beyond Chocolate (chocolate industry) and SIFAV (fresh fruit and vegetables) are probably the best-known initiatives active on the Belgian market.

While the exact composition of initiatives varies across sectors, IDH encourages multi-stakeholder cooperation. For instance, Beyond Chocolate involves retailers, government agencies, universities, investors, NGOs, trade unions, and certification organisations in addition to (mainly Belgian) chocolate companies. In terms of focus, SIFAV (fruit and vegetables) focuses primarily on living wages, environment, and due diligence; whereas Beyond Chocolate focuses on living wages, deforestation, and promoting certification.

- More information: https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/

The Food Covenant is one of 11 sector covenants on international corporate social responsibility. Within these covenants, various partners work together to make their production chains more sustainable. Setting up due diligence processes, together with initiating concrete joint projects, are central to this objective. The covenant is a multi-stakeholder initiative that includes sectoral organisations, NGOs, trade unions, as well as the Dutch government. Unlike some of the other covenants, individual companies have only limited involvement in the food covenant. The Dutch government that assumes the role of coordinator and supervisor (through the SER).

- More information: https://www.imvoconvenanten.nl/nl/voedingsmiddelen