

The Sustainability Journey in Seven Steps

The New Zealand Sustainability Dashboard (NZSD) is a research programme supported with funding from 2012 to 2018 by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment along with several industry partners. During the programme, the research team co-designed tailored dashboards with four different industries, using a process involving seven key steps. This policy brief outlines that process.

The Industry Partners

The tailored sustainability dashboards were prepared with the following four partners:

- Sustainability Winegrowing New Zealand;
- Zespri Kiwifruit;
- Ngāi Tahu; and
- Rangitata Diversion Race Management Ltd.

In each case, there were internal and external reasons for creating a tailored dashboard to record and profile sustainability credentials of the partner's commercial activities. The NZSD research team worked with senior managers to design a dashboard that met the user's needs. This involved seven steps, which are shown in the flowchart of Figure 1 on the second page of this policy brief.

Step 1: Clarification of Purposes

There are many reasons why an industry might develop a tailored sustainability dashboard. Export markets may require sustainability credentials to be evidence-based. Domestic residents may be concerned about sustainability performance. There may be internal pressures from the industry to improve sustainability outcomes. Thus, the first step is to clarify the purposes for the tailored dashboard being designed.

- Industries are facing a range of internal and external pressures to record and report on sustainability performance.
- The New Zealand Sustainability Dashboard can be tailored for this.
- A tailored industry sustainability dashboard involves seven steps.

Step 2: Prioritisation of Indicators

An industry must determine what indicators of sustainability are most important for its purpose. The NZSD has drawn on international sustainability frameworks to offer a structured list of potential indicators. The NZSD has also created tools for helping to prioritise indicators, such as Materiality Analysis (which is the subject of a separate policy brief).

Step 3: Selection of Measures

For each chosen indicator, agreement is needed on how to measure performance. An indicator might be "water use", for example; the industry must then agree on what uses of water count, and whether it is reported per hectare or quantity of output. The selected measures should be scientifically valid and credible to industry stakeholders (including final consumers).

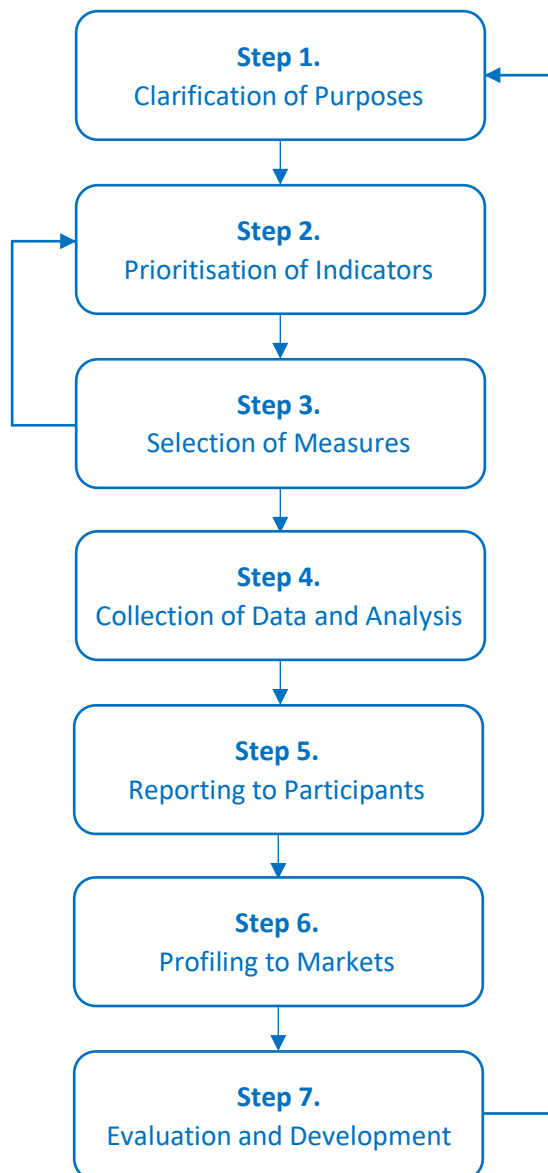
Figure 1 shows that the choice of indicators and measures is an iterative process. This is because choices may be influenced by data availability and cost. The final selection of indicators should not impose an unrealistic burden on an enterprise for collection and reporting of the sustainability data.

Step 4: Collection of Data and Analysis

The NZSD offers an on-line platform for collecting and analysing data. This is designed so that industry participants enter data from

their operations, some of which can be entered by the programme from industry sources. The data can be aggregated to an industry level for comparison of industry performance against targets for each indicator.

Figure 1: *The Sustainability Journey in Seven Steps*



Step 5: Reporting to Participants

Each participant in the industry sustainability dashboard can be provided with an individualised report on their performance.

This typically includes historical trends and performance against targets. The dashboard can also allow each participant to benchmark their own performance against the average of similar operations (classified by features such as size of land area or geographical location).

Step 6: Profiling to Markets

The industry sustainability dashboard can be used to present material to distributors and consumers in significant markets. This may take the form of an annual sustainability report, which tracks changes in performance of the industry each year. Typically, the industry creates and maintains a dedicated website that profiles its commitment to sustainability, evidenced by its performance recorded in its sustainability dashboard.

Step 7: Evaluation and Development

Consumer preferences, market regulations, scientific knowledge and commercial opportunities are evolving continuously. Consequently, sustainability is a journey. An industry sustainability dashboard should be regularly evaluated that it continues to meet the purposes of the industry, as shown in the final step and its arrow to the beginning of the process. The NZSD is designed to offer flexibility for development in line with industry commercial opportunities.

Further Information

Research Report: Dalziel, Paul, Caroline Saunders, Jay Whitehead, Andrew Barber, Jayson Bengé, John Reid, Matt Rout, Tremane Barr, Sue Cumberworth, Aaron Rimmer and Jon Manhire (2017). *The New Zealand Sustainability Dashboard: Four Case Studies of Industry Impact*. AERU Client Report, prepared for The Agribusiness Group. Lincoln University: Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit.

New Zealand Sustainability Dashboard Website:
<http://www.nzdashboard.org.nz/>