

SMART, the future of agricultural sustainability assessments

The FiBL has developed a science-backed tool for measuring producers' performances and providing suggestions for ways to improve.

Food and agricultural sustainability is a pressing issue for both farmers and retailers looking to improve their ecological and socio-economic performance, as well as tap into an ever-growing consumer base who place a premium on genuinely sustainable produce. However, assessing sustainability in a consistent and reliable way has historically proven difficult, and current sustainability assessment tools typically consider only a limited range of factors. For consumers and retailers, it is difficult to know whether a farm is operating sustainably or not, and, for farmers, it is difficult to assess and communicate their sustainability performance in a credible way which avoids greenwashing.

A SCIENTIFIC MEANS OF ASSESSING FARM PERFORMANCE

For this purpose, the Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL) has developed the Sustainability Monitoring and Assessment Routine farm tool (SMART). It is the first tool to assess the performance of a farm with regard to all of the multi-thematic and science-backed sustainability goals contained in the Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems (SAFA) guidelines developed by the FAO. The guidelines define four dimensions of sustainability: good governance, environmental integrity, economic resilience and social well-being, and are further divided into 21 themes and 58 detailed sub-themes with well-researched and defined sustainability objec-

tives. To achieve the best possible acceptance, legitimacy and compatibility of the SMART assessment methodology, further reference documents were incorporated into its development, such as the sustainability reporting guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative GRI-G4, the UN Global Compact, the ISO 26000 "Guidance for social responsibility", the SA8000 standard for social responsibility, the International Labour Organisation work and social standards, as well as the indicator matrix of the Economy for the Common Good.

SMART is not a new standard, certification system or label; it is an instrument to analyse and assess sustainability. It therefore does not compete with existing standards and certificates, but is a valuable supple-

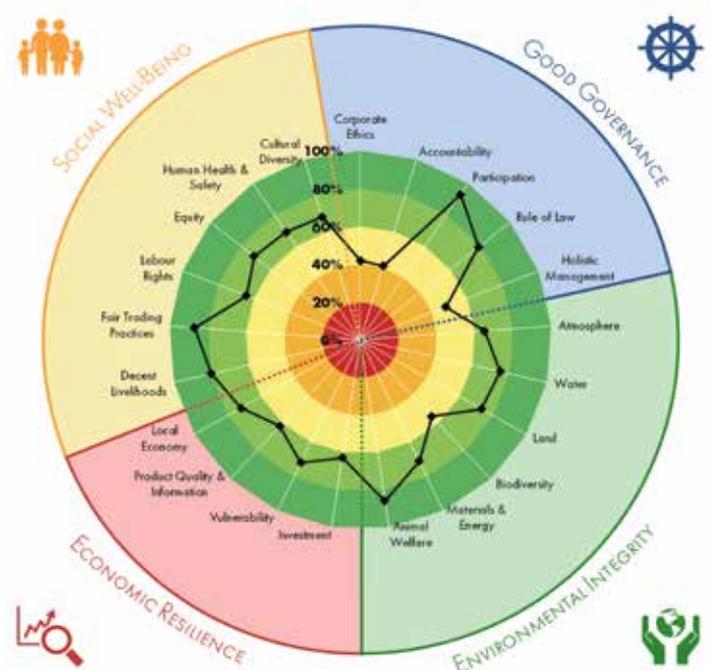
ment. A SMART assessment provides a scientifically rigorous, credible and transparent assessment of food and agricultural sustainability.

A STRAIGHTFORWARD PROCESS

Despite the sophisticated research behind the tool, the assessment process itself is efficient and simple for producers. Existing data from certifications can be seamlessly integrated into the SMART assessment, greatly reducing the time required. Upon completion of the assessment, the farm is presented with a detailed report analysing its sustainability strengths and weaknesses, as well as valuable targeted advice for improving its performance. SMART assessments have already been carried out on over 3,500 farms in 21 countries worldwide, and benefits from continuous research support and improvements.

SMART RESULTS PROVIDE TANGIBLE AND PERSUASIVE FACTS AND FIGURES

Farmers associations can employ SMART to gain an overview of their members, as well as provide a cost-effective method for risk assessments, benchmarking, and for the development and improvement of standards and certifications. It can also be used to design and develop targeted incentives and schemes to improve member performance. In addition, SMART results provide tangible and persuasive facts and figures for effective public relations and communications strategies for producers, companies and associations at all levels.



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