

AGROECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

SAFA for a 360 degrees performance

Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems (SAFA) is an international reference for assessing trade-offs and synergies between all dimensions of sustainability: *Environmental Integrity, Economic Resilience, Social Well-being and Good Governance.*

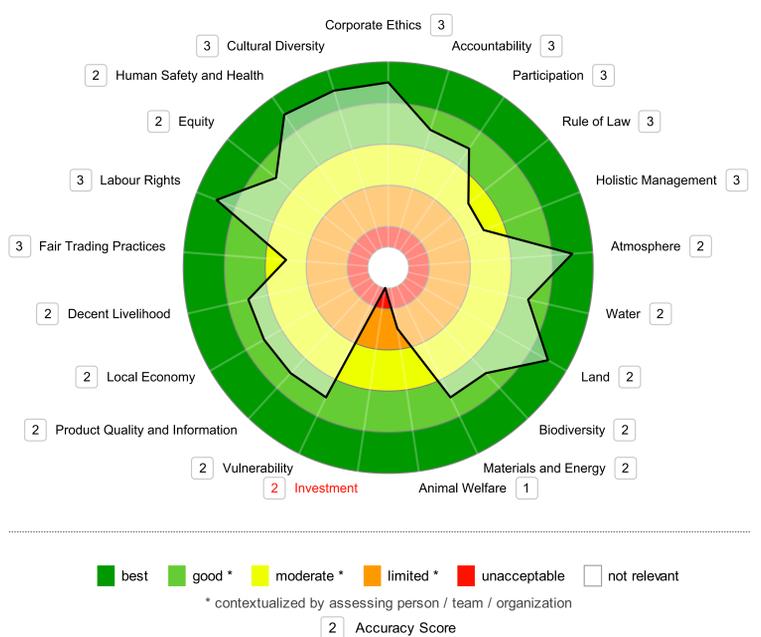
Developed through an open and participatory process, SAFA brings together numerous sustainability approaches into a coherent whole. It offers a harmonized framework, including universal principles and metrics, for monitoring food supply chains. SAFA includes open-access software to guide the sustainability assessment and capacity building of all actors, from large enterprises to smallholders.



Agroecology is the science of applying ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable food systems.

A hypothetical assessment of the common features of agroecological systems is demonstrated on the right. The polygon represents performance in each of the SAFA sustainability themes.

Performance is rated as: best, good, moderate, limited, or unacceptable. The accuracy score informs on the quality of information, from high (3) to low (1).



Through an integrated assessment, SAFA can highlight sustainability strengths and ‘hotspots’ where improvements can be made:

- > Agroecological systems typically perform relatively well in “Environmental Integrity”, as there is a focus on regenerating ecosystems and supporting the provision of ecosystems services. However, more consideration is needed on animal welfare.
- > The “Economic Resilience” of agroecological systems could be improved by re-orientating investment towards smallholder communities through better access to more flexible credit arrangements. Also, the sustainability claim needs to be pursued beyond the farm gate through post-harvest handling and processing.
- > Agroecological approaches contribute to “Social Well-being” by strengthening local economies, maintaining social cohesion and preserving cultural heritages. However, better connections with the market, and trading practices in particular, require more attention.
- > “Good Governance” in agroecology is not specifically targeted and performance varies widely among farms, depending on practioners’ awareness.

Picture below:

Following hunger in the 80s, the population of Tigray, Ethiopia, has become food secure by implementing agroecology over one million hectares of land, including community involvement in gully rehabilitation, agroforestry and organic management of crops.

Visit the Sustainability Pathways website: www.fao.org/sustainability

