

Short History of SAFA

Conceptual framework for sustainability (2009) The ISEAL Alliance and FAO's Natural Resources Management and Environment Department joined hands to define sustainability issues, potential targets and indicators. An expert meeting was held to review the ways in which sustainability tools were being assessed by different stakeholders, and internal discussions within FAO and ISEAL took place. As a result, a [draft Sustainability Framework](#) was designed.

Mapping sustainability indicators for the food sector (2010) Building on the Sustainability Framework, FAO further compiled a list of performance indicators, based on the review of dozens of corporate responsibility, social and environmental standards and sustainability reports of food chain actors. This resulted in revised draft sustainability goals and scope, as described in the SAFA [Background Document](#) prepared for the first E-forum.

First SAFA E-forum (February - March 2011) FAO invited stakeholder's views during a five-weeks E-forum on Sustainability Assessment of the Food Chain. The proposed SAFA scope and indicators were discussed; a total of 246 people from 61 countries registered as participants. Weekly summaries were posted on the forum portal and a [Synthesis Report](#) summarized the E-Forum's outcome.

Stakeholders' survey (April - August 2011) Commissioned by FAO, the Swiss College of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL), undertook a SAFA stakeholder survey. Experts from the food and agriculture industry, public administrations, non-governmental organizations, multi-stakeholder roundtables and multilateral institutions were invited to voice their views - in a telephone interview or by filling out a [Questionnaire](#) - on the purpose and contents of the SAFA initiative. Substantial feedback was received from: 18 industry and multi-stakeholder institutions; 15 NGOs and public institutions; and 8 scientific institutions. Parallel to the survey, 10 international conferences and meetings involved in sustainable food production and consumption and in sustainable finance were attended, where further discussions with stakeholders from industry and science took place.

Cross-comparison of standards and indicator sets (September – December 2011) The Swiss College of Agriculture refined the proposed set of the SAFA indicator topics through an extensive screening of mono- and multidimensional sustainability standards, indicator systems, initiatives and regulations, combined with in-depth literature survey. This detailed cross-comparison ultimately encompassed 44 systems: 18 industry standards; 5 farm-level systems; 4 systems of multilateral institutions; 7 NGO systems; 5 roundtable standards; and 5 other systems. The different stakeholders surveys and the indicators' analysis resulted in the draft [SAFA Guidelines](#).

Second SAFA E-forum (January-February 2012) FAO has been seeking stakeholders' views on the draft SAFA Guidelines, including the SAFA concept and process of development and implementation, as well as proposed sustainability categories and indicators. Stakeholders' views, including food producers and retailers, experts, consumers and civil society are hereby [summarized](#), together with FAO's reflections. You can also view the [contributions](#) made during the second SAFA E-forum (registration required).

Expert Meeting (April 2012) FAO hosted a meeting with the aim to share concerns raised by the second SAFA E-Forum and to discuss key issues prior to the finalization of the first version of the SAFA Guidelines. The meeting hosted a dozen stakeholders representing farmers, food industry and international sustainability initiatives' practitioners and researchers familiar with SAFA. A one-page [summary](#) shows the most important issues discussed during the event.

Testing the Guidelines (June 2012 – March 2013) Following face-to-face meetings, the [Test Version 1.0 of the Guidelines](#) was released in June 2012 for the Rio+20 Summit. In preparing for pilot studies, benchmarking against main sustainability schemes led to the production of a [Test Version 1.1 of the Guidelines](#). These were tested in 30 different settings around the world, in response to a call to fill a pilot studies [Questionnaire](#). Pilot testing was being undertaken from September 2012 to March 2013 through spontaneous contributions. A description of the pilot studies is available [here](#). Lessons from the field were shared and discussed in a SAFA Practitioners and Partners Workshop, FAO, Rome, 18-19 March 2013.

Guidelines Revision (April – June 2013) The SAFA Workshop organized in March 2013 was meant to guide the finalization of the SAFA Guidelines. The [Report of the Workshop](#) summarizes the changes that are currently being implemented in the Guidelines.