



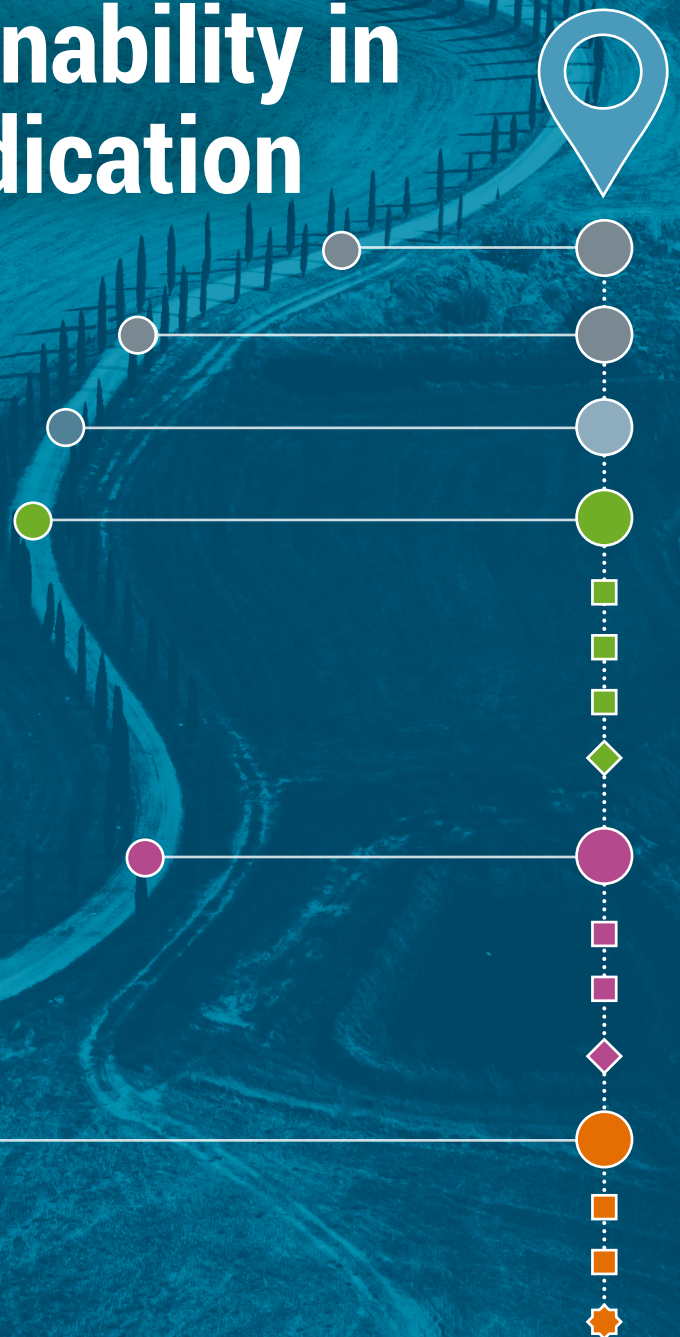
Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

oriGIn


Organization for an International  
Geographical Indications Network

# Developing a roadmap towards increased sustainability in geographical indication systems

Practical guidelines  
for producer organizations  
to identify priorities,  
assess performance and  
improve the sustainability  
of their geographical  
indication systems



# Developing a roadmap towards increased sustainability in geographical indication systems



● Practical guidelines for producer organizations to identify priorities, assess performance and improve the sustainability of their geographical indication systems

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
and  
Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network  
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# Abstract

The global challenges faced by the planet and humankind necessitate the integration of sustainability considerations in all economic activities. At the same time, compliance with social and environmental standards can also constitute a legal or commercial requirement to access markets for agricultural products. For producers and other value chain actors who have joined efforts to promote their product and protect its reputation through a geographical indication (GI) system, embarking on a sustainability strategy is even more relevant. Clearly, sustainability is embedded in the GI notion, as local resources need to be preserved to ensure the enduring supply of high-quality, territory-specific GI products. Also, the collective action model of GI systems creates opportunities for producers to develop comprehensive strategies to deliver important economic and social benefits while contributing to the preservation of natural and cultural environments. GI producers have to confront evolving global and local challenges in all four sustainability dimensions of GI systems (economic, social, environmental and governance); however, many are not familiar with the implicit link between GI and sustainability. GI organizations should analyse the performance of their GI system in terms of sustainability and, in many cases, document improvements to ensure cooperation with local actors and secure market access.

Conscious of these challenges, and acknowledging the crucial role of GI organizations in leading territorial approaches towards sustainability, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network (oriGIn) have developed this guide to help GI organizations and any other producer groups for collective action to develop tailored, context-specific sustainability roadmaps in collaboration with current and potential partners in the area.

Building on the global Sustainability Strategy for GIs (SSGI), the guide and its toolkit provide GI organizations with practical step-by-step guidance to develop and implement their own sustainability roadmap based on participatory processes (both within the organization and with external stakeholders and allies). The development of a sustainability roadmap starts with the definition of *common sustainability priorities* through a well-planned stakeholder identification and engagement process, followed by the *assessment of performance* against these priorities based on managerial and impact indicators. The priorities, objectives and measurement systems agreed upon constitute an essential part of the *improvement plan*, which should be shared with all GI stakeholders to ensure group cohesion and strengthen the product's market differentiation.

This guide can help ensure the engagement towards sustainability of producer groups from different sectors and territories and with different levels of sophistication. It supports the development of coherent GI sustainability roadmaps based on a bottom-up consultation process. Such sustainability roadmaps constitute a natural evolution for any GI strategy, allowing GI stakeholders to document and improve their contribution to rural development in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

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# Foreword

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is strongly committed to supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets of Agenda 2030 by promoting the transformation of agrifood systems. Under the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016–2025, FAO is putting a specific focus on the promotion of healthy, sustainably produced diets and the achievement of global nutrition targets.

In 2021, the United Nations Food Systems Summit and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit worked together to advance solutions across agrifood systems, based on the recognition that malnutrition in all its forms is one of the biggest challenges to ensure optimal health, resilience and prosperity for all. Both summits emphasized that food systems should be more sustainable and equitable, as well as promote healthy diets for better nutrition. For this transformation to happen, a territorial approach – recognizing the importance of local and regional policymaking for sustainability – is of particular importance in rural areas where the economy is dominated by the agriculture and food sectors. Geographical indications (GIs), which highlight the qualities and protect the reputation of certain products due to their specific geographical origin, are a key instrument under this approach. By uniting local producers and other stakeholders in a territory and adding value to local products, GIs can stimulate social and economic development, enhance the preservation of natural and cultural environments and contribute to healthy diets.

FAO is promoting the development of GI systems so that this tool may effectively contribute to multiple objectives. These include preserving food heritage, enhancing the potential for diverse diets through the preservation of traditional and biodiversity-related food products and preserving nutritional qualities with traditional processing methods. Other objectives relate to strengthening rural livelihoods by building inclusive value chains, preserving the local natural resources used to produce GI products, and enhancing coordination between public and private efforts towards sustainable development. Our experience has shown that GI organizations (bodies grouping producers who apply for GI protection and implement the GI specifications) are often overlooked as players in GI systems. Nevertheless, these organizations can provide significant contributions to the development of sustainable GI systems and boost their territorial impact.

FAO and the Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network (oriGin) have been collaborating since 2016, developing several initiatives to highlight and strengthen the relationship between GI systems and sustainability. This collaboration acknowledges the importance of GI organizations in local initiatives to enhance the

sustainability of GI systems and their territories, while recognizing the need to raise awareness and build capacities. The Sustainability Strategy for GIs, which was endorsed by GI organizations around the world during oriGIn's 2017 general assembly, has paved the way for GI organizations to embark on sustainability roadmaps tailored to local contexts and development. These sustainability roadmaps address specific challenges and ensure the involvement of all stakeholders.

FAO and oriGIn are pleased to present this guide and related toolkit, which provide practical guidance for GI organizations. The guide is designed to help GI organizations develop their own participatory and inclusive processes. It helps them prioritize their local challenges, assess the sustainability status of their agreed priorities and formulate their own plans for improvement through cooperation and consensus. The guide identifies a number of practical steps for producer groups to formulate their own sustainability roadmap.

FAO and oriGIn believe that this publication has the potential to provide crucial guidance to the more than 9 000 registered GI systems around the world. Based on the principles of food quality and local governance, the guide provides a bottom-up approach that allows GI producer groups to navigate complex local realities and challenges.



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# Abbreviations

<b>AREPO</b>	Association of European Regions for Products of Origin
<b>B2B</b>	business-to-business
<b>B2C</b>	business-to-consumer
<b>CSR</b>	corporate social responsibility
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>ESG</b>	environmental, social and governance [issues]
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>GHG</b>	greenhouse gas emissions
<b>GI</b>	geographical indication
<b>GRI</b>	Global Reporting Initiative
<b>INAQ</b>	National Institute of Origin and Quality [France]
<b>INRAE</b>	National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment [France]
<b>IPR</b>	intellectual property right
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>oriGIn</b>	Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network
<b>SAFA</b>	Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems
<b>SASB</b>	Sustainability Accounting Standards Board
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SSGI</b>	Sustainability Strategy for Geographical Indications



# The importance of sustainability strategies for GI systems

## Geographical indications and sustainability

### Why has sustainability become imperative?

Sustainability is the key topic of our times. The launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has prompted governments to identify and engage with territorial actors to review their performance towards sustainability. It is now generally acknowledged that in addition to environmental concerns, sustainability dimensions encompass economic, social and governance challenges and opportunities. Local actors should improve their knowledge of the various dimensions of sustainability, and develop action plans and measure progress towards increased sustainability in local territories and production systems.

The SDG framework has made it abundantly clear that the economic, social and environmental sustainability of agricultural and food production and distribution systems must be improved to safeguard the future of our planet. This need is reflected in the growing demand from consumers, and especially younger generations, for information on the sustainability performance of the products they purchase. Rather than a mere basis for a price premium, such information has become a necessary requisite for producers to be able to sell through many distribution channels. In addition, governments are increasingly imposing minimum legal requirements for sustainability performance.

### Geographical indications as tools towards increased sustainability

Geographical indications (GIs) are signs that are used on products that originate from a specific territory and possess qualities and/or a reputation due to that origin. GIs can be protected as intellectual property rights (IPR); in many cases, they are a part of local heritage. Deeply rooted in local culture and traditional knowledge, GI systems concern the resources and activities that contribute to the production of a GI product, including the components involved in the development and management of the GI product and its reputation. GI systems have the potential to significantly contribute to the sustainability of their territories.



They can play a key role towards the sustainable economic development of local communities, thus helping prevent the delocalization of production. Moreover, successful GI systems can improve the distribution of value among the actors in GI value chains, including farmers and processors. The collective rules and the traditions embedded in GI systems can also contribute to the conservation of local natural resources and biodiversity, the preservation of traditional food products and local breeds and varieties, and the promotion of nutritious diets. Finally, GI processes are collective endeavours and can therefore facilitate the scaling up of sustainability efforts, which is often difficult. Indeed, GI organizations can coordinate initiatives that involve all GI producers and other actors.

## Why should GI producers consider sustainability?

Although there is evidence of the positive socioeconomic impacts that GI systems can have in their territories (FAO and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development [EBRD], 2018), the contribution of these systems to sustainable development is not always monitored or measured. Where GI producers and other actors lack knowledge or capacities, their practices may even negatively impact economic, social or environmental sustainability. This may damage the overall image of the GI product (irrespective of the individual producer), thereby affecting the overall GI system and limiting market access opportunities.

Changing natural, social and economic environments pose several challenges to GI producers. Along with climate change, social tensions and rural migration, producers must also address changing consumer needs and requirements. Market research shows that consumers' awareness of the social and environmental impacts of products is increasing (Coronado Robles and Bhasin Darke, 2020). Consumers of GI products, which are mostly sold in more sophisticated market segments, demand more information as to the impacts that the production and marketing of these products have on the society and the environment. Not only are consumers increasingly aware of the importance of sustainably produced products, but they are also willing to pay more for them, especially when they are perceived to be of high quality. The principles of sustainability based on which governance, economic, social (including health) and environmental challenges can be identified and addressed constitute effective instruments for GI systems to capitalize on these new opportunities.

GI systems can not be delocalized, and must therefore address the challenge of conserving the resources in their territories to ensure their long-term viability. This renders the monitoring of (economic, social and environmental) sustainability performance all the more crucial. In addition, GI organizations must ensure good governance for the GI system to be sustainable. Where GI organizations fail to determine their own sustainability strategy, sustainability priorities may be determined by external actors who do not necessarily consider the local context. This often leads to sustainability metrics that do not reflect the local reality of GI products, and may even constitute a potential barrier to market access for GI producers.



For many GI organizations, developing a sustainability strategy is not an easy task. Field studies and consultations with producers have shown that most GI producers and their organizations are not sufficiently aware of the challenges of ensuring the sustainability of their own system, and require more information and tools to reflect on sustainability and develop a sustainability strategy that is tailored to their local context and their resources (FAO and EBRD, 2018). Thus, there is a need to support GI organizations around the world and help them define their own sustainability roadmap, tailored to their product and territory. FAO and oriGIn have been working together since 2016 to help GI organizations develop sustainability roadmaps that consider local realities and needs through a bottom-up approach. This collaboration has led to the definition of the Sustainability Strategy for Geographical Indications (SSGI), which was approved by oriGIn members during the organization's general assembly held in October 2017 in Treviso, Italy.

## The Sustainability Strategy for Geographical Indications (SSGI)

The main objective of the SSGI is to provide GI organizations with a framework and tools for embarking on a sustainability journey. The SSGI was developed after a thorough review of existing sustainability initiatives and assessment frameworks and the selection of their best elements. The SSGI framework consists of four sustainability pillars, each of them grouping a number of sustainability themes (see Annex 1). Information Box 1 describes how the SSGI framework was built.

### INFORMATION BOX 1



#### The development of the SSGI framework

A review of existing sustainability frameworks found that the Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems framework (SAFA) provides a structure and taxonomy that can help many GI organizations define their sustainability priorities. The SSGI conceptual framework and flow were reviewed based on a number of field tests; where necessary, the original SAFA framework, which focuses on individual operations, was adapted to suit the realities of GI products.

The SSGI framework is organized according to four pillars, including environmental integrity, social well-being, economic resilience and good governance:

- **Environmental integrity** means maintaining life support systems essential for human survival by minimizing negative environmental impacts and fostering positive impacts.
- **Social well-being** concerns meeting basic human needs and the providing the right and freedom to satisfy one's aspirations for a better life.
- **Economic resilience:** in a world plagued by crises, it is more important to focus on economic resilience than on economic development; this dimension directly links with the meeting of human needs.

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- **Good governance** is related to the process of making and implementing decisions, and is crucial to making sustainability real.

A total of 22 sustainability themes are classified under these four pillars (five under good governance, six under environmental integrity, four under economic resilience and seven under social well-being). These themes comprise a total of 62 sustainability topics, providing a wide array of sustainability priorities to choose from. GI practitioners should become familiarized with this structure of pillars, themes and topics, as well as with the standard definitions of each topic.

Sustainability indicators are provided to assess sustainability performance for selected priority topics. A total of 442 indicators are categorized under the various pillars, themes and topics (135 for the economic dimension, 116 for the environmental integrity dimension, 89 for the good governance dimension and 102 for the social dimension) (at the date of publication of this guide, because the number of indicators may evolve to include new sector indicators). A single topic may have one or more indicators to help measure performance. The SSGI sustainability indicators are derived from a number of reputable sources, including *inter alia* SAFA, the SDGs and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (see [Annex 3](#)).

*Source: Vandecandelaere, E., Samper, L.F., Rey, A., Daza, A., Mejia, P., Tartanac, F. & Vittori, M. 2021. The geographical indication pathway to sustainability: a framework to assess and monitor the contributions of geographical indications to sustainability through a participatory process. Sustainability, 13(14): 7535*

This SSGI framework benefitted from inputs from key international experts from the academic and economic sectors; this input helped establish some fundamental principles for the development of sustainability roadmaps by GI organizations (Information Box 2 provides a description of these SSGI principles).

## INFORMATION BOX 2



### The SSGI principles

**Sustainability is a pathway and not a state.** Sustainability it is envisaged as a continuous process of improvement. Rather establishing certain thresholds to categorize a state of sustainability, the SSGI enables GI organizations to choose sustainability goals based on the priorities that are relevant to their specific contexts. This principle implies that the priorities and actions of GI systems must be evaluated regularly. Indeed, priorities may change in an evolving world where new challenges to sustainability arise continuously, whereas the effectiveness of the sustainability initiatives undertaken must be analysed constantly through iterative processes.

**A strategy adapted to GI specificities.** This principle recognizes that GI systems are diverse in terms of geography, size, product sector, involvement in value chains and ability to implement initiatives. They are intrinsically linked to their territory of origin, can have a large influence of the behaviour of individual production units or farms (which cannot be delocalized). The anchorage of GI organizations to local human and natural resources constitutes the basis for the development of an extended territorial strategy benefitting the entire community in the territory, in collaboration

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with the organization's network of local stakeholders. It is crucial to recognize the potential impact of GI systems in terms of the preservation of local resources and traditions and the optimization of value distribution.

**Inclusiveness and participatory processes.** GI systems are voluntary and collective endeavours that involve different producers through participative processes. The combination of a strong bottom-up approach with open consultations with external stakeholders is most effective in the long term. Indeed, the involvement of producers and allies creates the right conditions for long-term engagement and cooperation. The SSGI framework can be used by diverse types of GI systems, with different degrees of sophistication, resources, capacities and knowledge regarding sustainability. The framework enables GI organizations to undertake their sustainability analysis without incurring significant expenses and without facing barriers related to capacities or resources.

**A sound and operational approach.** Sustainability is a serious commitment and should be based on methodical exercises that build on scientific literature and past experiences. The SSGI is consistent with other recognized sustainability frameworks, not only to ensure that it is solid and robust and combines several types of indicators (e.g. qualitative/quantitative, subjective/objective), but also to allow bridges between the frameworks and indicators used by other value chain actors and potential allies. This avoids duplication and provides a common ground for an enhanced and necessary dialogue among stakeholders and allies to devise new policies and initiatives. Sustainability is not about marketing and should not be considered as a greenwashing strategy, but rather as a way to address challenges that require concrete initiatives and actions. Thus, the communication around sustainability should emphasize such commitments and acknowledge both progress and shortcomings.

**A collective and individual exercise where cooperation is key.** Due to their collective nature, GI systems must consider specificities related to their own governance, to their territory of origin and to the influence they can exercise among the primary producers and processors involved. A collective sustainability path is the sum of the individual paths of all GI stakeholders along the value chain. It is important to use both individual and collective indicators, to look at the levels of both the value chain and the territory. No single stakeholder can confront all sustainability challenges. Indicators and initiatives can be added as alliances with specialists, authorities and other value chain actors are developed for strategic topics. Individual engagement and cooperation (within the GI organization and with external allies) are both crucial. Thus, the framework must be adapted to promote internal engagement and the development of external alliances, and should be used to implement both collective and individual sustainability strategies.

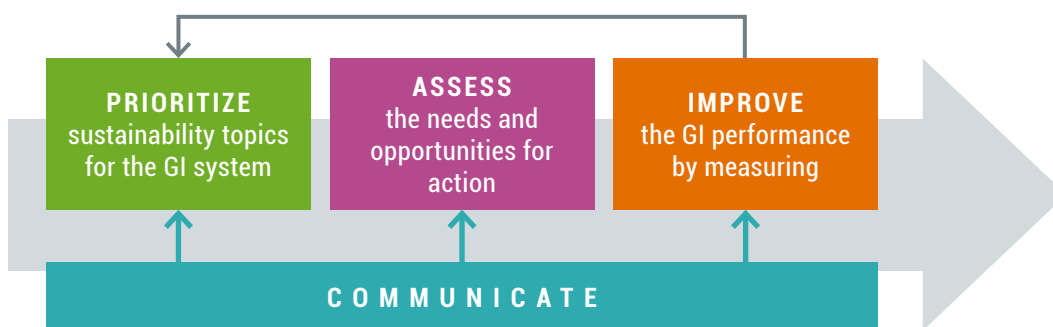
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Sustainability strategies for GI systems consist of three basic phases: *prioritization*, *assessment* and *improvement* – plus the overarching component of *communication* (see Figure 1).



FIGURE 1

### The components of the Sustainability Strategy for Geographical Indications (SSGI)



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**The prioritization Phase**, detailed in Phase 1 of this guide, provides a process through which GI organizations can define their sustainability priority topics, using the SSGI framework (which provides a list of main sustainability topics) and after consultation with their stakeholders. The end result of the prioritization component is a list of sustainability priorities, approved by the GI board; the GI organization then assesses its current performance against these priorities and defines an improvement strategy. This component emphasizes the importance of governance and modalities for stakeholder engagement (see also the glossary at the end of this publication, and the description of key concepts in Section 2).

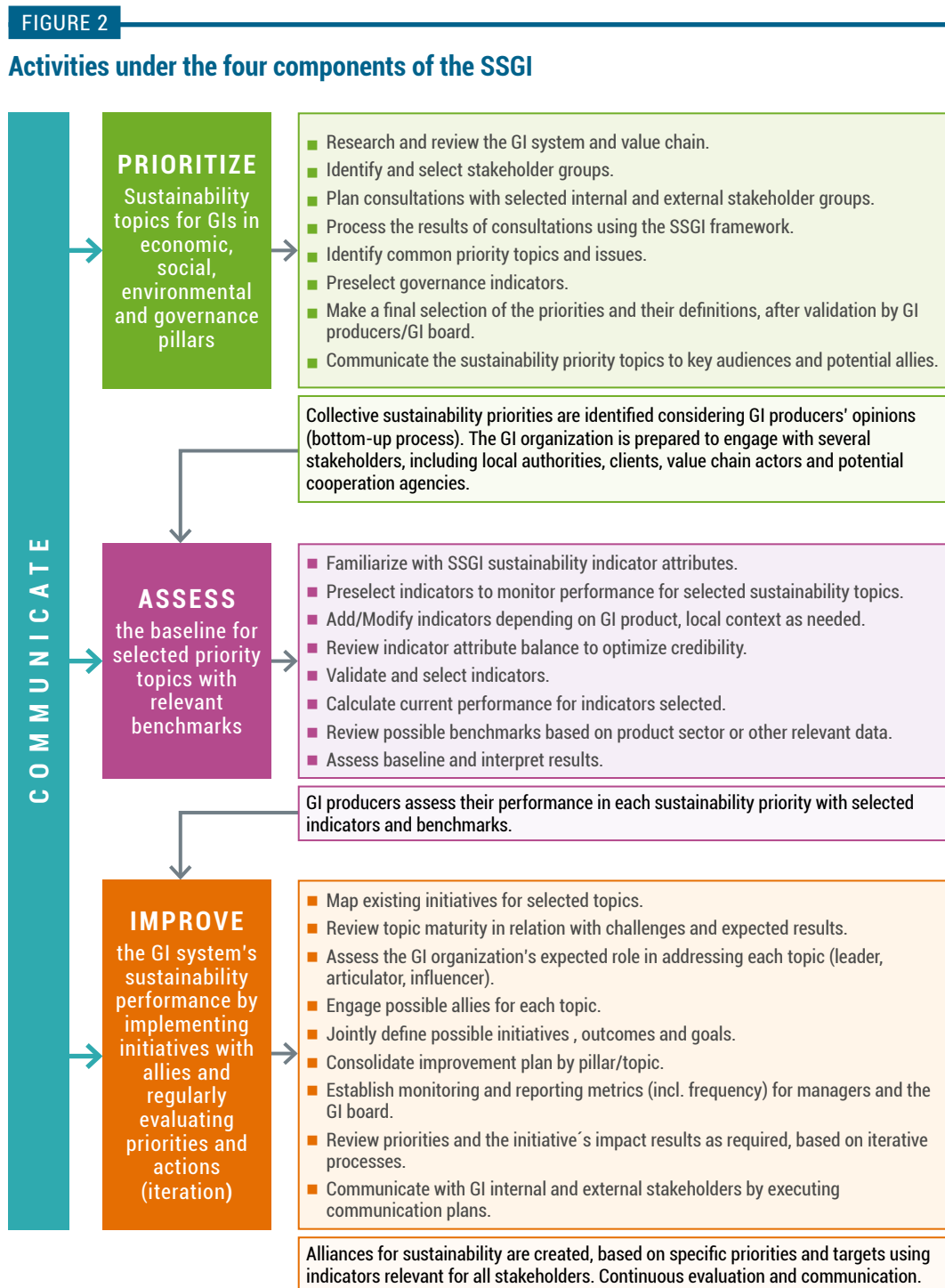
**The assessment Phase** is detailed in Phase 2 of this guide. It is designed to help GI practitioners select the most appropriate indicators to monitor progress towards the selected priorities and determine the baseline or current performance for each topic. The definition of relevant indicators is a key element of the assessment component of the SSGI. GI organizations can choose indicators from the SSGI database, and may add others. The deliverables of this phase are the assessment plan and the results of the evaluation of the current situation (baseline assessment).

**The improvement Phase** (Phase 3 of this guide) uses the metrics selected during the previous stage in order to define the goals, initiatives and actions that need to be implemented, and determine how to engage with possible allies who share common targets. As a result of this phase, an improvement plan is drawn up for each sustainability priority topic, taking into consideration the short- and long-term goals and the role the GI organization expects to play in defining and implementing the initiatives to achieve these goals, and ways to cooperate with allies are defined. The improvement phase should be seen as a gearing wheel for a continuous and iterative sustainability pathway, whereby initiatives and priorities are adjusted over time to respond to an evolving context. This is why this phase includes the regular monitoring of initiatives and evaluation of priorities, with links to the previous phases as needed.

*The communication component* is an overarching element common to all phases. It emphasizes internal communication with members of the GI organization and with partners to develop and implement the GI system's sustainability roadmap. Communication is a key

part of alliance building; it builds on the knowledge acquired during the process of identifying common objectives and sustainability priorities and metrics. The communication component also considers external communication with interested actors, including consumers, to provide information regarding challenges, progress and achievements.

Figure 2 summarizes all the activities under the phases described above.



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

# About this guide and toolkit

Building on the SSGI framework, FAO and oriGIn developed this guide and toolkit (an Excel spreadsheet), which can be downloaded from the FAO and oriGIn websites.<sup>1</sup>

According to oriGIn's GI database, there were over 9 000 legally recognized GI systems in the world at the end of 2022 (this Figure does not include other origin-linked production systems, which may also obtain formal GI recognition).<sup>2</sup> This guide and its toolkit were developed to help these highly diverse production systems in different territories and product sectors, of different sizes and with diverse degrees of sophistication, develop their own sustainability roadmap. By joining forces with key stakeholders, GI systems can determine their economic, social, environmental and governance challenges, and create the conditions necessary to evaluate and improve their current sustainability performance. By using this guide, GI systems can highlight and consistently evaluate their contributions towards sustainability.

The specific objective of this guide is to help GI organizations develop a tailored sustainability roadmap for their GI system and territory. This should be done based on the selection of sustainability priorities, the assessment of current sustainability metrics and the definition of a plan to improve sustainability performance in an iterative way.

The guide focuses on a GI approach to sustainability, but also provides tools for other operators to adopt the framework, if they so choose. By extension, the guide can help producer associations, origin-product systems or wider sectoral organizations from a territory, region or country to embark on their own sustainability pathway.

The primary users of this guide are established GI organizations and groups interested in developing a GI sustainability roadmap, including those that may not have access to sustainability experts. Stakeholders from other producer or value chain organizations with an interest in localized production may also find this guide useful to work towards sustainability. Consistent with the SSGI principles (see Information Box 2), this guide aims to be a useful resource for a wide variety of GI products in different geographies and at different stages of GI development.

Sustainability specialists will find the guide and its bottom up-approach useful for developing sustainability strategies for GI organizations and for producers who still have to obtain formal GI recognition. The guide may also be useful for sectoral trade associations or for organizations dealing with a wide variety of sellers interested in the sustainability of their production systems.

<sup>1</sup> The SSGI toolkit can be downloaded from FAO's website at <https://www.fao.org/geographical-indications/en> and from oriGIn's website at <https://www.origin-gi.com>.

<sup>2</sup> To consult the database, visit oriGIn's website at [www.origin-gi.com/worldwide-gi-compilation](http://www.origin-gi.com/worldwide-gi-compilation).

The guide acknowledges that not all GI organizations wishing to develop a sustainability roadmap have the resources to hire sustainability specialists or invest in ambitious sustainability initiatives. This is why this document primarily targets non-specialists who can help drive the process. These GI practitioners may be appointed by the GI organization to support the definition and implementation of its GI sustainability roadmap (see Phase 0 – Getting prepared).

It is crucial to consult and engage with all stakeholders in the GI system throughout the development of a sustainability roadmap. This guide provides resources and suggestions that can facilitate this process. The toolkit is designed to generate graphs and figures that can stimulate such engagement and provide a basis for discussions and the creation of alliances between GI organizations and their stakeholders.

#### Please note:

This guide was developed primarily for GI organizations whose GI has already been registered as an intellectual property right (irrespective of the exact legal tools used). The guide therefore makes references to specific elements related to GI formalization (such as the specifications defining the link to origin and the GI organization). Nevertheless, the guide can also be used in situations where the GI is not (yet) registered, or where a group of local producers of specific quality products is interested in developing a sustainability roadmap for their production system, even if this system has not yet been formalized as a producer organization. In such cases, the GI practitioner must adapt the guidance provided, and not consider aspects specifically linked to registered GIs.

As noted above, the SSGI consists of four components: *prioritize*, *assess*, *improve* and *communicate*. The communication component crosscuts each of these phases. Users undertake a total of eight steps to develop a sustainability improvement or action plan. The toolkit that accompanies this guide (see Toolkit Box 1) provides users with a system to organize and present the information that is generated, facilitates the decision-making process and aids engagement with stakeholders and potential allies.

#### TOOLKIT BOX 1



##### Presentation

The toolkit that accompanies this guide is composed of different Excel spreadsheets for each step of the SSGI's prioritization phases. In addition, it includes the SSGI database of GI sustainability indicators for each of the four pillars. The toolkit provides users with various formats (for review, calculation and presentation of results) that can facilitate understanding and discussion among stakeholders. For the toolkit to work properly, make sure you're using a 2019 or later version of Microsoft Office.

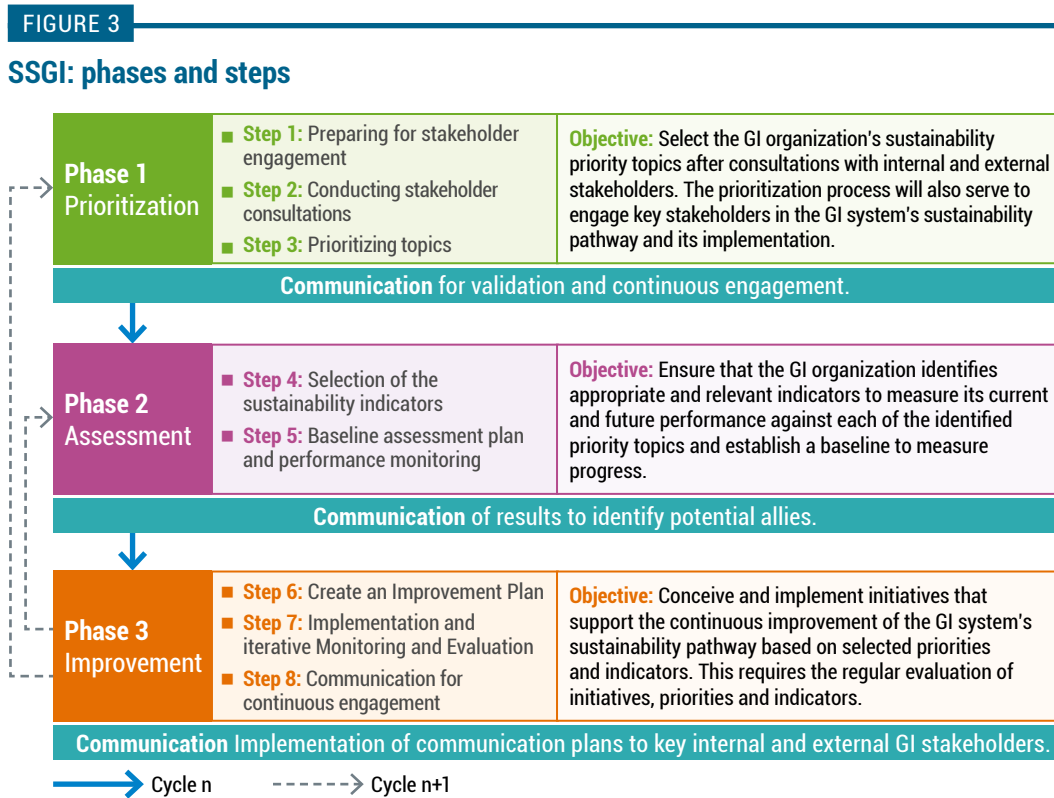
Throughout this guide, yellow boxes such as this one explain how to use the toolkit and provide examples. The toolkit can be downloaded at [www.origin-gi.com/web\\_articles/sustainability](http://www.origin-gi.com/web_articles/sustainability)

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



A preliminary section titled *Getting prepared* explains the roles of the GI practitioner and GI board, and provides a definition of fundamental concepts in the development of the GI system sustainability roadmap. The section helps GI practitioners become more knowledgeable about GIs, sustainability and the GI system and its organization.

Figure 3 provides an overview of the structure of the guide.



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**Please note:**

After the preliminary stage (*Getting prepared*):

- **GI organizations** that have not yet prioritized sustainability topics should start at [Step 1](#) of Phase 1 (*Prioritization*) and complete the different steps of this guide.
- **GI organizations** that have already identified certain priorities but want to update them can start the process at [Step 2](#) of Phase 1, skipping Step 1.
- **GI organizations that have already defined their sustainability topic priorities** but used a different methodology should adapt these priorities to the SSGI taxonomy (sustainability pillar, theme and topic, as outlined in Annex 1). In such cases, GI practitioners should consult [Step 3](#) of this guide (see [Use of the SSGI framework by organizations that have engaged in prior prioritization exercises](#), page 72 and toolkit box 12).

All sustainability topic priorities should be shared with and agreed upon by the stakeholders, validated by the GI producers and effectively communicated. Then, practitioners can proceed to Phase 2 of this guide.



# The basics

This section clarifies some key concepts related to the development of GI sustainability roadmaps (in addition to the terms defined in the glossary):

- key sustainability frameworks that were used to elaborate the SSGI structure and are important for benchmarking;
- the roles of GI boards and GI practitioners in developing and implementing a sustainability roadmap; and
- crucial elements for the development of the sustainability roadmap: governance, engagement and materiality.

## Key sustainability frameworks

The SSGI framework is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the framework for the Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems (SAFA) and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) frameworks. The sustainability indicators provided in the Toolkit detail the relationship of the SSGI framework with both the SDG and the GRI frameworks, which are commonly used by governments and organizations to report on sustainability.

## The Sustainable Development Goals

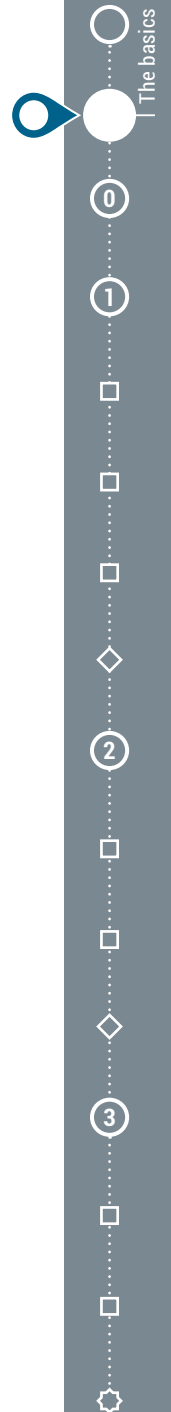
The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework, including indicators, that can be used by public and private actors to jointly work towards sustainable development at the territorial level (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

### The United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals



Source: United Nations. 2023. Make the SDGs a reality. In: *Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. New York. Cited 17 April 2023. <https://sdgs.un.org>



Information Box 3 outlines how collective efforts under GI systems can contribute to the SDGs.

### INFORMATION BOX 3



#### Potential contributions of GI systems to the SDGs

For GI systems, SDG 17 (*Partnerships for the Goals*) highlights the need to cooperate with different stakeholders, as most challenges faced by these systems are collective in nature. Governance is a pillar that is crucial to the achievement of successful cooperation. It is only through cooperation and the building of alliances that GI organizations can define common goals shared by different actors, and GI systems can contribute to the achievement of joint objectives.

GI systems can provide significant contributions towards SDG 2 (*End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*). Indeed, these systems can help provide safe and nutritious food, promote sustainable agricultural practices, generate income for producers (in particular for vulnerable categories such as women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers) and preserve the genetic diversity of plants and animals.

In addition, GI systems can contribute to economic sustainability and improve the distribution of income among value chain actors, which relates to SDG 1 (*No poverty*), SDG 8 (*Good jobs and economic growth*) and SDG 10 (*Reduced inequalities*). SDGs related to the environment, such as SDG 13 (*Climate action*), SDG 14 (*Life below water*) and SDG 15 (*Life on land*) are also relevant in the context of GI systems, which generally operate in rural areas. Furthermore, GI processes can help achieve SDG 12 (*Responsible consumption and production*) by improving the information and guarantees regarding product quality and production practices provided to consumers. For GIs to be sustainable, social themes cannot be ignored, including SDG 5 (*Gender equality*) and SDG 11 (*Sustainable cities and communities*).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The SDG framework provides opportunities and avenues for cooperation at the local, regional and national level. GI systems can constitute key instruments to achieve collective sustainability goals at the community and/or regional levels. In order to play a leadership role in partnerships towards common sustainability objectives, GI organizations should clearly define their sustainability priorities and determine how these priorities match with those of other actors in the territory.

## Framework for the Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems

The framework for the Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems (SAFA) was developed by FAO to evaluate the sustainability performance of individual farms and food processing enterprises. The SAFA framework was a key building block in the development of the SSGI framework.



The SAFA framework consists of four sustainability pillars: good governance (crucial for the success of GI systems), environmental integrity, social well-being and economic resilience. The SAFA framework can be adapted to different product environments and is consistent with other sustainability frameworks, such as the SDGs and frameworks used by downstream value chain actors. These considerations supported the decision to select SAFA as the key sustainability framework for the SSGI (see Information Box 4).

#### INFORMATION BOX 4



##### Key strengths of the SAFA framework

The following characteristics of the SAFA framework underlie the decision to use it as the basis of the SSGI framework:

- **breadth of scope:** SAFA covers a broad range of issues, which can be contextualized to the realities of the GIs;
- **value chain coverage:** SAFA primarily covers upstream components of the value chain, which are most relevant for GI systems. It is designed for food and agricultural supply chains, which constitute the majority of GI systems;
- **credibility:** SAFA was developed by the United Nations, with support from multiple stakeholders. It is science-based and built with well-developed tools;
- **flexible:** SAFA can be very detailed, but can also be used in a flexible manner by producers or producer groups;
- **diversity of products:** SAFA covers a diverse scope of agricultural products;
- **support for regional development** (through the alignment with the SDGs); and
- **support for market requirements** (through the alignment with ethical sourcing policies, disclosure standards and certification systems, and especially environmental systems).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Linking people, places and products

A hands-on, illustrative guide on GIs entitled [Linking people, places and products](#) (FAO & SINERGI, 2010), can help GI practitioners gain a better understanding of the dynamics of GI systems and sustainability. The guide emphasizes how origin products can become the “pivotal point of a specific-quality virtuous circle” that promotes the preservation of agri-food systems and the socio-cultural and natural environments that make the production of high-quality GI products possible, and thus contributes to the sustainable development of rural communities. The design and implementation of a sustainability roadmap for GI systems is especially relevant to the *Reproduction of local resources* phase of the virtuous circle (see Figure 5). Indeed, sustainability roadmaps ensure the constant adjustment of GI systems, including the product specifications, to achieve economic, social and environmental benefits in an evolving context.

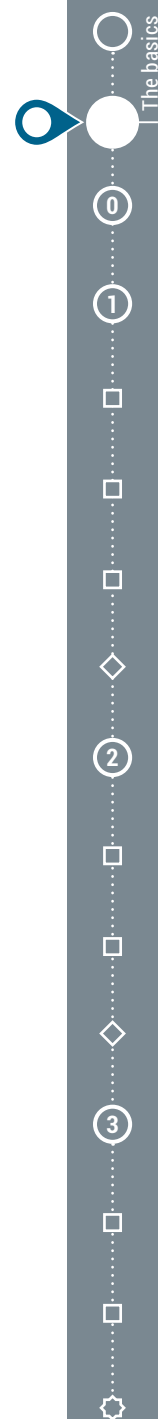




FIGURE 5

### The origin-linked quality virtuous circle



Source: FAO. 2009. *Linking people, places and products. A guide for promoting quality linked to geographical origin and sustainable geographical indications.*

Another relevant publication by FAO and the University of Florence is a guide titled *Evaluating geographical indications. Guide to tailor evaluations for the development and improvement of geographical indications* (Belletti and Maresscotti, 2021).<sup>3</sup> This guide (see Figure 6) provides guidance for stakeholders to assess the impacts of GI systems, either in a prospective (before the registration of the GI registration, of the expected effects) or in a retrospective way (after GI registration, of the actual effects). The guide provides a stepwise approach to build an evaluation framework with indicators tailored to the evaluation objectives. This publication was used to develop the database of GI indicators of the toolkit.

<sup>3</sup> The guide can be downloaded from FAO's website at [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb6511en](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb6511en).

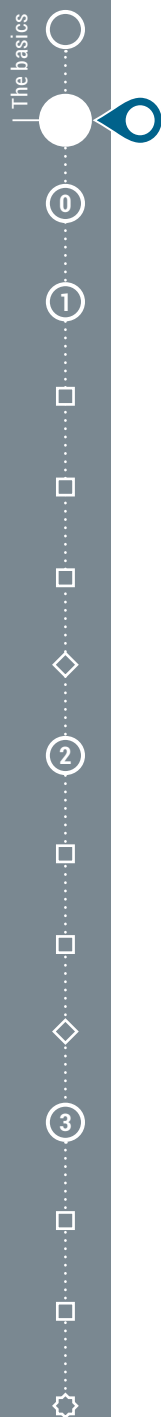


FIGURE 6

## Evaluating geographical indications. Guide to tailor evaluations for the development and improvement of geographical indications



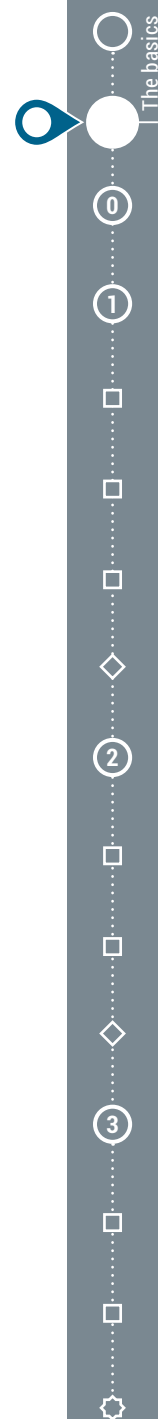
Source: Belletti, G. & Maescotti, A. 2021. *Evaluating geographical indications. Guide to tailor evaluations for the development and improvement of geographical indications*. Rome, FAO.

## Private sector sustainability frameworks: the Global Reporting Initiative and the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) are sustainability frameworks that are commonly used by private sector actors.<sup>4</sup> GI organizations may find these frameworks useful to communicate with market actors on their sustainability roadmap and indicators. GRI is widely used by major retailers and other companies. It provides guidelines for companies to conduct sustainability reviews of their operations and analyse the impacts of their operations on the economy, the environment and the communities in which they operate or which they may influence. The SASB framework also provides guidance to companies on how to communicate with investors on environmental, social and governance issues (commonly referred to as ESG issues) that may have an impact on financial performance.

Both the GRI and SASB frameworks provide guidelines for engaging with stakeholders, helping companies identify the topics on which they should focus. Another common feature of GRI and SASB is an emphasis on providing transparent information to investors and stakeholders in general, disclosing challenges, objectives, policies and achievements through sustainability reports.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the GRI, see [www.globalreporting.org](http://www.globalreporting.org); for more information on the SASB, visit [www.sasb.org](http://www.sasb.org).



# The roles of the GI board and the GI practitioner

GI organizations can bring together various types of actors along the GI value chain. GI organizations usually consist of producers (i.e. the producers of raw materials and/or processors), but can also comprise other types of actors (see “horizontal” and “vertical GI organizations” in the [glossary](#) and [Information Box 8](#)). Most GI organizations have a top decision-making body (a GI board or board of directors), as well as a collective body that represents the organization’s members, such as a general assembly of GI producers. Throughout this guide, the term “GI board” will be used to indicate the collective decision-making GI body. The GI board represents the interests of the members of the GI organizations (GI producers, and possibly other value chain actors), and should protect and promote the interests of the GI system. The GI board is the most appropriate and efficient decision-making body to develop the GI sustainability roadmap, with modalities for consultation with and/or validation of decisions by the GI organization’s members.

GI organizations should actively communicate the key elements of the GI sustainability roadmap with GI producers and stakeholders, and be ready to adjust the roadmap if necessary. The GI board can consult with and communicate its decisions to GI producers during general assemblies or through other instruments (e.g. periodic updates via email), thus allowing members to provide feedback. The GI board may directly ask members to validate decisions concerning the sustainability roadmap (in particular regarding the selection of priority topics during Phase 1).

GI organizations appoint a GI practitioner to lead and coordinate the definition and implementation of their sustainability roadmap. This person can be a GI board member, a staff member or an external consultant reporting to the board. The GI practitioner does not have to be a specialist in sustainability, but should be knowledgeable (or become knowledgeable) about the GI system, their role and the methodology (see *Getting prepared – appointing the GI practitioner* and [Information Box 5](#)).

The term “GI practitioner” is used throughout this guide to refer to the person in charge of the development of the sustainability roadmap, and is the primary intended user of the guide. Throughout the different steps of the guide, the GI practitioner will need to get feedback from different GI stakeholders – primarily the internal stakeholders (members and staff of the GI organization) – and obtain approval from the GI board at certain stages. They must become familiar with key sustainability frameworks, fundamental concepts for the roadmap and the specificities of the GI system and value chain.



# Crucial elements for the design and implementation of the GI sustainability roadmap

The SSGI builds on important concepts that are essential in the design and implementation of sustainability roadmaps, including:

## Governance

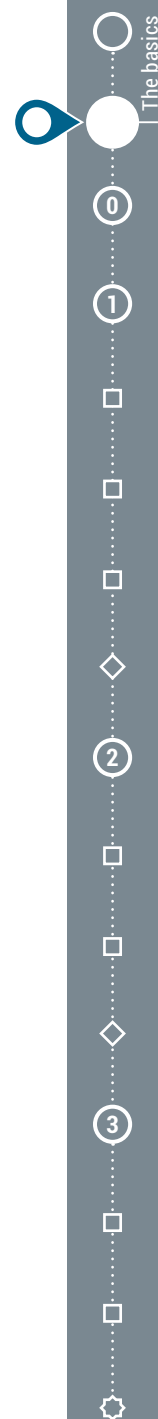
Governance is an important aspect of any organization. Good governance gives an organization legitimacy, allows it to make decisions in a transparent way, provides credibility with consumers and regulators, and helps build and maintain alliances. As most GI organizations around the world have rather limited resources, their institutional strength is their main asset. Governance topics are therefore particularly important for GI systems; they are the basis of their credibility and their ability to build long-term partnerships. Governance is an important dimension for sustainability, and especially for collective endeavours such as GI systems, where many actors must cooperate to formulate and implement collective solutions. For this reason, governance is considered a fourth pillar of sustainability in the SAFA framework and in ESG frameworks that analyse the risks and opportunities of investing in individual companies.

GI sustainability roadmaps should include at least three governance topics in the list of priority topics. This boosts the credibility of the GI organization and increases its abilities to develop partnerships or alliances to improve the sustainability performance of both the GI system and the territory.

## Engaging stakeholders and building alliances

Most GI organizations are unable to develop and implement significant actions to enhance the sustainability performance of their GI system without partnering with various stakeholders. By engaging with different stakeholders through a participatory and dynamic approach, GI organizations are better able to identify the economic, social and environmental issues that should be addressed at the individual and collective levels, as well as along the product's value chain and within the territory. Once these issues are prioritized, the GI organization will need partners to collect and assess data and – above all – to improve the GI system's sustainability performance through a continuous and iterative process.

Engaging with key stakeholders is a critical part of the process of developing a GI sustainability roadmap. Engagement is the process by which an organization identifies and selects stakeholders who have a significant interest or are strategically aligned with the organization's sustainability goals. Once selected, stakeholders are engaged by soliciting



their views and analysing their challenges concerning the GI system (stakeholder consultation); then, stakeholders should be kept involved in the formulation and implementation of initiatives and actions that address common priorities (cooperation, alliance building or implementation engagement).

The internal stakeholders of a GI organization are the GI producers and other value chain actors, the organization's staff members and its decision-making bodies. GI producers and their representatives should not only be consulted on their perceived challenges, but should also endorse the actions and initiatives that result from the process of developing the sustainability roadmap. Such engagement provides legitimacy and transparency to the effort, which is in turn crucial to securing the involvement of stakeholders. Active communication on the sustainability priority topics that must be confronted is also crucial to improving sustainability performance at the collective and individual levels. The efforts required to effectively consult and engage internal stakeholders depend on the size of the GI organization. Even small GI organizations must make sure that their members and staff understand and support the sustainability roadmap process and implement the resulting sustainability improvement plan.

External engagement is also fundamental to the definition and implementation of a sustainability roadmap. External GI stakeholders (all non-internal actors, from the public and private sectors, concerned by or interested in the GI system and its sustainability) represent an important asset for the GI organization and its roadmap. First, consulting external stakeholders provides a richness and a depth to the sustainability roadmap that cannot be achieved by focusing only on the GI producers and the GI organization's internal knowledge and vision. Second, the GI organization itself is unlikely to possess the resources required to assess and improve the GI system's sustainability on its own. By establishing a dialogue with value chain actors, governmental bodies, cooperation agencies and other external stakeholders, GI organizations can enhance their position and relevance in the GI system and territory, and validate the selected priorities. A well-planned stakeholder engagement process can also lead to fruitful discussions focusing on common interests and joint initiatives.

Annex 2 details a number of considerations which GI practitioners should take into account to optimize the results of stakeholder interaction; these elements should be considered when defining the GI sustainability roadmap.

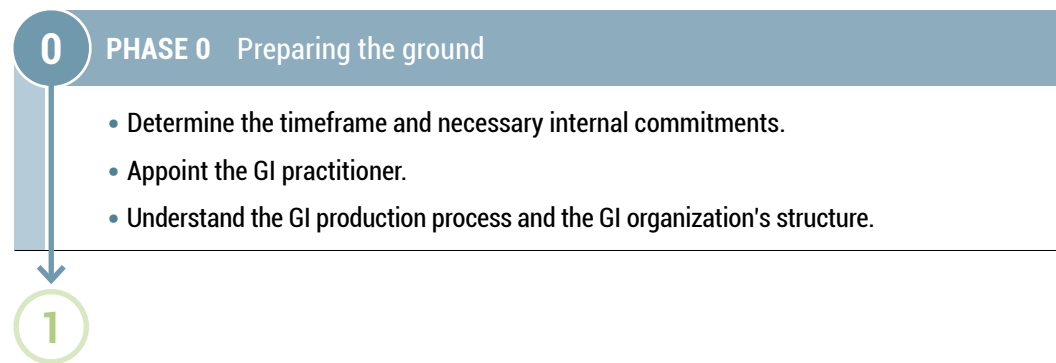
# Phase 0

## Getting prepared

The objective of this preparatory phase, which precedes the actual stages of the SSGI (starting with prioritization), is to prepare the ground. This phase consists of three main activities by the GI board and practitioner, as detailed in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7

### Overview of the Phase 0

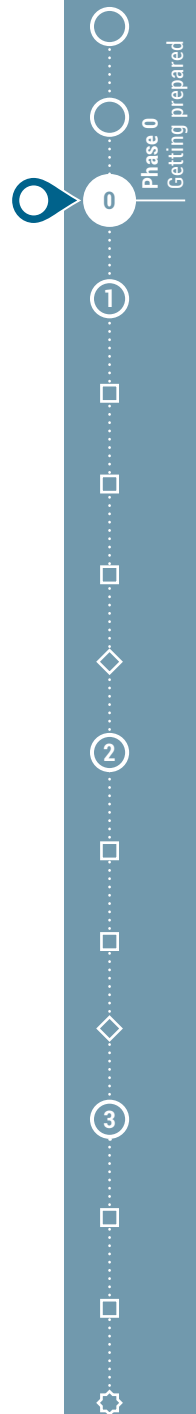


Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Determining the timeframe and necessary internal commitments

The GI organization's staff and members, the GI board and the GI practitioner must dedicate time, not only for formal gatherings but also for informal discussions and meetings, to optimize the process of defining the sustainability roadmap. The complexity of this task varies depending on the GI product and its local context, affecting the time and the resources required to develop the sustainability roadmap.

The times suggested in Table 1 assume that the GI practitioner devotes a significant portion of their time and that of their team (if applicable) to the sustainability process. The times for each phase depend on the overall timeframe for the definition and implementation of the sustainability roadmap; they may also vary according to the complexity of the GI system (e.g. the number of actors and the degree of heterogeneity among them, the availability of stakeholders, etc.).



The **prioritization process** can be expected to take approximately 8 to 12 weeks, assuming that the GI board is available to review and approve certain steps, information can be obtained when required and GI stakeholders can be consulted promptly. This period includes the time devoted to stakeholder research before interviews, and to the analysis of the different sustainability reports from the industry or value chain actors, territory development plans, etc. Well-prepared prioritization interviews with key stakeholders can take up to two hours. Depending on the number of GI producers involved, additional time may be required for the communication and validation processes.

The expected duration of the **assessment phase** will depend mostly on the availability of information and the indicators selected. If the information is readily available, it can take four weeks to build the baseline, with an additional two weeks to share the results with key stakeholders.

The **improvement phase** (building the improvement plan) requires the active participation of the GI board and the staff members of the GI organization. Determining gaps and defining goals may take up to four weeks, including validation of the proposal. For some priorities (in particular governance priorities and other priorities led by the GI organization itself), an improvement plan can be defined within a few weeks. For those priorities where the GI organization chooses to partner with other actors, improvement plans with concrete sustainability initiatives may take longer to develop. Actions towards achieving the selected goals should be clearly laid out, so that the GI organization and its board have a clear and verifiable roadmap. Actions may include active and structured dialogues with potential allies, government actors and other GI stakeholders. Generally, 12 to 16 weeks should be dedicated to defining initiatives and plans for most topics, assume regular evaluation and communication throughout the implementation of the roadmap.

**TABLE 1**

### Suggested approximate timeframe for the definition and implementation of the sustainability roadmap

Phases	Process	Approximative time
1 <b>Prioritization phase</b>	Research and consultation	8 to 12 weeks (depending on the availability of the GI board and stakeholders)
2 <b>Assessment phase</b>	Building the baseline	4 weeks (if information is readily available)
	Sharing the results	2 weeks
3 <b>Improvement phase</b>	Building the improvement plan	At least 4 weeks (depending on the accessibility of current and potential allies)
	Accompanying initiatives	Time is determined by the timeframe of the initiatives and monitoring

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



## Appointing the GI practitioner

The GI board appoints a GI practitioner to lead and coordinate the development of the GI sustainability roadmap, which consists of the following steps: defining sustainability priorities, assessing current performance against these priorities and elaborating and implementing an improvement plan with specific targets and goals (see *About this guide and toolkit* in Section 1). GI practitioners may or may not be members of the GI organization's staff; in any case, the GI practitioner must allocate the necessary time to leading the process and ensuring stakeholders' full cooperation. Information Box 5 outlines some considerations related to the identification and roles of GI practitioners.

### INFORMATION BOX 5



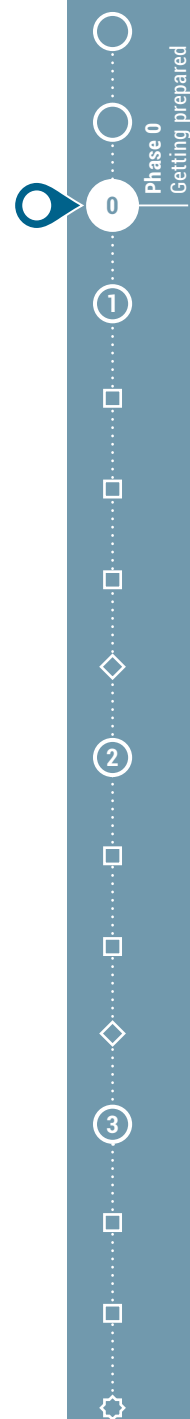
#### Considerations regarding the selection and role of GI practitioner

- GI practitioners are not necessarily sustainability experts.
- GI practitioners should dedicate sufficient time to their duties, and should be given access to different stakeholders.
- GI practitioners must act according to a mandate given by the GI board, and should receive the board's full cooperation. The board should assist the GI practitioner in validating information and in making decisions on behalf of the GI organization and its members. The GI board should also be involved in this process, providing feedback and approval at certain steps.
- GI practitioners should read this guide and its annexes to familiarize themselves with the concepts of sustainability, engagement, prioritization, assessment and improvement, and with the SDG and SAFA frameworks. GI practitioners must engage with the board, with GI producers and external stakeholders, and should therefore have a good understanding of the whys and hows of the process of developing a sustainability roadmap.
- GI practitioners should read this guide in conjunction with the accompanying toolkit; this requires them to be familiar with the Excel program. GI practitioners should take the time needed to understand how the excel toolkit works during the preparation process, to be able to visualize the entire process before starting to work. It is recommended to create backup files.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

GI practitioners should take the time to read the introduction to this guide, review the frameworks referenced (in particular SAFA, the SDGs and the SSGI structure, see Annex 1), become familiar with the SSGI toolkit and with different approaches for stakeholder engagement (see Annex 2). GI practitioners may deepen their knowledge of GI sustainability by reading the documents [Linking people, places and products](#) (FAO and SINERGI, 2010) and [Evaluating geographical indications](#) (Belletti and Marescotti, 2021).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> These documents can be downloaded from FAO's website at [www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/debde43-9d99-5c74-a440-e8db347941ac](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/debde43-9d99-5c74-a440-e8db347941ac) and <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6511en>, respectively.



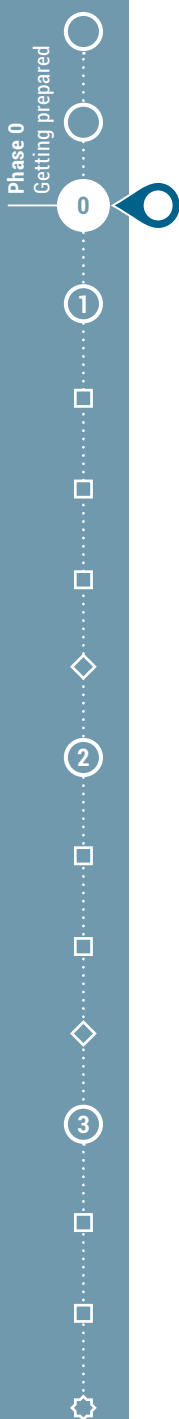


## Understanding the GI production process and the GI organization's structure

Once they have gained a clear understanding of all the key concepts related to GI systems and sustainability, GI practitioners should take an in-depth look at the specificities of the GI system.

GI practitioners should be aware of all the regulations that concern the GI product category and its value chain. To this end, the practitioner may draw up a list of all the regulations that apply to the GI product at the different stages of production, including sector-specific requirements regarding taxation, labour or the environment. In addition, GI practitioners should familiarize themselves with the GI product specifications, the GI value chain and the GI organization's structure and membership. They should review the GI organization's by-laws, its structure, the different types of GI producers, and the control procedures that are in place to ensure that product infringements do not go undetected and that producers comply with the GI specifications. It may also be useful to review GI infringement cases and analyse how they were handled.

Finally, GI practitioners should take stock of all the sustainability initiatives that have been, or are being, implemented by the GI organization, in relation to the economic, social, environmental and/or governance pillars.



# Phase 1

## Prioritization

### OBJECTIVE

The objective of Phase 1 is to select sustainability priority topics, after due consultations with the GI system's internal and external stakeholders. Priorities must be defined following the taxonomy of the SSGI framework (pillars, themes and topics, see Annex 1). The prioritization process will serve as a means to engage key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the sustainability roadmap.

### ACTIONS

- After familiarizing themselves with the GI system, its value chain, key sustainability concepts and the SSGI framework, the GI practitioner leads the effort of researching and analysing information on sustainability and public policy priorities in the territory and for the GI product category;
- the GI practitioner plans the process of stakeholder consultation to identify stakeholders' priorities, focusing on both internal stakeholders (the organization's members and staff) and external stakeholders (within or outside the territory); and
- building on the results of the stakeholder consultation, the GI board validates the selection of priority sustainability topics together with the GI producers (to ensure internal stakeholder engagement). The priority topics are communicated to all external stakeholders to ensure their involvement in the development and implementation of improvement initiatives along the GI system sustainability pathway.

### DELIVERABLES

- Collective sustainability priorities are identified through stakeholder consultations; and
- the GI organization engages with several public and private stakeholders, based on an engagement plan.

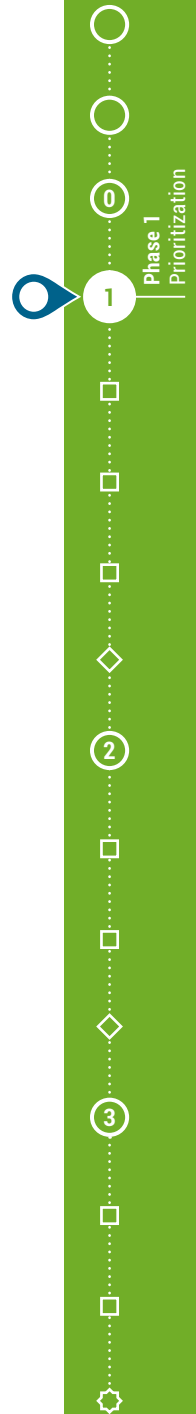
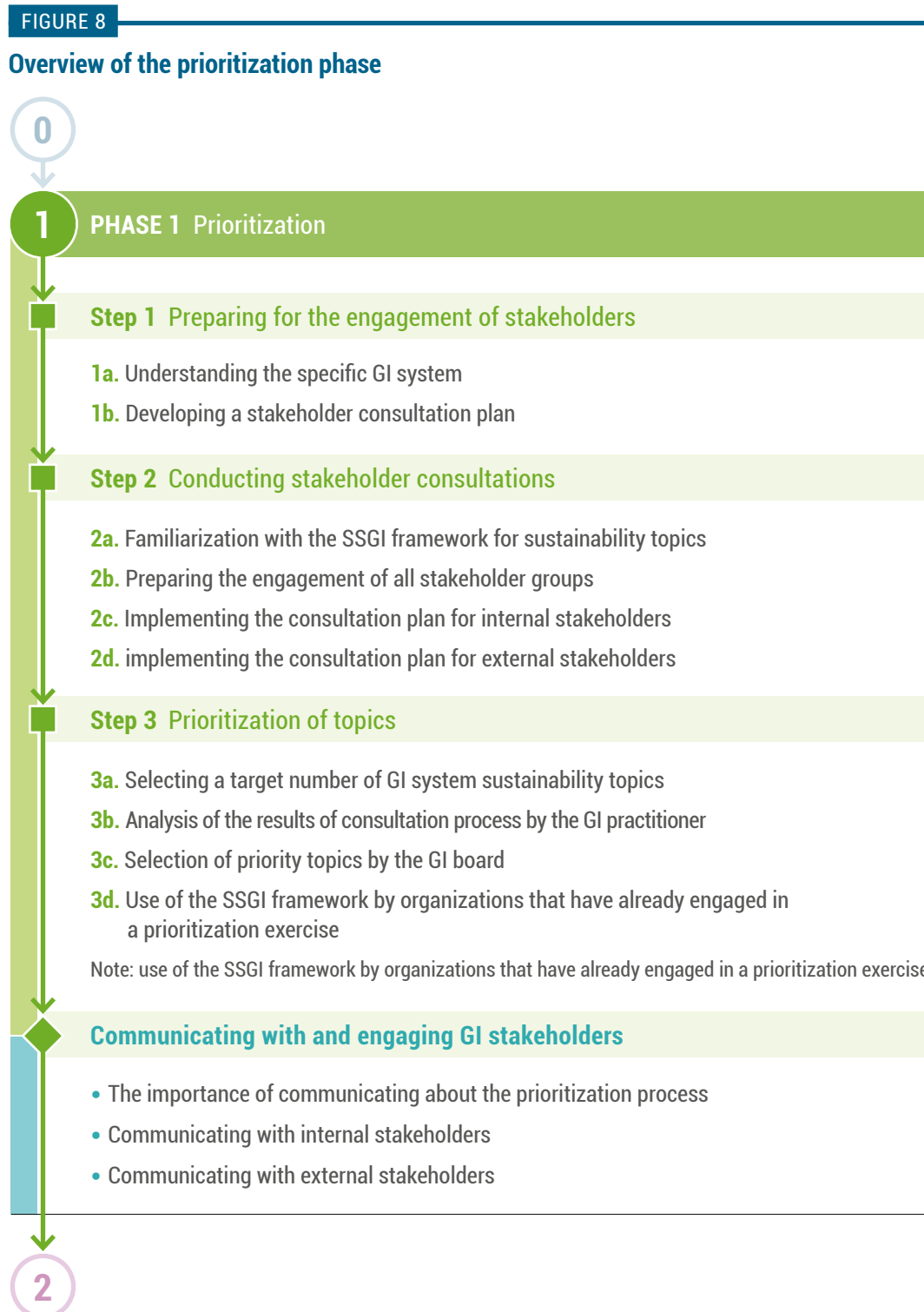


Figure 8 provides an overview of the steps of Phase 1.



Source: Authors' own elaboration.



including – but not limited to – public authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, extension service providers and other institutions (for example, tourism operations in the production area). It also includes stakeholders in the territory who are interested in the natural and cultural conditions that render the production and marketing of the GI product possible.

The prioritization exercise should consider the views of a wide range of stakeholders, to gain a broad view of the GI system's challenges and opportunities; this will ensure that the results of the prioritization process are solid and accepted by all key actors. Information Box 6 lists the different benefits of wide-ranging stakeholder consultations.

#### INFORMATION BOX 6



##### Benefits of wide-ranging stakeholder consultations

- Stakeholder engagement creates opportunities for stakeholders and GI organizations to get to know each other; it helps establish partnerships to work towards common goals.
- The range of sustainability topics that must be considered is very wide; different stakeholders may offer perspectives that the GI organization may not have thought of.
- By consulting a wide range of stakeholders, organizations can gain a better understanding of needs, requirements and impacts perceived by various actors.
- Stakeholder consultations help build trust: engaging diverse stakeholders improves relationships, ensures buy-in, increases transparency and strengthens confidence in the organization's actions.
- Effective stakeholder consultations strengthen the GI organization: they improve decision-making, ensure that strategies are relevant, strengthen the organization's reputation, enable the proactive management of risks, and stimulate innovative thinking and internal improvements.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

By conducting research and organizing initial conversations with various stakeholders, the GI practitioner can identify the main challenges and strengths of the GI system, which helps structure the stakeholder consultation process. Information Box 7 lists a number of questions for the GI practitioner to consider. When reviewing the strengths and challenges of the GI system and the GI organization, the practitioner must determine which of the four pillars of sustainability of the SSGI they belong to (economic, governance, social or environment).



## INFORMATION BOX 7



### Key questions for the initial review of the GI system's challenges and opportunities

#### Economic

- Are GI producers making a profit? What are the major constraints to profitability? Are producers investing?
- Is the local economy benefitting from the GI system?
- Are the GI product's qualities (e.g. nutritional) and differentiating attributes recognized and adequately communicated?
- Is the GI system vulnerable (to price swings, lack of market opportunities, lack of access to financing, etc.)?

#### Governance

- Is the GI system/organization accountable through audits/transparency mechanisms?
- Has a GI product and system strategy been defined and communicated? Are collective decisions consistent with this strategy?
- When decisions are made, do they consider possible direct and indirect impacts on the community, the environment or other stakeholders?
- Can all GI producers actively participate in collective decisions, if they so wish?
- Does the GI system/organization comply with all applicable laws and regulations, and is it able to prevent GI product infringements?

#### Social

- Does the GI system rely on and/or promote local culture and traditions?
- Do those involved in the GI system have decent livelihoods?
- Are new generations interested in the GI production? Does the GI system have access to the labour it needs to grow?
- Does the GI system provide opportunities to women, vulnerable people and other disadvantaged groups?
- Does the GI system provide acceptable working conditions? Does it affect the quality of life of surrounding communities?
- Do labour contracts in the GI system comply with legislation?
- Does the GI system provide transparent market information to buyers and sellers? Are buyers and sellers interested in continuing their involvement in the GI value chain?

#### Environment

- Does the GI system treat animals according to standards and regulations (when applicable)?
- Does the GI system monitor its greenhouse gas emissions, and does it implement actions to prevent air pollution?
- Does the GI system implement actions to preserve or promote biodiversity?
- Does the GI production system respect land use regulations and soil conservation practices?
- Does the GI system monitor the energy it requires and the waste it generates?
- Does the GI system monitor its water use?

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

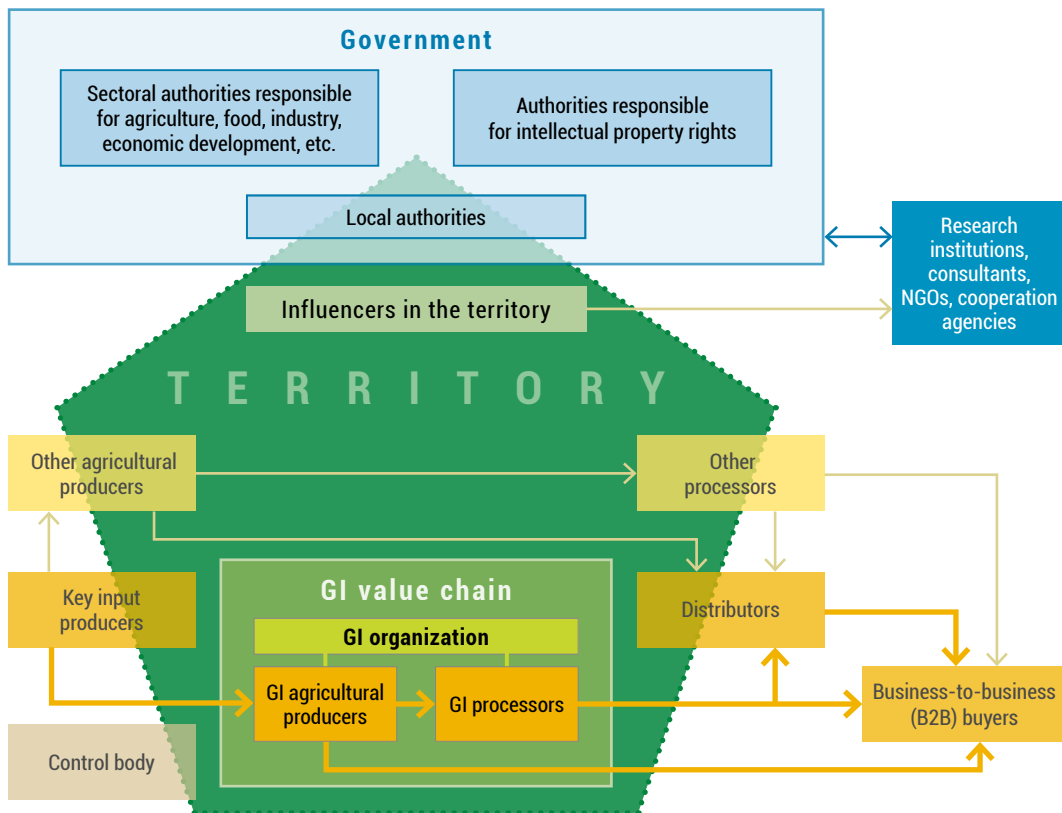


The GI practitioner may answer additional questions regarding different challenge areas that are deemed relevant. Self-assessment guides, such as those for ISO 14001 on environmental topics,<sup>6</sup> can be used to this end, adapting questions as needed.

Based on the results of this preliminary research, the GI practitioner maps the GI system, identifying its actors and main stakeholders. GI stakeholders are actors who are directly or indirectly concerned by the GI product and system; they include the actors in the GI value chain (producers, distributors, traders, buyers, etc.), as well as private or public entities, located within or outside the territory, that can impact or be impacted by the GI system. These may include cooperation agencies, research centers, NGOs and national, regional and local government entities that implement programmes and policies affecting the GI system (including its legal and institutional framework, for example concerning IPRs). Figure 9 provides an overview of possible GI system stakeholders; practitioners can use this figure as a basis to draw a map of their system’s key actors.

FIGURE 9

General mapping of GI actors



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

<sup>6</sup> An example of a self-assessment guide that can be used to evaluate an organization’s readiness for an ISO 14001 environmental management system can be found at [www.bsigroup.com/LocalFiles/en-GB/iso-14001/resources/BSI-ISO14001-Assessment-Checklist-UK-EN.pdf](http://www.bsigroup.com/LocalFiles/en-GB/iso-14001/resources/BSI-ISO14001-Assessment-Checklist-UK-EN.pdf).

## Understanding the value chain of the GI product

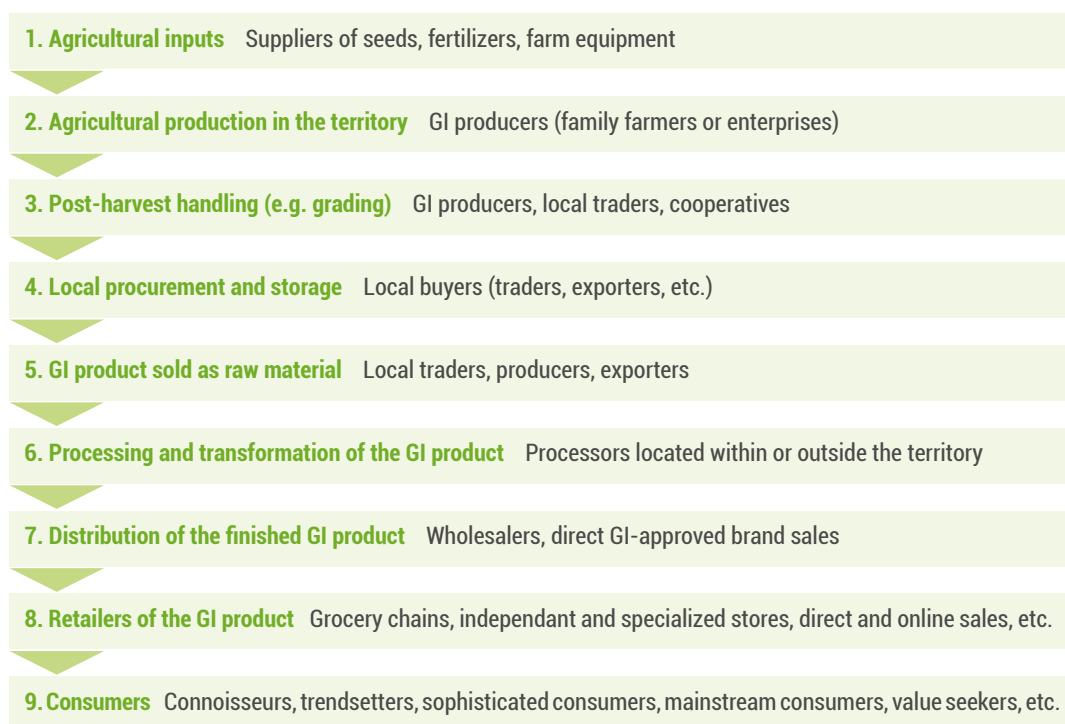
In a next step, the GI practitioner reviews the GI value chain and its different stages:

- What are the key inputs that the GI production process relies on?
- Is the GI product ready for final consumption, or is it used as an ingredient in the production of other products?
- Does the GI system include processing activities to make the product ready for final consumption?

Figure 10 provides an example of a typical value chain for an agricultural product and its different stages; GI practitioners can use this figure as a basis to identify the key stages and actors in their GI system.

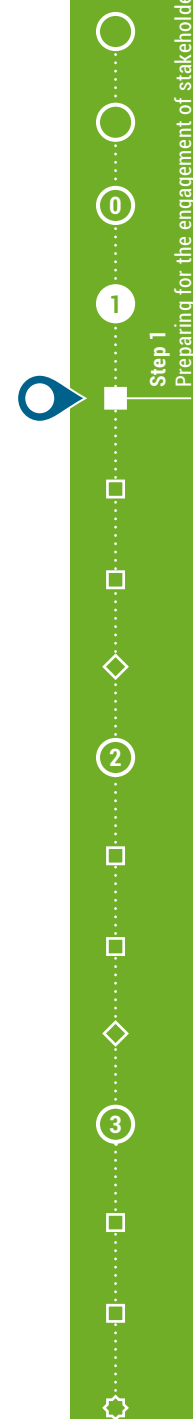
**FIGURE 10**

### Typical example of the value chain for an agricultural product



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

GI organizations can be classified as horizontal or vertical, depending on whether the organization's members (the producers complying with the GI specifications) perform activities at the same or at different stages within the value chain (see Information Box 8 for a definition of horizontal and vertical GI organizations). In horizontal organizations, all actors operate at the same stage of production, and only one type of producer must be considered. Meanwhile, in vertical organizations, practitioners must distinguish between the producers of raw materials and processors.





## INFORMATION BOX 8

**Horizontal and vertical GI organizations**

**Horizontal organizations** are GI organizations whose members all operate at the same stage of production; the IG specifications apply only to this operation within the value chain. Horizontal organizations may group, for example, producers of agricultural raw materials, such as coffee, cocoa or fruits. Alternatively, they may group only manufacturers or processors (e.g. in the case of handicrafts).

Meanwhile, **vertical GI organizations** include GI producers operating at different stages of the value chain. Here, the GI product specifications cover both production and processing. For cheese, for example, GI specifications usually concern both the production of milk and the making of cheese. Likewise, the GI specifications for wines may include rules that concern both the producers of grapes and the processors who transform the grapes into wine. In certain cases, the GI specifications concern that actors at further stages of the value chain, such as packers (if the GI characteristics call for a specific type of packaging) and retailers or other sellers (if the GI specifications prescribe a specific way of maturation or selling). An example of a vertical organization is the Tequila Regulatory Council (Mexico), which incorporates both the producers of agave and the processors producing Tequila.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

**Identifying the internal and external stakeholders of the GI system**

This guide distinguishes between internal and external stakeholders:

- **Internal GI stakeholders** are the prime actors interested in and concerned by the GI system i.e. the GI producers who adhere to the GI specifications (producers of agricultural raw materials or processors, generally members of the organization) and the staff members of the GI organization who manage the GI system. These stakeholders are directly involved in the functioning of the GI production system and concerned by its performance. They must play a leading role in the definition of the sustainability roadmap, and should be consulted and informed regularly throughout the process of the preparation and implementation of the roadmap. For large GI organizations, consultations may be organized with representatives of different groups of stakeholders. The GI organization's staff members are also considered internal stakeholders, acting as facilitators and influencers of the actions implemented by the GI organization.
- **External stakeholders** are not members of the GI organization (whatever its form), but nevertheless play a significant role in the GI system or are impacted by it, including:
  - other actors in the GI value chain (e.g. suppliers of key ingredients, industry leaders from same product category, intermediary distributors, marketers, retailers, consumers);
  - academics/researchers;
  - local communities;
  - actors who influence or enforce the GI product specifications (e.g. control bodies, NGOs, cooperation agencies); and
  - actors who influence GI product regulations (e.g. governmental bodies such as those dealing with intellectual property rights, and local authorities).



## Classifying GI stakeholders into categories and groups

The broad overview of key actors in the GI system provides GI practitioners with enough elements to classify stakeholders into categories and groups.

A **stakeholder category** includes actors that perform the same actions or functions in the value chain, within or outside of the territory, and therefore have similar interests (e.g. farmers, processors, traders, control bodies, NGOs, etc.). Information Box 9 identifies the main GI stakeholder categories, while Information Box 10 provides questions to help identifying key stakeholder categories of the GI system.

### INFORMATION BOX 9



#### GI stakeholder categories

##### Within the territory

- **Internal stakeholder categories:**

- GI primary producers;
- GI processors;
- staff members of the GI organization; and
- other key actors belonging to the GI value chain.

- **External stakeholder categories:**

- local authorities (provincial or municipal, or other authorities dealing with territorial issues); and
- inhabitants of the territory, influencers.

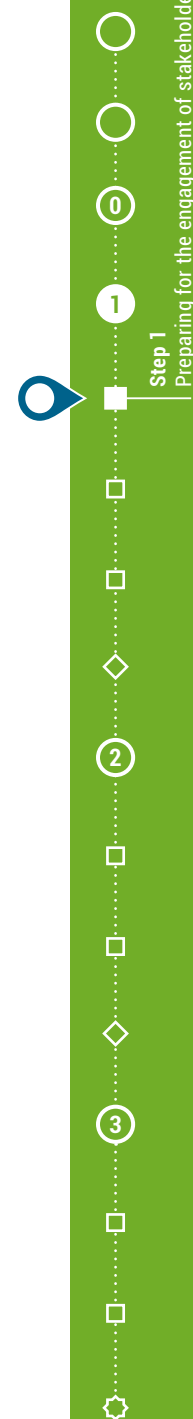
##### Within or outside of the territory

- **External stakeholder categories:**

- academic and research institutions;
- control bodies, cooperation agencies and NGOs, the civil society;
- primary producers and/or processors who do not belong to GI organization but produce similar products or non-certified GI products;
- national authorities (e.g. ministries of agriculture, development, the environment or culture, and authorities dealing with intellectual property rights); and
- intermediaries (e.g. wholesalers, importers, exporters, distributors or retailers) and consumers.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**Stakeholder groups** are stakeholders within a single category that share common characteristics (for example, size, location, capacities, etc.) that differentiate them from other groups within the same category and may give rise to different views. For example, the category of GI processors may comprise two groups: family processors and industrial processors. Meanwhile, the category of farmers may comprise a group of farmers located



in mountainous areas and a group of farmers located in plains. Stakeholders in the category of government actors may be grouped according to their specific functions, such as intellectual property authorities, local authorities, environmental authorities or any other group of authorities with an impact on the GI product category.

## INFORMATION BOX 10



### Questions to identify key stakeholder categories

#### The GI product and value chain

- Which actors play a significant role in the GI product value chain?
- What is the GI production process? What are the types of GI producers, and what are their methods of production? Who are the internal and external stakeholders of the GI organization?
- Are there any key inputs or raw materials that the GI producers must buy? Who supplies them?
- What are the main challenges that GI producers and the GI organization face?

#### The GI market

- Who are the final buyers of the GI product, and how does the product reach these buyers?
- In which markets (foreign or domestic) is the GI product sold?
- How does the price of the GI product compare to that of competing products?
- What type of consumers tend to buy the GI product? What seems to underlie their interest in the GI product?
- What type of retail outlets do they use (distribution channels)?
- Who sells the GI product to those distribution channels? Are they located in the territory?
- Who do the GI producers typically sell their products to?
- What are the relevant markets, market players and partners to consider, now and in the future? Do local markets, including the local tourism market, represent interesting perspectives for the GI product?
- What are the current or possible challenges and sustainability issues in the industry, and what are consumers' expectations regarding sustainability?

#### Territory and regulations

- Do producers comply with the GI rules and regulations?
- Are there important evolutions in local or national regulatory frameworks? Which authorities should the GI organization liaise with in the development of its sustainability pathway?
- Which sector leaders, cooperation or government agencies or other key stakeholders express opinions or influence sustainability priorities and initiatives?
- Are there lessons to be drawn from sustainability initiatives implemented by other stakeholders in the territory or industry?
- What are the strengths and challenges in the territory as perceived by producers and by the local authorities?

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



Information Box 11 provides elements that can be used to define stakeholder groups within a single stakeholder category. The groups may have different degrees of current or potential influence in the GI system, depending on their roles, characteristics and interests.

### INFORMATION BOX 11



#### Criteria to define stakeholder groups within stakeholder categories of GI organizations

- Type of operation: depending on the size of the GI system, at least three groups from one or more categories should be consulted, e.g. producers of raw agricultural materials, producers who also do some processing, producers who also commercialize, etc.
- Size of operation: producers with different sales volumes should be consulted. Ideally, two large, two medium and two small producers should be consulted.
- Location: the views of producers in different locations within the territory should be solicited (at least one producer/processor in each location).
- Influence and representation: the views of influential GI producers and of operators who represent or have responsibilities vis-à-vis their fellow operators should be consulted (e.g. GI board members). This should include the key representative groups in each category.
- Type of relationship of the operator with the GI organization (for example, individual membership or membership through a cooperative).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Key decision-makers within the GI organization may provide insights that can help define stakeholder groups. Toolkit Box 2 explains how this guide's toolkit can be used to identify stakeholder categories and groups.

### TOOLKIT BOX 2



#### USING THE TOOLKIT – Identifying GI stakeholder categories and groups

- Go to **Tab 1.1.1 "Background research"** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to help identify the internal (Table 1) and external (Table 2) stakeholder groups within each category that must be consulted.
- Fill in the GI product name and GI product description.
- Indicate whether your organization is a horizontal or a vertical organization (see Information Box 8) and select "processors" and/or "primary producers". For horizontal organizations, delete all groups belonging to the category that is not relevant to the organization.
- The toolkit provides fields for different stakeholder groups within a category (see Information Box 9 and Information Box 10). Group names may be adapted to the specific context of the GI system; groups may be added, as long as they do not overlap with other groups and categories.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



## Analysis of the sustainability context

To understand the overall GI context in terms of sustainability, it is recommended that the GI practitioner first reviews:

- reports by GI product category leaders (producers or distributors); most large and influential stakeholders publish sustainability or corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports; and
- policy documents and development plans by local authorities, and information from national authorities on the GI and GI product category (generally, the ministries of agriculture or the environment).

In addition to these sources of information, an initial classification of stakeholders (see Information Box 9) can provide a basis to identify documents or experts who may be consulted to identify stakeholders' sustainability interests and priorities. Information Box 12 provides examples of such resources.

### INFORMATION BOX 12

#### Identifying GI stakeholder sustainability interests: examples of resources

<b>Local authorities</b>	Government plans, SDG territory reports and/or policy documents indicating priorities. Initial consultations to identify perceived sustainability challenges.
<b>Large commercial actors</b>	Publicly available sustainability or CSR reports.
<b>Consumers</b>	Consumer surveys. Sustainability priorities by distributors or retailers may be a good proxy of consumer interests.
<b>National authorities</b>	Government plans, policy priorities (including of authorities in charge of IPRs).
<b>Academia</b>	Consultations with GI product experts.
<b>NGOs/ cooperation agencies</b>	Mission/purpose statements, annual reports and/or policy priorities. Consultations with organizations located in the territory to identify specific challenges (especially in relation to environmental and social topics).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Drafting of a summary report

It is recommended to draft a succinct report detailing the main sustainability challenges identified based on the analysis of documents and conversations with representatives of key stakeholder groups. This report can serve as a basis for discussions with both internal and external stakeholders, and can help identify sustainability issues and priorities. Example Box 1 provides an example of such a summary report.



## EXAMPLE BOX 1



### A summary report on sustainability challenges

Based on the results of initial conversations with stakeholders and the study of documents, GI practitioners may draft a summary report on the GI system's sustainability challenges. The following format can help practitioners structure this report.

*Mark the appropriate box with x, based on conversations held*

Frequently mentioned challenges and opportunities	Common theme in conversations/ research					Associated SSGI sustainability themes
	GI producers	Staff members of the GI organization	Other actors in the value chain	Regulators	Other stakeholders	
<b>1. Possible economic resilience topics</b>						
Access to inputs is unreliable or dependent on a small supplier base						Investment
Prices and profits vary significantly from year to year						Investment
The dynamics of the local economy are significantly affected by GI products						Local economy
GI producers are not investing or upgrading						Investment
Long-term relationships with customers are difficult to maintain						Investment
Access to new markets/distribution channels is difficult						Vulnerability
Access to financing and insurance is an issue						Vulnerability
Changing economic and climate conditions make producers vulnerable						Vulnerability
Compliance and certification against GI specifications is costly						Product quality and information
Other considerations and/or challenges relevant to the GI System						Applicable SSGI theme
<b>2. Possible good governance topics</b>						
The GI organization is known and its actions and activities are communicated						Accountability
The GI collective strategy and vision are known and decisions are consistent with this purpose						Ethics
Final buyers are requesting sustainability metrics and certifications						Holistic management

Follows on the next page →



Frequently mentioned challenges and opportunities	Common theme in conversations/ research					Associated SSGI sustainability themes
	GI producers	Staff members of the GI organization	Other actors in the value chain	Regulators	Other stakeholders	
<b>2. Possible good governance topics</b>						
The GI organization is professionally managed						Holistic management
GI stakeholders are consulted and GI producers can participate in discussions and decision-making bodies without undue restrictions						Participation
Local laws and regulations are evolving and it is more difficult to comply						Rule of law
The GI system adopts decisions following explicit and known rules, and GI product quality enforcement is consistent with GI product specifications and applicable regulations						Rule of law
Other considerations and/or challenges relevant to the GI System						Applicable SSGI theme
<b>3. Possible social well-being topics</b>						
Local knowledge and traditions are a key aspect of GI benefits						Cultural diversity
Those involved in the GI system in the territory have opportunities to improve their standard of living						Decent livelihoods
New generations see the GI system as a career possibility						Demography
The GI system provides opportunities to minorities, females or vulnerable people						Equity
The GI system and production processes comply with workplace safety standards						Community safety and health
The GI system supports nutrition and food sovereignty						Community safety and health
Workers belonging to the GI production system are treated fairly, in line with applicable laws and regulations						Labour rights
Commercial practices for GI products are not discriminatory and provide incentives for those performing according to GI rules						Rewarding commercial practices
Other considerations and/or challenges relevant to the GI System						Applicable SSGI theme

 Follows on the next page 

Frequently mentioned challenges and opportunities	Common theme in conversations/ research					Associated SSGI sustainability themes
	GI producers	Staff members of the GI organization	Other actors in the value chain	Regulators	Other stakeholders	
<b>4. Possible environmental integrity topics</b>						
Animal welfare challenges need to be addressed						Animal welfare
Air quality and greenhouse gas emissions are a challenge						Atmosphere
Considerations related to the protection of ecosystems and the preservation of species and biodiversity						Biodiversity
Maintaining soil quality and complying with applicable regulations						Land
Efficient use of inputs, energy and waste systems						Materials and energy
Water use and quality						Water
Other considerations and/or challenges relevant to the GI System						Applicable SSGI theme

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

## 1b. Developing a stakeholder consultation plan

The GI organization must consult key GI stakeholder groups, both internal and external to the organization, in order to identify their views on the possible priority sustainability topics for the GI system. In order for the stakeholder consultation exercise to be credible, it must be based on a sound and well-conceived process that ensures that the views and concerns of all stakeholder groups are considered. All stakeholders (including stakeholders whose opinions are usually not heard) should be able to participate in the consultation process without fear that sharing their thoughts may have negative repercussions.

To ensure an effective and inclusive consultation process, the GI practitioner must formulate a stakeholder consultation plan, whereby representatives of all stakeholder categories and groups are consulted. As a strict minimum, the groups that must be consulted are the GI producers (primary producers and/or processors), as well as the staff members of the GI organization. In addition to these internal stakeholders, the consultation plan must foresee consultations with the most relevant external stakeholder categories and groups. Information Box 13 provides an overview of the stakeholder groups that are generally consulted during a GI prioritization process.





**INFORMATION BOX 13****GI stakeholder groups to include in the consultation process**

- GI producers (primary producers and/or processors belonging to the GI organization);
- staff members of the GI organization;
- key value chain actors and/or primary producers and processors in the territory who do not belong to the GI organization;
- government stakeholders at the territorial level;
- large retailers that sell (or could sell) the GI product;
- social/environmental cooperation agencies and NGOs in the territory, with an interest in the GI product category; and
- academic and research institutions with an interest in the GI system or in the GI product category.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**Selecting internal stakeholder groups for consultations**

The GI producers (primary producers or processors) are the most important stakeholders to include in the consultation process. The GI practitioner must ensure that all internal stakeholders have an opportunity to express their views and concerns (for example through interviews, workshops, forums or other engagement methods). To ensure an inclusive consultation process, stakeholders of different sizes and operating in different areas should be consulted.

The exact consultation modalities will depend on the characteristics of the GI system. For example, in the case of large GI organizations, it may be impossible to consult all GI producers individually. In such cases, the practitioner may consider consulting the representatives of groups of producers, such as primary producers or processors grouped by size, location or other criteria. Other consultation means include surveys or discussions in focus groups or with producer committees. For smaller GI organizations, all producers may be consulted individually.

It is also recommended to consult key players in the GI value chain who are not members of the GI organization but nevertheless exercise significant influence on the GI system. Examples include producers who comply with the GI product specifications but have not (yet) joined the GI organization, suppliers of the raw materials that are used to produce the GI product (see the example of Queso Paipa in Example Box 2), processors who use the GI product as an ingredient in other products (e.g. chocolate makers or coffee roasters), or exporters of the GI product.



## EXAMPLE BOX 2

**Queso Paipa: key stakeholders in the GI value chain**

Milk producers are key players in the value chain of Queso Paipa (a semi-hard cheese registered as a GI in Colombia) but are not members of the GI organization. Nevertheless, their views and concerns were taken into account when the GI organization prioritized its sustainability topics; they were interviewed and are considered key players in the organization's sustainability roadmap. Other key actors in the Queso Paipa GI system are cheese producers who do not belong to the GI organization because of a lack of information or failure to comply with official regulations concerning cheese production. Representatives of these groups were consulted as part of the internal stakeholder engagement process.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Staff members of the GI organization may help identify the key stakeholders who should be included in formal consultations.

TABLE 2

**Overview of internal GI stakeholder groups: the example of a horizontal GI organization**

Internal GI Stakeholder category	Stakeholder groups within the category			
GI producers of raw materials	Large plantations that are GI producers*	Small and medium-sized GI producers*	GI producers working under associations or cooperatives*	GI producers located far from markets*
Other actors in the GI value chain	Key producers of inputs*	Associations of producers in the territory who do not belong to the GI organization	Users of the GI product as an ingredient who do not belong to the GI organization*	
Staff members of the GI organization	Managers*	Sustainability experts*	Employees who have regular contacts with GI producers	

Note: \* indicates stakeholder groups that are considered influential in the GI system.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**Identifying internal stakeholders to engage in consultations**

The GI practitioner must identify, for each internal GI stakeholder group, the actors to be consulted (institutions, entities, companies and/or individuals). The list of actors to engage in consultations forms the basis of the consultation engagement plan. Toolkit Box 3 outlines how to use this guide's toolkit to rank internal stakeholders according to their relevance for consultations.



### TOOLKIT BOX 3



#### Selecting and ranking internal GI stakeholder groups for consultations

Go to **Tab 1.1.2.1 "Int. Stakeholder identi."** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to help identify the key internal stakeholder groups that must be consulted on the GI system sustainability priorities.

- Click on the Step (a) box to update all internal GI stakeholder groups previously identified.
- Assess the influence wielded by each group, for each of these criteria: GI strategy, GI decision-making, GI operations, financial performance of the GI system and GI reputation.
- Click on the Step (c) box. The toolkit will rank the stakeholder groups based on your assessment.
- Select the stakeholders for consultation by clicking on the appropriate box. The final selection may be based on the score provided, or on other criteria. You may select as many groups as you want, taking into account the resources available to reach out to groups. There should be a minimum of five GI primary producer and/or GI processor groups to be consulted.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Discussions with staff or board members of the GI organization may help identify the individual actors for consultation. The following criteria can be used to estimate the influence (low, medium or high) of the groups, according to their role within the GI organization:

- **Organizational strategy and decision-making:** ability of the group or its representatives to influence the strategy and direction of the GI system in the long term, or the decision-making of the GI organization in the medium term.
- **Business operations:** capacity of the group to influence the day-to-day operations of the GI system, to rapidly improve the GI system's sustainability.
- **Financial situation of the GI system:** influence of the group on the profitability or the financial performance of GI system.

For large GI systems, GI practitioners may take into account the following considerations:

- For GI organizations with different committees, each representing a group of value chain actors (the milk producers, cheese makers and ripeners for GI cheese, for example, or producers based in various localities): each committee can organize internal consultations, and the practitioner can consult the representatives of the various committees (see Example Box 3).
- For each group, the practitioner can select a certain number of representatives (see Information Box 14). Individual actors can be selected based on their knowledge or commitment, or they can be asked to participate on a voluntary basis, with an invitation sent out to all actors.



## EXAMPLE BOX 3

**Selecting producers for consultations: cocoa producers in Orinoquía, Colombia**

One of the key regions of cocoa production in Colombia is the Orinoquía, where approximately 5 000 farmers produce cocoa. Producers in this area are organized under the local chapters of the Federación de Cacaoteros de Colombia (Fedecacao), which functions as the GI organization. Fedecacao has local staff in the area, and cacao producers have formed municipal and regional producer committees. However, communications are limited, and it is often difficult to reach producers on distant farms. To select which producers to interview for the prioritization process, it was decided to interview the leaders of local municipal committees and local producer associations, as well as a local Fedecacao staff members, and obtain feedback on the results of these interviews through larger producer forums. The selected producers represented all geographic locations, were both male and female, and operated farms of different sizes. A total of eight interviews were conducted virtually, lasting approximately two hours each; these interviews allowed the practitioner to develop a consolidated view of internal stakeholders' perspectives.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## INFORMATION BOX 14

**Number of key stakeholders to consult within each internal stakeholder group****Actors in the GI value chain**

The number of value chain actors to be contacted depends on the size of the GI organization. Organizations with a limited number of members may consult all producers, as well as their staff members, while organizations with hundreds or even thousands of members and a large staff may have to select and sample members, based on their profiles. For larger GI systems (usually with more than 30 producers), the GI practitioner may contact producers through surveys or organize workshops. However, it is advisable to focus on structured interviews with key producer representatives, as such interviews usually result in a deeper understanding of challenges and priorities. It is recommended to interview:

- for small GI organizations: all employees, and all members;
- for intermediary GI organization: at least five primary producers and five processors (as applicable), and two to five other GI users (e.g. manufacturers);
- for larger GI organizations: a minimum of 20 interviews with representatives of primary producers and processors (and other value chain stakeholders, as applicable) OR interviews with a certain percentage of all individuals within each stakeholder group (e.g. 20 percent).

The GI practitioner must review available information on GI producers, and may seek the advice of the organization's staff to list producers who are reachable (see also Example Box 3).

**Staff members of the GI organization**

In general, the GI practitioner should also enlist key members of the **organization's staff**, particularly those who are familiar with the challenges of the GI system, the sustainability initiatives in place, the functioning of the control body and the governance system of the GI organization. Engaging staff members is crucial to ensure that they "buy in" into the sustainability process, as they may eventually lead the implementation of certain sustainability initiatives. For larger GI organizations, reaching out to staff members from different areas of the organization or based in different localities may be useful.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



## Selecting external stakeholder groups for consultation

Certain categories and groups of external stakeholders may not be easily reachable for consultation. The practitioner will often select the external stakeholders who are the most influential in the development of the sustainability roadmap, based on the following criteria:

- **knowledge:** capacity of the group to provide crucial information for the prioritization and assessment processes that is not easily available to the GI organization;
- **financial situation:** influence of the group on the financial performance or funding of the GI system (for assessment or improvement) and/or their possible contribution to the GI sustainability roadmap, either for assessment, improvement and /or communication;
- **reputation:** ability of the group to influence the image of the GI product and/or system and help in diffusing information;
- **impact:** the impact that GI system has on the group, and the impact it exerts on the GI system as a result of normal activities;
- **influence:** the group's influence on the GI system's decision-making; and
- the **resources** available to reach these groups.

It is recommended to consult at least five external stakeholder groups; important stakeholders to consider are:

- the staff members of the GI system's control body: they may provide information on the challenges of quality control and GI enforcement, as well as on the practical difficulties involved in certifying GI products based on the current GI product specifications. It may very well be that based on these conversations, new approaches to certification or new ideas for GI product specifications lead to more cost-effective and/or environmentally friendlier processes;
- governmental actors (local or national, including authorities dealing with intellectual property);
- GI product category leaders with established sustainability or CSR policies; and
- large distributors or retailers of GI products.

Table 3 provides helpful criteria to determine the external GI stakeholder groups that must be considered for consultations.



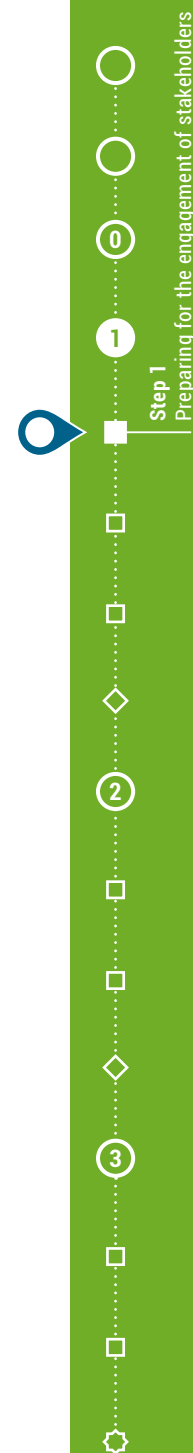
TABLE 3

### Assessing the influence of GI external stakeholder groups

<p>High-impact stakeholder groups are those with the power to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remove, grant or influence the “license to operate”;</li> <li>• restrict access to resources, operation sites or intellectual capital;</li> <li>• damage or build the GI product's reputation;</li> <li>• Influence the GI product category: play a role in territorial or product development plans and/or in the enactment of regulations that affect the GI system;</li> <li>• strengthen or weaken the GI's organization's ability to learn and innovate;</li> <li>• restrict or provide access to investment funds; and</li> <li>• provide useful early warning signals about emerging issues and risks, or cause distractions diverting the management's attention and time away from core activities.</li> </ul> <p>Other relevant questions to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Is their position critical to the GI system?</li> <li>→ What is the size of their operation?</li> <li>→ Do their decisions affect the GI system?</li> <li>→ Do they influence policies or initiatives in the territory?</li> <li>→ Are they influencers on market and social trends?</li> <li>→ Are they exposed to the final users or consumers of the GI product?</li> <li>→ Are they significantly affected (positively or negatively) by the performance of the GI system?</li> <li>→ Do they publish information on sustainability priorities and initiatives?</li> <li>→ Are they involved or can they become involved in sustainability initiatives around the GI system?</li> </ul>
<p>High-dependency stakeholders are those who are in a position of:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• direct financial dependence (e.g. stakeholders who depend on the GI system for wages or purchases);</li> <li>• indirect financial dependence (e.g. stakeholders whose livelihoods depend on GI system through its contributions to the regional economy, such as tourism or other activities linked to the GI product's reputation);</li> <li>• vulnerability to non-financial impacts or risks from the GI system (e.g. through air, water or noise pollution, health risks for consumers, or reduced access to natural resources); or</li> <li>• dependency or bargaining power (e.g. a single supplier or a strategic customer).</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Table 4 provides an example of a possible outcome of this exercise, with different external stakeholder categories and groups. This guide's toolkit provides a framework for GI practitioners to identify relevant groups within each category and assess the influence of each group (see Toolkit Box 4).



**TABLE 4**
**Example of the initial assessment of external GI stakeholder groups**

External GI stakeholder category	Stakeholder groups within the category			
Value chain actors	Industry leaders belonging to same product category*	Other suppliers	Primary producers outside the territory*	
Business-to-business (B2B) buyers	National B2B buyers	International B2B buyers*	Retailers*	
Government	Authorities dealing with intellectual property*	Ministry of agriculture	Local governments*	Environmental agencies*
Control bodies, cooperation agencies and NGOs	National cooperation organizations	International cooperation organizations*	Environmental and social certification agencies	Private GI control bodies*
Inhabitants and influencers in the territory	Local community*	Local media*	Other local influencers	
Academic and research institutions	Local universities*	Research agencies	International research institutions*	National research institutions

Note: \* indicates stakeholder groups that are considered influential in the GI system.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**TOOLKIT BOX 4**

**Selecting and ranking external GI stakeholder groups for consultations**

Go to **Tab 1.1.2.2 "Ext. Stakeholder identi."** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to help practitioners identify the key external stakeholder groups that must be consulted on the GI system's sustainability priorities.

- Click on box (a) to update all external GI stakeholder groups previously identified.
- Assess the influence of each group according to the influence using the suggested criteria: GI strategy, GI decision-making, GI operations, the GI system's financial performance and GI reputation.
- After filling out the table, click on box (c). The toolkit will rank stakeholder groups based on your assessment.
- Select the stakeholders for consultation by clicking on the boxes. The final selection may be based on the score provided, or on other criteria. You may select as many groups as you want, considering the resources available to reach out to groups.

Note: it is recommended to select at least five external GI stakeholder groups.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



## Identifying external stakeholders to engage in consultations

The selection of the actors within each influential stakeholder group may be based on different considerations. In some cases, it may be obvious which actor is the group's representative (e.g. if there is only one institution within the group), while in other cases all group members may need to be consulted (e.g. in the case of key research institutions with an interest in the GI system).

In other cases, the actors' influence within a group may be the prime criterion for selection. For example, if retailers are identified as an influential stakeholder group, a big retail chain may have more influence than a single convenience store, and must be given priority for consultation. The GI practitioner may therefore wish to assess the degree of influence of the different actors within a group.

Cooperation on improvement initiatives and the exchanging of information or resources is a key part of the engagement process and must be considered during the selection of stakeholders. Potential allies for the assessment and improvement phases should be given priority. Entities that have already published information related to their sustainability performance (e.g. CSR or sustainability reports) or have communicated their sustainability priorities may be able to help with the collection of data or develop joint sustainability improvement initiatives in the future; it is recommended to select such actors for consultations.

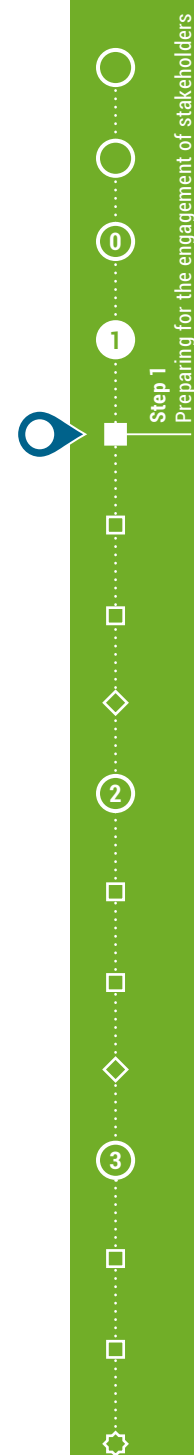
Interviews with previously identified stakeholders may lead to the identification of new key actors, such as cooperation agencies or certification agencies with an interest in the GI product category.

### Stakeholder consultation methods

Defining how the selected stakeholders will be reached is a key aspect of the consultation engagement plan. The consultation methods depend on the size of the GI system and its territory, the characteristics of the GI organization and the GI product category, and the profiles of the stakeholders selected for consultations. GI practitioners must identify the best means of consultation for each individual actor.

A variety of methods (emails, phone calls, one-on-one interviews, focus groups, public meetings, etc.) can be used, depending on the level of engagement that practitioners want to obtain. In-depth consultations aim to create collaboration and empowerment (two-way or multi-way approaches), while less intense consultations focus on monitoring and informing (one-way approaches). Table 5 provides an overview of different stakeholder consultation methods.

The means of engagement should be selected with a view to building a closer relationship with stakeholders. One-on-one structured interviews (see Information Box 15) enable enriching conversations and generally result in a deeper understanding of the GI system's challenges; they should be given priority as a method of consultation.





**TABLE 5**
**Stakeholder consultation methods**

<b>One-on-one face-to-face or virtual meetings</b>	These meetings create a safe space, where stakeholders may speak openly about topics that are deemed sensitive.
<b>Online engagement</b>	Online engagement can be one-way (e.g. soliciting comments) or multi-way (e.g. discussion boards, webinars). One-way engagement mechanisms do not provide opportunities for dialogue, and the responses obtained may not always provide a lot of detail. The design of the online engagement method is very important, and stakeholders' access to online engagement mechanisms must be taken into account (e.g. internet connectivity, digital capacities).
<b>Focus groups</b>	Consultations in a small group, with discussions typically facilitated by a third party; this type of engagement allows for in-depth discussions on a particular topic. Participants in the focus group should be representative of the larger group.
<b>Public meetings</b>	Public meetings work well for discussions on localized impacts and to obtain feedback on planning processes; they may be facilitated by a third party. There is a risk that meetings become contentious.
<b>Surveys</b>	Surveys are a type of one-way engagement that is particularly suited to gather specific, actionable information. Surveys can reach a high number of respondents (especially if they are conducted online), but cannot be used to build consensus.
<b>Advisory panels</b>	Advisory panels may be made up of individuals representing multiple stakeholders, or of individuals representing a single stakeholder group. They are well suited to deal with long-term, complex issues, but require a certain time commitment from participants (who may expect payment).
<b>Multi-stakeholder forums</b>	Multi-stakeholder forums are useful to tackle complex issues that require a consensus between multiple stakeholders.
<b>Analysis of publicly available information</b>	This analysis complements all the above methods; it may be the only way to obtain information on stakeholders who are not directly reachable.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

One-on-one structured interviews can help create relationships that go beyond mere consultations, which is crucial for external stakeholders who could become allies during the assessment and improvement phases of the sustainability roadmap.

In some cases, important stakeholders may not be contactable directly.<sup>7</sup> Here, practitioners may use indirect methods to obtain information on stakeholders' interests and priorities based on publicly available information; stakeholders' views must be inferred through connections, information provided by third parties, stakeholder surveys, publicly available reports or priority statements, government plans or other public documents (see information Box 16). An example of this indirect approach is provided in Example Box 4.

<sup>7</sup> External stakeholders who are difficult to reach directly may include distributors, retailers and consumers, GI product category leaders and trade associations based outside the territory (or even country). Scheduling meetings with government entities may also be difficult. However, the most influential stakeholders tend to publish sustainability and/or CSR reports (or, in the case of government entities, development and policy plans for the territory or sector), which may provide valuable information on their top priorities and challenges.



## INFORMATION BOX 15

**One-on-one structured interviews**

It is advisable that any stakeholder engagement plan includes structured interviews with a set of key stakeholders, as this is the preferred stakeholder consultation method. One-on-one structured interviews are an example of a two-way approach for consultation. The planning of these interviews, typically lasting up to two hours, is crucial: they should be high-quality interactions that create opportunities for further dialogue and collaboration. One-on-one interviews can also help develop trust and credibility for the GI organization and its sustainability pathway process.

The interviews must be perceived by interviewees as conversations, and should be structured in a way that enables the identification of top challenges and priorities. The discussion may start with the interviewee's top-of-mind sustainability challenges, as this will limit the risk that similar scores are assigned to other topics mentioned later. The GI practitioner may then go through the different topics of the SSGI in this order: economic, governance, social and environmental. This will prevent the discussion from focusing only on environmental topics, which tend to receive more attention. The GI practitioner assigns scores to the different topics, depending on the emphasis placed by the interviewee on these topics and their relevance, or based on specific consultations. The interviewer can ask additional questions as to why specific sustainability issues are felt as important and what is being done about them.

Reaching out to stakeholders and organizing interviews may be difficult. The GI organization and board must actively support the GI practitioner in scheduling interviews, and provide information and contacts. To avoid disappointing experiences, the GI practitioner should conduct a thorough preparatory analysis of the topics and stakeholders prior to the consultations.

It is good practice to send thank-you notes to each interviewee with a summary of the conclusions of the prioritization exercise. This may open the door for a deeper dialogue and collaboration on joint sustainability initiatives.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

## INFORMATION BOX 16

**Methods to obtain information on stakeholders who are not directly contactable**

While direct contacts and structured interviews are always preferable, they are not always feasible. Indeed, highly influential external stakeholders such as government entities, cooperation agencies, product category leaders, foreign buyers or large retailers may not be easily reachable. Public statements, reports or other publications by these stakeholders may provide key information on their priority topics, and may be used in the analysis of the stakeholder consultations. Stated priorities must be assessed based on the SSGI framework, and high scores should be assigned to those issues that stakeholders emphasize in their action plans or devote more resources to. Some stakeholder publications may define sustainability priorities using the SDG or GRI frameworks.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*



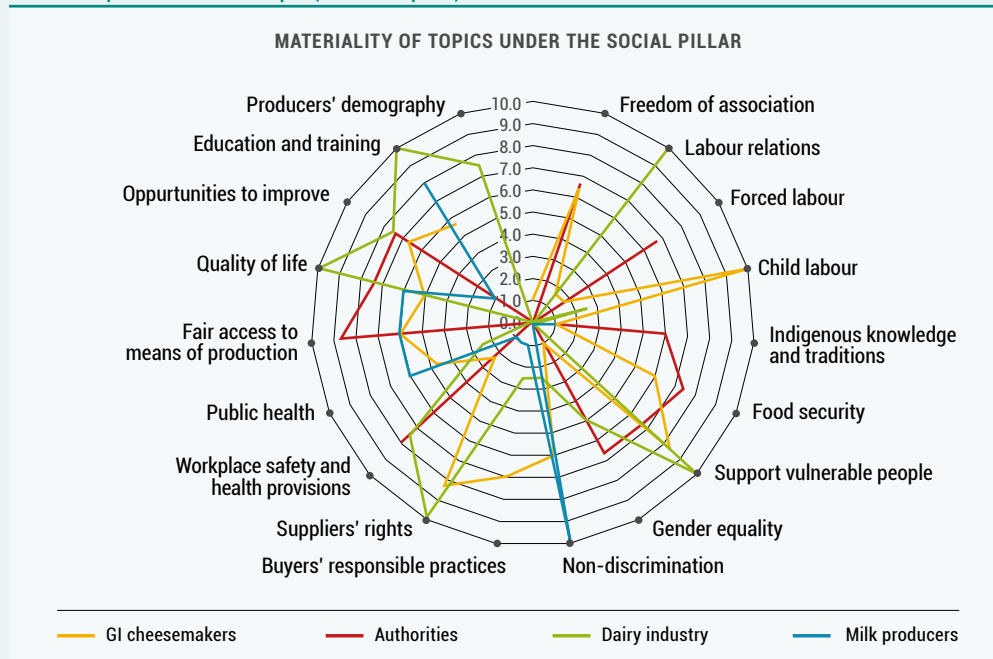
EXAMPLE BOX 4



**Identifying stakeholders' sustainability priorities based on public information: Queso Paipa**

The designation of origin Queso Paipa is a Colombian GI for a semi-hard cheese whose production territory includes the municipalities of Paipa and Sotaquirá, in the department of Boyacá. The code of practice for the production of this cheese has been sanctioned by the Colombian Government. Queso Paipa producers sell through various domestic distribution channels, including large grocery retailers. When reviewing the value chain for Queso Paipa, it was decided that the municipal development plans for Paipa and Sotaquirá, as well as for the department of Boyacá (all of which were available on the internet), provided a good overview of the priorities for the territory. In addition, the GI practitioner obtained the sustainability and CSR reports of key players in Colombia's dairy sector (Alpina, Alquería and Colanta) to understand their sustainability challenges. Industry concerns concerning distribution and consumption were analysed based on the sustainability report of Colombia's largest grocery chain, Almacenes Éxito. It was deemed that the priorities identified by these stakeholders would reflect downstream concerns regarding distribution and consumption, as there were no public consumer surveys available, and these large commercial players were not directly accessible. The priorities identified for each group received a score after processing the information into the SSGI structure (pillar, theme and topic), resulting in a graph that clearly identified common priorities for the different stakeholder groups. The figure below shows the importance of social topics for the four stakeholder groups.

**FIGURE 11. Visualizing priorities for internal and external stakeholder groups: the example of Queso Paipa (social topics)**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The Toolkit of this guide provides a framework to help GI practitioners list the representative actors within each stakeholder group and determine the most appropriate means of consultation (direct or indirect consultation) (see Toolkit Box 5).



## TOOLKIT BOX 5



### Selecting actors within selected GI stakeholder groups for engagement

Go to **Tab 1.1.3 “Engagement plan”** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to list key players and their contacts, for each selected stakeholder group, and define whether consultations will be direct or indirect.

- By clicking on “Step 0”, Table 1 (external stakeholder groups and actors) and Table 2 (internal stakeholder groups and actors) will be updated. Table 2 is located to the right of Table 1.
- Fill out the information for institutions, entities, companies and/or individuals belonging to each stakeholder group in Table 1 and Table 2, according to these steps:
  - For each selected stakeholder group, write down the names of the representative actors belonging to each group (there may be multiple actors for a single group). For individuals, indicate why they were selected as representatives of a group.
  - Determine the level of influence of all actors within a group (high or low), based on the five different criteria provided; the default level is medium, indicating an average level of influence.
  - Select the type of contact (direct or indirect).
  - Select the contact methods, depending on whether the contact will be direct or indirect (see Table 5, Information Box 15 and Information Box 16).
- Individual contacts to interview (a preferred option) can be identified and approached with the help of GI staff or board members, or other networks. Write down the first and last name of the interviewees; this will facilitate follow-up contacts and ensure continuous engagement.
- Lines can be added to both tables to include additional actors. For each actor, the appropriate stakeholder category and group must be selected.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Drafting the engagement plan

The engagement plan is a summary of the consultation process that emerges from the research. Table 6 provides a possible template; this template can be added to the report on the background research and the stakeholder map. The template contains information related to:

- stakeholder categories, groups and representatives to be consulted, with their level of influence and possible future contribution to the roadmap;
- modalities of consultation; and
- proposed timeframe.



TABLE 6

## Example of a stakeholder engagement plan

Groups/ stakeholders	Means of engagement	Number of events	Criteria	When	Who is in charge	Materials to prepare	Follow-up
Internal stakeholder category				GI primary producers			
Group 1: primary producers with farms of 5–15 ha	Focus groups	5	One per location	Every two weeks from January until March	Name	Summary of the main results of the research	Thank you notes to organizers
					Name	Notes to ensure the flow of the conversation	
					Name	Review and confirm the main priority topics	Summary of the conclusions of the event
					Name	Identify the issues that are relevant to producers of a certain size/in a certain location	
Group 2: primary producers with farms < 5 ha	Survey	1 (max. 15 min)	Targeting at least X percent of respondents. Either in person, at events, or online.	Sent out on 15 April, results on 25 April	Name	Review the results of the focus groups of Group 1, as well as of previous research. Ensure that respondents confirm and grade the challenges for each priority.	Send feedback (e.g. own results vs the average for all producers surveyed)
						Promise follow-up (informing on final prioritization results)	
Internal stakeholder category				GI processors			
Group 1: processors with sales of X (value/ volume)	One-on-one conversations	Five	Focus on processors who are currently implementing sustainability initiatives	Between January and March. Use the GI board members' contacts to obtain appointments, if necessary.	Name	Review publications	Send thank you note
					Name	Review their clients' policies	Promise to report on the results of the prioritization process
					Name	Research on purchasing practices	Send a summary of the prioritization process, highlighting common themes of interest
					Name	Prepare conversations	
External stakeholder category				B2B buyers			
Group 1: large retailers	Indirect	One	Great impact on the value chain for the GI product industry, proxy to consumers	February	Name	Review stated priorities in public statements, sustainability reports (those that are most relevant to the GI sector)	Send e-mail to inform on the process and results
						Classify according to SSGI framework	
						Review who they work for (e.g. vendors)	

Note: ha = hectare

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



## Step 2

# Conducting stakeholder consultations

### Objective

Systematically assess and organize the sustainability priorities of influential GI stakeholders.

### Specific objectives

- Identify the sustainability topics that are important for the GI organization and GI producers, and for external GI stakeholders;
- understand why these topics are important: what are perceived impacts on stakeholders, what are the actions of the GI organization on these topics, what are the perceived needs, etc.;
- identify the specific sustainability priority topics, and fine-tune the SSGI definition of these topics to the local context (if needed);
- determine which initiatives are already in place to respond to certain topics; and
- identify the key actors that can help address the identified challenges in partnership with the GI organization.

### Actions

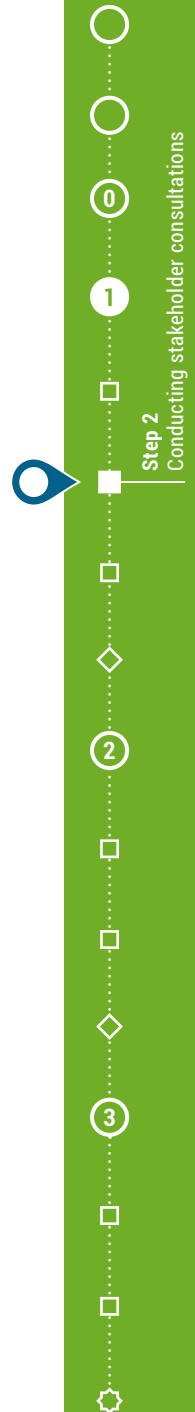
Reaching out the selected stakeholders (and alternative stakeholders, if the first selected stakeholders are not reachable or do not publish information) in order to:

- Obtain information on how stakeholders perceive the GI system's sustainability challenges, using the SSGI sustainability topic list (see Annex 1);
- process their views using structured formats and compare the aggregate views of selected stakeholder groups;
- identify and keep track of the initiatives that are already in place to address specific topics, and evaluate whether these initiatives are delivering the expected results;
- consider the need to reformulate or complete the description of the topics in the database; and
- present the resulting list of SSGI priority topics to obtain validation by the GI board.

### Deliverables

A consolidated list of the sustainability priority topics of GI stakeholder groups, for evaluation by the GI organization.

The various activities that must be carried out to implement the consultation process are described in the below sections.



## 2a. Familiarization with the SSGI framework for sustainability topics

The background research (Step 1) has given the GI practitioner a broad understanding of the challenges that the GI system, the GI product category and the territory may be facing. Now the practitioner must collect the selected stakeholders' visions on the GI system's sustainability priority topics and organize this information in a structured way. The SSGI framework (see Annex 1) provides a structure to process the information.

### Understanding the SSGI topics

GI practitioners should first familiarize themselves with the taxonomy of SSGI topics and the four sustainability pillars (economic resilience, good governance, social well-being, and environmental integrity). Each pillar is divided into sustainability themes, with 22 themes in total. Each theme is in turn subdivided into sustainability topics; there are 62 sustainability topics under which the sustainability challenges facing the GI system can be classified. Each topic has a default definition, as well as a number of guiding questions that may steer the conversations with stakeholders and lead to more specific issues being analysed (see Annex 1, and the Toolkit).

The pillar of good governance is given particular emphasis, with five themes and 13 topics. Given the relevance of governance in collective endeavours such as GIs, the SSGI requires that at least three governance topics be prioritized. Assessing and improving the governance of GI organizations is a crucial factor to ensure their relevance and deliver the collective goods associated with an improved sustainability performance.

### Discarding topics that are not relevant to the GI system

Not all 62 topics provided by the SSGI framework need to be discussed with stakeholders, as many may not be relevant to the GI system concerned. For example, certain topics in the economic, social and environmental pillars may not be of concern to the organization in question – governance topics, however, are relevant to any form of organization.

### Reviewing key topic definitions

GI practitioners should review each of the selected topics and definitions in detail. It is important to understand the concepts behind each topic; the guiding questions provided in the SSGI framework (see Annex 1.A.) may help ensure that the topics are discussed in a language that is understood by the different stakeholder groups. GI practitioners should be prepared to fine-tune topic definitions during the consultation process.

### Familiarization with the grading system

The GI practitioner can perform their own preliminary assessment of the relative importance of each SSGI topic in the GI system. This is the ideal way to become familiar with each topic and its standard definition before reaching out to selected GI stakeholders.

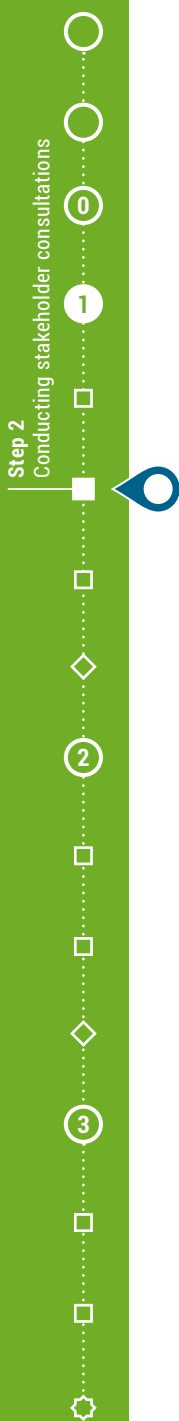


Table 7 provides a scoring system that can be used to assess the importance attached by stakeholders to the various topics during the consultations. This scoring system can be used for any consultation method, including surveys, structured interviews or publications.

TABLE 7

### Scoring system for the importance attached by stakeholders to sustainability topics

SCORING SCALE	0	Lowest (not relevant)
	1–2	Some awareness, but not a real concern or opportunity
	3–4	Broader awareness, but not a significant concern or opportunity
	5–6	Considerable concern amongst a minority
	7–8	Considerable concern amongst many
	9–10	Highest: high level of widespread concern or opportunity

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The highest scores are given to the most important challenges or opportunities of the GI system in the economic, governance, social or environmental dimensions. The practitioner must consider the availability of resources, market access limitations and cost increases (for example resulting from new regulations). Toolkit Box 6 describes how the Toolkit can be used for familiarization with the SSGI topics and the scoring system.

#### TOOLKIT BOX 6



##### Familiarizing with the SSGI list of topics and scoring system

- Go to **Tab 2.1 “Organizing information”** of the Toolkit; the objective of this tab is familiarization with the SSGI structure of sustainability topics, definitions and scoring system.
- Based on the practitioner's understanding of the GI system at this point, a score is assigned to each SSGI topic (opportunity or challenge), reflecting its importance to the GI system (See Table 7). The practitioner should make note of any observation or issue that should be raised during the stakeholder consultation process in the space provided to help better understand and fine-tune a topic's definition later on.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Once the GI practitioner is in a position to organize the issues identified during the research phase within the SSGI structure, they can start planning the interviews with the selected GI stakeholders.





## 2b. Preparing the engagement of all stakeholder groups

Ensuring that selected stakeholders are willing to participate in the consultation process is often a challenge. GI practitioners may activate their own professional networks and those of the GI board members, as well as the organization's institutional networks, to reach out to selected stakeholders.

A credible and fruitful GI stakeholder engagement process comprises not only consultations but also strategies to establish and nurture relationships that may lead to partnerships and alliances to address common sustainability priority topics. GI practitioners must consider that opportunities to directly engage with stakeholders may be limited due to a lack of time, logistic challenges or the absence of direct relationships. Once contacts are set up, a good preparation is crucial to obtain the necessary information and create interest in a nurturing, two-way dialogue.

For each consultation method used, the GI practitioner must prepare:

- a list of logistical requirements;
- a simple checklist, to make sure that the key sustainability topics are discussed (indicating the relation of each topic with the SSGI topics);
- background documentation and material to introduce the objectives and methods of the consultation to all participants;
- a possibility for stakeholders to provide feedback; and
- a method to rate feedback (e.g. meeting attendance, survey reply rates) and present the most important conclusions.

If structured interviews and conversations are used, the GI practitioner should show the topics and their scores during the gathering (e.g. by projecting a PowerPoint presentation), so that the results can be validated immediately.

The GI practitioner can use the key driving questions for each topic that are listed in Annex 1.A and mentioned in the Toolkit (see Toolkit Box 6). It may be difficult to assess the relative importance of the different topics if the top challenges and concerns are not identified early on in the conversations. Information Box 17 provides a suggested flow for such cases.



## INFORMATION BOX 17



### Suggested flow of one-on-one conversations with stakeholders

- Explain the objective of exercise and promise that once the sustainability priorities are defined, they will be shared with stakeholders.
- Explain the sustainability pillars, topics and their grading system; inform participants that the definitions of topics can fine-tuned to the local context.
- Focus on the emphasis placed by participants on various concerns.
- Understand stakeholder perspectives on the GI system, the GI organization and the territory.
- Identify top-of-mind short- and long-term concerns for each sustainability pillar, in relation with the IG production system, the value chain (including consumption) and the territory.
- Highlight the priorities that came out of the preparatory research, and request further explanations of why they are considered priorities.
- Collect information on current initiatives and programmes designed to confront these priorities, and on their possible impacts on the GI system. Collect progress reports and performance indicators for these initiatives.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## 2c. Implementing the consultation plan for internal stakeholders

The GI organization leads the preparation and implementation of the GI sustainability roadmap; its producers and staff members play a crucial role in this process and must therefore be well informed and prepared for engagement.

For large GI organizations, the consultation plan (such as the one proposed in Table 6) may need to be reviewed, as its implementation may require additional resources. For example, it may be necessary to identify the internal staff members that will be consulted, and task certain staff members with the logistical organization of meetings. The consultation plan should also contain provisions on how to communicate with GI producers before and after the consultation. In sum, the GI practitioner needs to clarify the different tasks, deliverables and timelines for themselves and for the staff members supporting the process.

### Preparation of the consultations

#### Transparency and confidentiality

One key objective of the consultation exercise is to gain a better understanding of the challenges facing the GI organization and its stakeholders in their efforts to improve the system's sustainability performance. These challenges may concern the enforcement of the GI specifications internally (within the GI system) and externally (outside the GI system),



or the need to review the GI rules in view of difficulties related to the access to resources or environmental impacts.

It is therefore important to ensure that participants feel that they can express their opinions freely, without any fears that what they say will affect their position in the GI system. A certain level of confidentiality should be ensured during the consultations, and the results of the consultations should be reported in an anonymous way.

### Adapting interview methods to a large number of producers

Although the preferred method for internal stakeholder consultations is the one-on-one structured interview, organizing individual interviews with a large number of GI producers may not be feasible due to time and resource constraints. In such cases, the GI practitioner may start with a number of one-on-one interviews; based on the information obtained during these interviews, other types of consultation can then be developed to reach more producers, such as focus groups, meetings or surveys. These additional methods can be used to gather additional information or to seek validation of the conclusions of the preliminary interviews. This can also be done during regular meetings, such as assemblies, where the GI organization communicates with producers. Example Box 5 provides examples of considerations for the preparation of such meetings.

#### EXAMPLE BOX 5



##### Reaching out to a large number of GI producers: Marcala coffee

The territory of origin of the designation of origin Café Marcala comprises 202 villages in 19 municipalities of three departments (La Paz, Comayagua and Intibuca) of Honduras. More than 90 percent of Marcala coffee producers produce on areas of less than five hectares. Over 2 300 producers comply with the GI product specifications of Café Marcala (although this number could potentially rise to 15 000).

An effort to gather internal stakeholders' views on sustainability priorities for the territory and the GI system took place in 2018. The effort included individual interviews and group workshops with Marcala's GI board and organization staff members. In addition, a number of producer forums were organized in localities outside of the Marcala territory, to obtain additional insights. The table below illustrates how the producer forums were organized with the help of local civil associations; the table also summarizes the key conclusions and actions that confirmed some of the sustainability priorities that emerged from earlier interviews and workshops.

Follows on the next page →



TABLE 8. Engagement planning for GI producers: the example of producer forums for Café Marcala, Honduras

Stakeholder	Engagement method	Tasks	Results from previous research	New findings	Next steps and possible collaboration
La Paz (civil association)	Public meeting	Set-up	SAFA subthemes (SSGI topics) of interest		
	Date of meeting: 1 August 2018, 6–7 pm	Reach out to stakeholders contact to verify availability of projector	Possible topics: water withdrawals, energy use, gender equality and product information		
	Location: La Paz community centre	Communication	Current action plans	Current action plans	Possible cooperation on current/future action plans
	GI board or other contact person	Send briefing materials to stakeholder contact	Reduce water intake, develop alternative energy uses, train women, ensure transparent labelling		
	Bring materials	Send thank you note after summarizing main points and possible ways of working together	Indicators used Total cubic meters of water saved, total gigawatts produced, number of women trained, number of transparency reviews	Indicators used	Joint indicators

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Identifying and scoring the priorities of internal stakeholders

The discussions on the GI system's challenges and concerns will lead to the identification of possible priorities within the SSGI topic list. The GI practitioner can use the toolkit to select SSGI topics and rate their importance as perceived by the internal stakeholder groups (see Toolkit Box 7). If possible, the selection of the key sustainability priorities should be validated before the end of the meeting.



## TOOLKIT BOX 7

**Identifying the priority topics of internal stakeholders**

Go to **Tab 2.3 "Int. Consultation Engage"** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to systematically record the priority topics of internal stakeholders using the SSGI topic list and scoring system.

- Click to update the table, so that all individual internal stakeholders previously selected for consultations are generated.
- For each individual internal stakeholder, go through the methods of obtaining information and assign scores to the SSGI topics (See Table 7), according to the actor's perceived importance and relevance:
  - For direct contacts (e.g. one-one-one interviews), the top-of-mind topics (i.e. those that were mentioned without prompting) should receive the highest scores.
  - Once the most pressing topics have been identified, the GI practitioner may continue with questions related to other topics: first the topics under the economic pillar, followed by governance, social and environmental topics. This order helps stakeholders realize that sustainability is not limited to environmental issues, a common misconception.
  - For indirect sources, the GI practitioner will have to study all materials (such as publications or public statements by stakeholders) and determine the degree of emphasis given to specific topics by each stakeholder, assigning a score.
- GI practitioners may record any observations related to stakeholders' emphasis on certain topics; these notes may lead to the revision of the definition of some topics and the formulation of new questions.
- It is also useful to record observations on existing sustainability actions by stakeholders and their results.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## 2d. Implementing the consultation plan for external stakeholders

### Preparation of the consultations

Good planning is also essential when implementing the consultation plan for external GI stakeholders plan (see Step 1). Well-prepared consultations will lend credibility to the sustainability roadmap, and may provide a foundation for future conversations and partnerships with certain stakeholders.

Meetings and interviews should always be organized to obtain as much value as possible from all interactions. The GI practitioner should ensure that:

- the conclusions of the internal stakeholder consultation process, including the identification of the priority topics, have been analysed and included in presentations to stakeholders;
- methods and approaches are chosen in function of stakeholders' characteristics; and
- the characteristics of all external stakeholders to be consulted have been well researched (see Information Box 18).



### INFORMATION BOX 18



#### Questions to consider before reaching out to selected external stakeholders

- What are their key economic interests?
- What is their role in the GI system?
- Does the GI organization have a relationship with this stakeholder?
- Have they been engaged before?
- Do they have preferred methods of engagement?
- What were the results of previous engagements, if any?
- What is their level of familiarity with the challenges faced by the GI system?
- What is their level of interest and capacity to become involved in the sustainability process?
- Who are the most appropriate and knowledgeable staff members of stakeholder entities? Are they familiar with the short- and long-term challenges of the GI system? Can they influence the entities they belong to? Are they willing to get involved in the process?

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Identifying and scoring the priorities of external stakeholders

The GI practitioner must identify the most important SSGI topics for each external stakeholder, based on interviews or indirect research and organize them according to their level of importance (scoring) using this guide's toolkit (see [Toolkit Box 8](#)). The GI practitioner should also seek to identify any initiatives that are currently being implemented by stakeholders to address the selected priorities.

As for internal stakeholders, it is important to first approach those stakeholders who can be engaged in one-on-one conversations. Stakeholders whose priorities can only be identified through indirect means should be the last ones to be scored.

Different scoring modalities can be considered:

- For meetings and interviews, the GI practitioner can fill out the modules of the toolkit during the discussion itself, and seek immediate validation by the interviewee. Alternatively, the scoring exercise can be finished afterwards, based on the interviewer's notes; in this case, the list of topics and their scores must be shared with the interviewee after the interview.
- For surveys or other indirect consultation methods, the GI practitioner analyses the information gathered to identify and score the topics. Whenever possible, the results of the analysis should be shared with individual shareholders to ensure their engagement in the process.
- For indirect research without any direct input from the stakeholders concerned (e.g. the analysis of reports), the list of topics and their scores should be considered as "likely priorities".



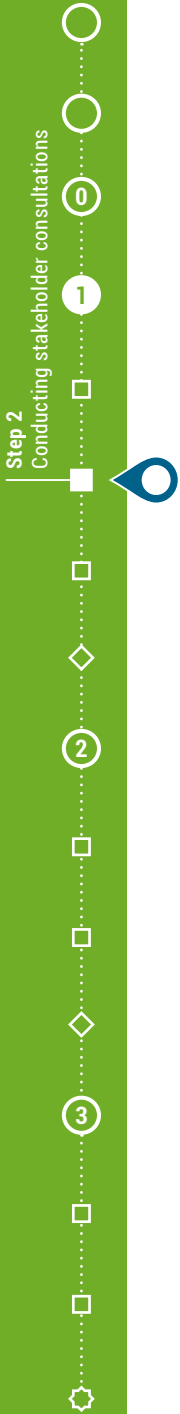
## TOOLKIT BOX 8

**Identifying and scoring the priority topics of external stakeholders**

Go to **Tab 2.4 "Ext. Consultation Engage"** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to systematically record the priority topics of external stakeholders using the SSGI topic list and scoring system.

- Click to update the table, so that all individual external stakeholders previously selected for consultations are generated.
- For each individual external stakeholder, go through the methods of obtaining information and assign scores to the SSGI topics (See Table 7), according to the actor's perceived importance and relevance:
  - For direct contacts (e.g. one-one-one interviews), the top-of-mind topics (i.e. those that were mentioned without prompting) should receive the highest scores.
  - Once the most pressing topics have been identified, the GI practitioner may continue with questions related to other topics: first the topics under the economic pillar, followed by governance, social and environmental topics. This order helps stakeholders realize that sustainability is not limited to environmental issues, a common misconception.
  - For indirect sources, the GI practitioner will have to study all materials (such as publications or public statements by stakeholders) and determine the degree of emphasis given to specific topics by each stakeholder, assigning a score.
  - Most consultations with external stakeholders will focus on three pillars, in the following order: economic, social and environmental. In certain cases, the GI practitioner may consult selected external stakeholders on governance issues (for example academics) and record the results of these interactions in the space provided.
- GI practitioners may record any observations related to stakeholders' emphasis on certain topics; these notes may lead to the revision of the definition of some topics and the formulation of new questions. It is also useful to record observations on existing sustainability actions by stakeholders and their results.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



## Step 3

# Prioritization of topics

### Objective

Draft the final list of the sustainability priority topics of both internal and external stakeholder groups, and obtain validation of the list by the GI board. The prioritization of sustainability topics will ensure that the sustainability roadmap focuses on the most relevant sustainability actions.

### Actions

- Analyse the information obtained during the consultations of internal and external stakeholder groups;
- consider the total number of priority topics that the GI organization would be able to address;
- present the consolidated results of the analysis to the GI organization's board and staff members, for the final selection and fine tuning of the topics; and
- present the list of sustainability priority topics to GI producers and other staff members for validation.

### Deliverable

The final list of sustainability priority topics (which may include modified topic definitions, tailored to the specific GI system).

### 3a. Selecting a target number of GI system sustainability topics

The SSGI pillar/theme/topic taxonomy lists 62 possible priority topics for GI systems. The objective of the prioritization exercise is to identify a limited number of topics for initiatives aimed at improving the GI system's sustainability performance. Thus, the GI organization and its possible allies can concentrate their resources to develop an improvement plan that focuses on those sustainability topics that are most important for the GI system.

The number of topics to consider under the various pillars depends on the experience, resources and capabilities of the GI system concerned. For example, GI organizations with limited resources and/or experience in the development of a sustainability roadmap may want to focus their efforts on a limited number of priorities; this will give them time to gain experience and develop partnerships and alliances. Meanwhile, GI organizations with more experience may focus on a larger number of sustainability priority topics. GI practitioners may consider the following guidelines:





- For GI organizations that have embarked only recently on a sustainability roadmap, choose a maximum of 12 priorities across the four sustainability pillars (economic, governance, social and environmental). The GI practitioner may select up to 15 topics across all pillars, three of which should be topics from the governance pillar. This list of preselected topics is then presented to the GI producers and GI board, who should reduce the list to a maximum of 12 priority topics.
- GI organizations with more experience in sustainability strategies may develop a final list of approximately 20 priorities, including the three default governance topics. This can be achieved by preselecting around 25 topics for further discussion, five of which will be discarded during the process.

Information Box 19 provides an overview of the number of sustainability priority topics to consider. The numbers of priorities are merely indicative, and may vary from case to case. Ultimately, the list of priority topics serves to focus efforts; if there are too many priorities, efforts may be spread too thinly, limiting progress.

#### INFORMATION BOX 19



##### Suggested number of sustainability priority topics

- **Governance pillar:** three to six topics, out of which at least three should be default governance topics.
- **Economic pillar:** minimum two topics.
- **Social pillar:** minimum two topics.
- **Environmental pillar:** minimum two topics.
- **Total number of priority topics across all dimensions:** maximum 20 topics (for well-established GIs with a certain level of experience in implementing sustainability strategies).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## 3b. Analysis of the results of the consultation process by the GI practitioner

### Identifying common concerns of stakeholder groups

After the stakeholder consultations, the GI practitioner should analyse the concerns and challenges identified by the various stakeholder groups (internal and external), with the aim of identifying common priority topics. Toolkit Box 9 explains how the results of the stakeholder consultations can be summarized and presented in a graph.



## TOOLKIT BOX 9



## Analysing the priorities of internal and external stakeholder groups

### For internal GI stakeholders:

Go to **Tab 3.1.1 (Consolidation Int.)** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to determine the weighted (or simple) average scores of possible priority topics by internal stakeholder group and sustainability pillar.

- Click to update the table, so that the weighted average scores of all consulted internal stakeholder groups are shown in the table. These scores are then used to graph the highest top-ten scores by pillar.
- A different weight has been assigned to each internal stakeholder group (as shown in row 19), based on its previously stated influence in the GI system. These weights can now be reviewed and, if necessary, adjusted (the total should always add up to 100).
- It is highly recommended that the total weight of all GI primary producers/processors (jointly for vertical GI organizations, or separately for horizontal GI organizations) adds up to at least 60 percent of the total weight. The percentages can be edited manually; their sum should always be 100.
- Once the final weights of each consulted group have been defined, the resulting graphs can be used to present the results of the consultations to GI board members and other stakeholders for discussion.
- Some of the top priorities may require further analysis based on the notes made during the consultations.

### For external GI stakeholders:

Go to **Tab 3.1.2 (Consolidation Ext.)** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to determine the weighted (or simple) average scores of possible priority topics by GI external stakeholder group and sustainability pillar.

- Follow the same procedure as for internal stakeholders.

### Joint interest review:

Go to **Tab 3.1.3 (Joint Interest Review)** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to identify topics of joint interest among key external and/or internal stakeholder groups.

- Click on the button to refresh the page. The internal and external stakeholder groups from which information was gathered are found in the table.
- You may select the simple average scores for external and/or internal stakeholder groups they wish to compare.
- If needed, go back to the interviews and notes to review issues raised for top-scoring topics during the consultations.
- The resulting graphs will help identify high-scoring topics that are shared by the selected stakeholder groups, which may lead to possible alliances. You may use these graphs as communication tools to provide feedback to stakeholders and engage them in the process.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



In the Toolkit, a different weight has been assigned to each internal and external stakeholder group, depending on its influence in the GI system. The GI practitioner may modify these weights, if necessary. Within the internal stakeholder categories, GI producers (primary producers and/or processors) may be given a large relative weight, especially for topics under the economic pillar. Meanwhile, GI producers may be less knowledgeable on social and environmental issues. Here, the views of local specialists (external stakeholders) may be more relevant, and their analysis may lead to the formulation of new solutions towards increased sustainability. Example Box 6 presents an example of this type of analysis.

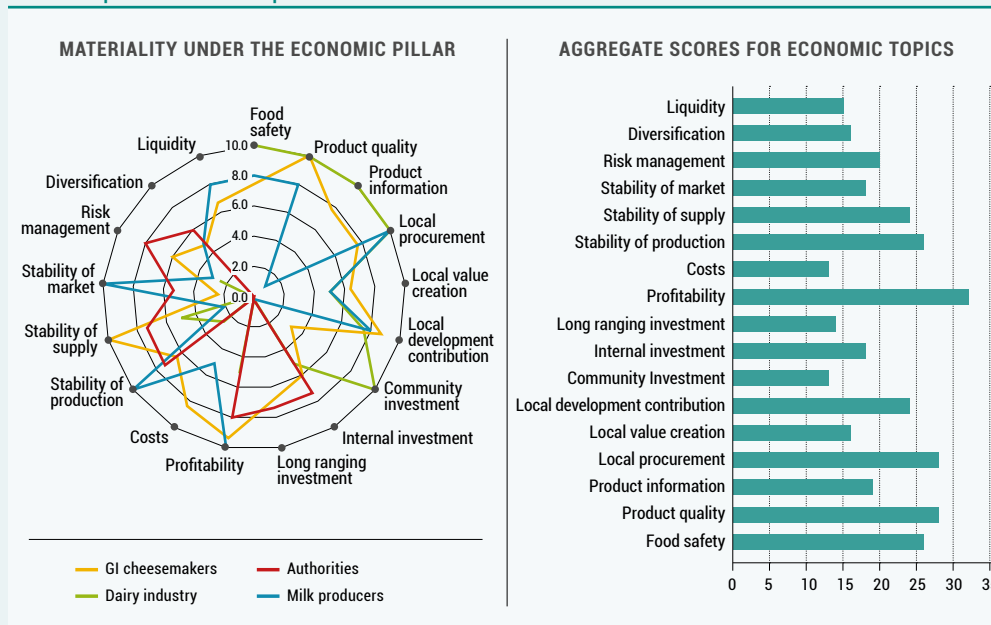
**EXAMPLE BOX 6**



**Comparing priorities among stakeholder groups: Queso Paipa**

To prioritize sustainability topics for the GI system of Queso Paipa, interviews with various stakeholder groups were organized. The graphs in this Box show the consolidated results of these interviews for the economic pillar. The spider graph compares the opinions of local milk producers (brown line), key players in the dairy industry (green line), local authorities (yellow line) and Paipa cheese makers (orange line). Common priorities among stakeholder groups surfaced immediately. The bar graph adds the scores of all groups, giving them the same weight (the Toolkit allows users to assign different weights to the scores of different groups).

**FIGURE 12. Visualizing stakeholder group priorities (economic pillar): the example of Queso Paipa**



These graphs were instrumental to select the sustainability priorities for each pillar. They also proved useful to report back to key stakeholders (such as municipal authorities and FAO officials), who saw themselves as potential players and allies in addressing priorities of mutual interest.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The Toolkit allows users to generate a graph representing the priority scores of the different stakeholder groups by pillar, offering additional options for analysis (see [Toolkit Box 9](#)). These graphs facilitate the comparison of the levels of concern among internal and external stakeholder groups. They may be used to present the results of the consultations to the GI board and other stakeholders, lending credibility to the prioritization process.

## Selecting three prescribed topics for governance

As highlighted in the introduction to this guide, the SSGI places a strong emphasis on the governance pillar. GI organizations should review their governance performance continuously to ensure their system’s sustainability. Information Box 20 explains the importance of governance topics.

### INFORMATION BOX 20



#### Why governance topics are crucial to a GI system's success

- A crucial role of GI organizations is preventing GI infringements (i.e. non-compliance with the GI product specifications by GI producers, or the use of the GI seal by producers who do not belong to the GI organization). This role is part of the “Remedy, restoration and prevention” topic in the governance pillar.
- A GI organization with a clear mission and collective purpose will be supported by its members, even in difficult times.
- An open dialogue with stakeholders will ensure that the organization's policies are well grounded in the product context and market realities.
- By making decisions in a transparent manner (e.g. regarding the management of resources), GI organizations can build trust and boost the credibility of initiatives.
- Legitimate GI organizations are respected in their community and territory, are perceived as representative, and are governed in a disciplined manner.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

GI organizations should continuously evaluate their governance performance in order to preserve their position as a respected key player in the GI system and maintain or improve their ability to positively influence this system. This is why the SSGI requires GI organizations to include at least three governance topics in their list of sustainability priority topics; Table 9 lists the prescribed governance topics that organizations should choose from. In addition to these prescribed governance topics, GI practitioners may include other relevant governance topics that may have emerged from the stakeholder consultations.



TABLE 9

**Prescribed topics under the governance pillar of the SSGI framework**

Topic	Topic definition/description	Examples of key guiding questions
<b>Transparency</b>	Effective access of stakeholders to procedures, policies, decisions and decision-making processes as well as information on financial performance. Stakeholders' ability to contest the GI organization's decisions following impartial internal procedures.	Does the GI organization keep formal minutes of meetings? Does the GI organization have anti-corruption policies/policies to manage conflicts of interest? Does the GI organization provide relevant and transparent information to its stakeholders, including regular activity reports and reports on the use of financial resources? Are controls on conformity with the GI product specifications reliable and in line with agreed procedures?
<b>Mission statement and purpose</b>	Stakeholders have a clear understanding of the long-term role of the GI organization in the collective product strategy and its expected benefits.	Does the GI organization have a clear mission and strategy? Is there understanding among internal and external stakeholders of the actions and strategies implemented by the GI organization?
<b>Stakeholder dialogue</b>	Engagement of and communication to all GI stakeholders in decision-making processes and their implementation.	Has the GI organization made a regular and structured effort to identify its stakeholders, their interests and priorities? Does the GI organization reach out to key stakeholders to communicate its collective strategies and priorities? Does the GI organization regularly reach out to internal stakeholders to understand their concerns and explain its plans and decisions? Do internal stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in the GI organization's decision-making bodies?
<b>Legitimacy</b>	Reputation and ability to influence based on ability to represent the interests of GI primary producers and processors compliance with internal decision-making rules and by-laws. Legitimacy also rests on active communication with and understanding of the GI organization's activities by internal and external stakeholders.	Is the GI organization generally viewed as representative of its members' interests? Does the organization know its degree of compliance with its own decision-making rules? Are the GI organization's decisions generally accepted by its stakeholders?
<b>Remedy, restoration and prevention</b>	Actions taken by GI stakeholders to remedy, restore and/or prevent any infringements of regulations, including GI product specifications (including by external stakeholders and other actors).	Does the GI organization have a system to detect GI infringements within and outside the territory? Is this system being monitored and implemented? Is the system to ensure compliance with the GI specifications by GI producers in the territory perceived as fair and objective? Are there strategies to support GI producers/processors and keep track of corrective steps needed to ensure compliance with the GI specifications?

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



## Presenting the selected priority topics

Based on the results of the stakeholder consultations, the GI practitioner presents a list of possible priority topics for the organization’s sustainability roadmap to the organization’s decision-making body (usually the board). The list of preselected topics should include a reasonable number of topics by pillar (see Information Box 19), possibly slightly more than the final target number (maximum two priorities more than the target number per pillar).

A key consideration in the selection of priorities is whether the topic affects the performance of the GI system, not whether the organization has the capacities to address the topic. Indeed, how the topic or challenge will be tackled is a question that is dealt with in later stages of the SSGI process. Information Box 21 provides an overview of the criteria that can guide the preselection of priority topics.

### INFORMATION BOX 21



#### Criteria that can guide the preselection of priority topics

- Higher scores usually indicate topics that different stakeholder groups consider priorities. However, the selection may not be based solely on scores, as the importance and influence of the groups on the GI system may vary.
- Certain stakeholder groups with specific competences may identify priorities that are not obvious to other stakeholders, especially under the environmental and social pillars. If these topics are mentioned by highly influential stakeholders (specialists), they should be given significant consideration in the preselection.
- A topic with a high score for both external and internal stakeholders should be included in the preselection as this may facilitate the building of alliances.
- A topic with a high score topic that is mentioned by most of the stakeholder groups indicates that there is a consensus to include this topic in the roadmap and address it in the near future.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

For topics that emerged as important from the background research, the practitioner should present an overview of stakeholders’ views – even if the topic in question was not ranked as important by all stakeholders. Table 10 provides examples of topics with different priority levels for different stakeholders, and the approach adopted by the GI practitioner. This approach will depend on the dynamics of the discussion and the number of priorities that must be preselected.

The GI practitioner should clearly indicate to the GI board why certain priorities were selected, and others discarded.



**TABLE 10**
**Selecting priority topics: examples**

Topic	Stakeholder perspectives	GI organization's perspective	Critical topic, or not?
<b>Water withdrawals</b>	The local government is extremely concerned about possible droughts and access to water. It is concerned that the GI organization is not using water efficiently. Thus, this is a highly important topic.	Water is a crucial element in producers' operations. Access to water is highly important.	Yes, with a very high priority level.
<b>Education and training</b>	The level of unemployment in the local community is high. Stakeholders have highlighted the need to educate and train young people to make them employable by GI producers. Thus, this topic is very important.	GI producers and the GI organization do not depend on local labour for their operations; this topic is not very important.	The topic of education and training was selected for consideration in the medium term. Opportunities to attract training providers and develop training programmes related to the GI production system should be monitored; further prioritization is required.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Fine-tuning the definitions of preselected topics

The GI practitioner must ensure that the definition of each preselected topic is appropriate considering the GI system's local context and the priorities identified by stakeholders. The practitioner should therefore review the standard SSGI definitions and, if necessary, modify them; this should be done using a simple language that can easily be understood by all stakeholders (see Example Box 7 and Example Box 8).

### EXAMPLE BOX 7



#### Fine-tuning the definition of priority topics: "water quality"

In cases where the topic of water quality is preselected, a number of issues may surface that are relevant for the specific GI system in question, such as water contamination, water sanitization, water discharge methods, upstream water use or the enforcement of regulations on water discharge. These issues may be included in a revised definition of the topic of water quality.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



## EXAMPLE BOX 8

**Fine-tuning the definition of priority topics: cocoa from the Santander mountains**

Chocolate Santander is a GI product of the Santander region in Colombia. For the GI system's sustainability roadmap, 15 topics were identified as priorities (including topics under the governance pillar). Based on interviews and background research, the GI practitioner adapted the definitions of each topic to stakeholders' perceived challenges, with a focus on perceptions of the GI producers. The table 11 below shows the definitions approved by the GI organization for the priority topics that were selected under the social pillar.

TABLE 11. Adapted priority definitions under the social pillar for cocoa from Santander

Topic	Definition adapted to local reality
<b>Producers' well-being</b>	The cocoa sector must ensure a dignified and prosperous life for those who produce and/or work on cocoa farms, thus ensuring generational renewal.
<b>Education and training</b>	Knowledge is transferred to ensure viable, quality-differentiated cocoa plantations.
<b>Labour relations</b>	Promote the formalization of labour relations in the plantations that use the GI, to ensure the financial security of families.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Toolkit Box 10 explains how to use this guide's toolkit to preselect the priority topics for discussion with the GI board.

## TOOLKIT BOX 10

**Preselecting topics for discussion by the GI board**

Go to the **Tab 3.2 "Materiality"** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to first help the GI practitioner preselect a number of priority topics, and then help the GI board to make a final selection of these topics for inclusion in the sustainability roadmap. (See [Toolkit Box 11](#)).

- First, the GI practitioner should include a target number of possible sustainability topics that may be considered for the GI sustainability roadmap. Information Box 19 provides some guidelines as to the number of topics to include, taking into account that the number of preselected topics should be higher than the number of topics that will be included in the final priority topic list.
- Then, the GI practitioner must:
  - review the scores attributed to each topic by internal and external stakeholder groups (the graph can be used for visual comparison);
  - in column H, preselect at least three governance topics out of the five prescribed governance topics (see also the "Default governance" tab in the Toolkit). Default governance topics must be selected, even if they have low scores;
  - preselect other topics (including additional governance topics, if applicable) in column H;
  - if needed, the GI practitioner may review the definitions of preselected topics to include specific issues, based on the results of the stakeholder consultation and previous research. The revised topic definitions should be short (with a length similar to that of the SSGI definitions) (see [Annex 1](#));
  - A copy of this work should be kept for future reference as some modifications may be made in the next step.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.





### 3c. Selection of priority topics by the GI board

The GI practitioner should present the list of preselected topics – including their definitions and an explanation of their importance, as well as an overview of the preselection process – to the GI board. This board should include the representatives of the GI primary producers and/or processors, and of the GI organization’s decision-making body. The time required for the revision of the list by the GI board will vary depending on a number of factors (including the size of the GI system and organization, the number of board members and the capabilities of the GI practitioner to present the results and answer possible questions); in general, at least half a day will be needed.

A further and final validation of the list of priority topics by representatives of the most important internal stakeholder groups (e.g. the producers’ general assembly or appointed committee) may be necessary to ensure their full engagement.

To prepare these meetings, the GI practitioner should:

- prepare their presentations in function of a discussion of priorities on a pillar-by-pillar basis; visual aids (e.g. graphs) can be used to facilitate these discussions;
- underline that challenges and concerns may change over time, and that the sustainability roadmap may be reviewed in the future, based on regular prioritization exercises; and
- be open to review the list of preselected topics and their definitions, if additional information and views emerge from these discussions with the GI board and stakeholder groups.

Table 12 proposes a structured process to achieve consensus on the selection of priority topics.

**TABLE 12**

**Possible flow of the discussion with the GI board on the selection of priority topics for the sustainability roadmap**

Stage	Contents	Suggested time	Supporting material
<b>Introduction</b>	The GI practitioner describes the process that led to the preselection of topics (e.g. how stakeholders were selected, how their views were solicited, how concerns were classified under the various topics).	No more than 15 minutes.	Visual aids developed with the use of the Toolkit may help present the introduction in a structured manner.
<b>Presentation of the topics raised by the stakeholder groups</b>	The GI practitioner presents an overview of the main issues raised by different stakeholder groups.	No more than 20 minutes.	Graphs developed with the use of the Toolkit, comparing the importance of topics among stakeholder groups (e.g. the graphs produced with the help of <b>Tab 3.1.1 "Consolidation Int."</b> , <b>Tab.3.1.2. "Consolidation Ext."</b> , <b>Tab 3.1.3 "Joint Interest Review"</b> and <b>Tab 3.2 "Materiality"</b> of the Toolkit.

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Stage	Contents	Suggested time	Supporting material
<b>Validation of the number of priorities</b>	The GI board has to agree on the number of priorities it shall consider, considering the organization's resources and experience, as well as the final target number of topics. There should be a balance between the number of topics considered under the various pillars (with at least three prescribed topics for the governance pillar, and two topics for the other pillars) (see Information Box 19).	No more than 10 minutes.	
<b>Presentation of the proposed priority topics</b>	The GI practitioner presents the list of preselected topics, with their (modified) definitions and the reasons for their selection. The practitioner should be open to add topics that were not preselected.	Up to two hours.	A table presenting the views of the different stakeholder groups (see <a href="#">Table 7</a> as a support).
<b>Selection of the final list of priority topics</b>	The GI board now has enough elements to select the final list of sustainability priority topics. This selection should be based on the consideration of whether the topic affects the sustainability of the GI system, rather than whether the GI organization has the capacity to address the topic.	Up to half an hour.	Final list of priority topics, following the suggested numbers ( <a href="#">Information Box 19</a> ).
<b>Validation of the definitions of the topics included in the final list</b>	The GI board endorses the definitions of the topics as presented by the practitioner or requests their review to include additional key issues.	Up to half an hour.	
<b>Possibilities for alliance building</b>	The board may discuss which stakeholders can be considered as possible allies to address the priority topics. The list of potential allies will be instrumental to fine-tune communications activities.	Up to one hour.	
<b>Planning of the further validation and communication of the final list of priority topics</b>	The board plans the further validation of the priority topics by the GI organization as a whole (if deemed necessary), and discusses how to communicate the final results of the consultations and the next steps in the development of the roadmap to all stakeholders (modalities and timeframe).	Fifteen to 30 minutes.	

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Once the board has agreed on the final selection of priority topics, the GI practitioner can feed this selection into the Toolkit and, if needed, adjust the definitions of each topic (see Toolkit Box 11).



## TOOLKIT BOX 11

**The GI board's selection of priority topics**

Go to the **Tab 3.2 "Materiality"** of the Toolkit. This tab will now be used (again) to select the final list of sustainability priority topics as agreed upon by the GI board, for inclusion in the assessment and improvement phases.

1. Insert the total number of topics that the GI board has agreed to consider.
2. Click on the priority topics selected by the GI board in column H. Include at least three topics out of this guide's list of five prescribed governance topics (see also the "Default governance" tab in the Toolkit).
3. Once the topics are selected, ask the GI board to validate the definitions used in the preselection process; if necessary, modify them. Revised definitions should be short, with a length similar to that of the SSGI definitions.
4. Indicate the expected role of the GI organization (see [Information Box 32](#)) when considering possible initiatives to address the selected priority topic. Under the governance pillar, the GI organization most often assumes a leader/executor role.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

### 3d. Use of the SSGI framework by organizations that have already engaged in a prioritization exercise

Some GI organizations may have already undertaken the exercise of prioritizing sustainability topics in the past, using different frameworks or methodologies. To carry out a prioritization exercise based on this guide and its toolkit, the priorities that were selected previously should be adapted to the SSGI taxonomy of pillar/theme/topic. To this end, the GI practitioner should consult the SSGI topics and definitions in [Annex 1](#), modify topic definitions to ensure that they reflect the GI system's challenges, and include the default governance topics in the list of priorities. Toolkit Box 12 explains how to feed the priorities that were selected earlier into the Toolkit.

## TOOLKIT BOX 12

**Adapting previous prioritization exercises to the SSGI framework**

Go to the **Tab 3.2 "Materiality"** of the Toolkit. The objective of this tab is to bring sustainability priorities that were chosen previously in line with the SSGI framework.

1. Review the standard SSGI definitions of topics (See [Annex 1](#) of this guide) and compare them with the priorities that were identified earlier.
2. Select those priorities in column H that best match the previous selection (including at least three prescribed governance topics (see the "Default governance" tab in the Toolkit). Governance topics should be included even if they were not selected as priority topics in the earlier prioritization exercise.
3. If necessary, modify the topic definitions to ensure that they reflect the challenges facing the GI system and organization.
4. If needed, seek the GI board's validation of the selection of topics and their definitions.
5. Indicate the expected role of the GI organization (see [Information Box 32](#)) when considering possible initiatives to address the selected priority topic. Under the governance pillar, the GI organization most often assumes a leader/executor role.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.



# Communicating with and engaging GI stakeholders

## Objectives

The main objectives of communication are to build trust and credibility, making stakeholders feel appreciated for their time and input, providing material for a continuous dialogue on common priorities and generating interest and involvement in the overall process. Communication initiatives are also strategic opportunities for GI organizations to highlight their purpose (as expressed in their mission and vision statements) and underline their commitment to uphold the quality of the GI product.

## Actions

- Prepare a brief report for internal and external stakeholders;
- tailor each report to the communication needs of the various stakeholders;
- prepare meetings; and
- incorporate feedback.

## Deliverable

A brief report (with graphic elements) on the priority topics.

## The importance of communicating about the prioritization process

The success of any sustainability roadmap relies on the capacity of the stakeholders to consider the selected priorities as their own and on the GI organization's ability to develop partnerships and alliances to confront the sustainability challenges. This is why the GI organization needs to actively communicate the list of selected sustainability priority topics, as well as the process that led to this selection.

Stakeholder engagement goes beyond merely consulting them on priority topics. Indeed, stakeholder communication should ensure continuous engagement by creating an ongoing dialogue. Strong relationships with internal stakeholders improve a GI organization's governance, while solid relations with external stakeholders may evolve into partnerships and alliances for the implementation of joint sustainability initiatives and programmes. In many cases, communication starts with the consultations on priority topics; further, more sophisticated communication will lend legitimacy to the process and enhance the credibility of the GI organization.

It is important to provide feedback to those stakeholders who participated in the interviews, to reward them for their time and interest. This feedback can take the form of a brief report on the consultation and its main results (the selected topics and their scores). Such a report



will help maintain stakeholders' involvement in the next steps of the sustainability process (assessment and improvement), as well as provide credibility to this process. Information Box 22 outlines the possible contents of the report (which also provides an opportunity for stakeholders to review and or validate their scores).

The below sections provide guidelines for communicating with both internal and external stakeholders.

#### INFORMATION BOX 22



##### Informing stakeholders on the consultation and resulting priority topics

The report to stakeholder groups may compare the results of the interview with that stakeholder group with those of the other groups/categories/averages (without disclosing group-specific information) and present the final selection of priority topics by the board (and the reasons why). Graphic elements for the report can be developed with the use of the Toolkit (see [Toolkit box 9](#)) to put together the suggested reports without disclosing individual stakeholder information.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

## Communicating with internal stakeholders

All internal stakeholders should be given a report on the prioritization process and its results. Wherever possible, this report should compare the stakeholder group's views with the final selected priorities. The report will provide a basis for the stakeholder group's validation of the end results of the prioritization process. Example Box 9 and Example Box 10 provide examples of methods to report back on the prioritization process to internal stakeholders.

#### EXAMPLE BOX 9



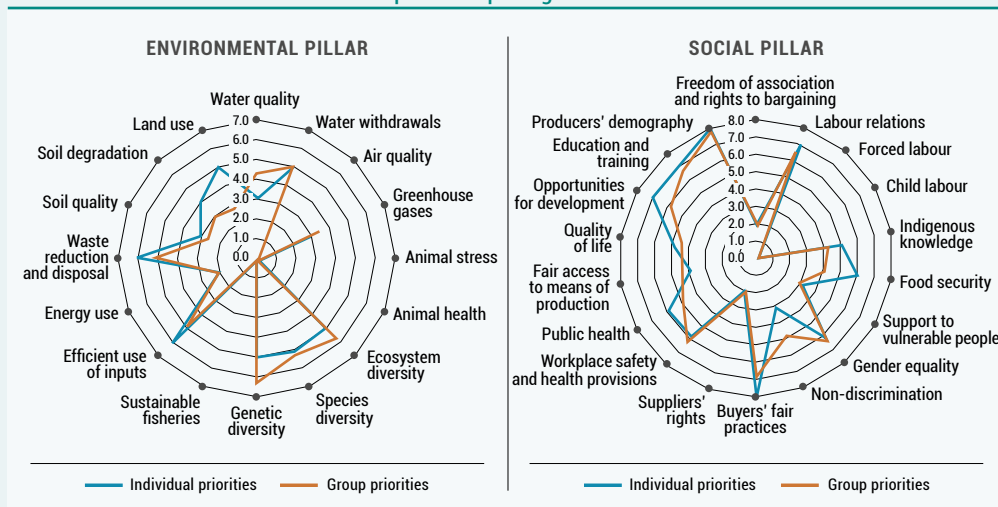
##### Providing feedback to internal stakeholders: Santander cocoa (Colombia)

To consult cocoa producers in Santander, Colombia, the GI organization had to reach out to producers in different locations, of different types and with different plantation sizes. A total of eight representative producers from six different municipalities were selected for one-on-one interviews, lasting approximately one hour each. Due to distance, some of these interviews were conducted in a virtual manner. The interviews followed the flow described in [Information Box 17](#). Once the interviewees' individual priority topics and scores were identified, an average score was assigned to all topics, and the individual scores were compared with these average scores in a graph (see the figures below). Each interviewee was sent a report explaining the methodology of the interviews and presenting the main results, including the graphs, so they could compare their views with those of their peers.

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**FIGURE 13. Stakeholder feedback: report comparing individual and overall scores**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

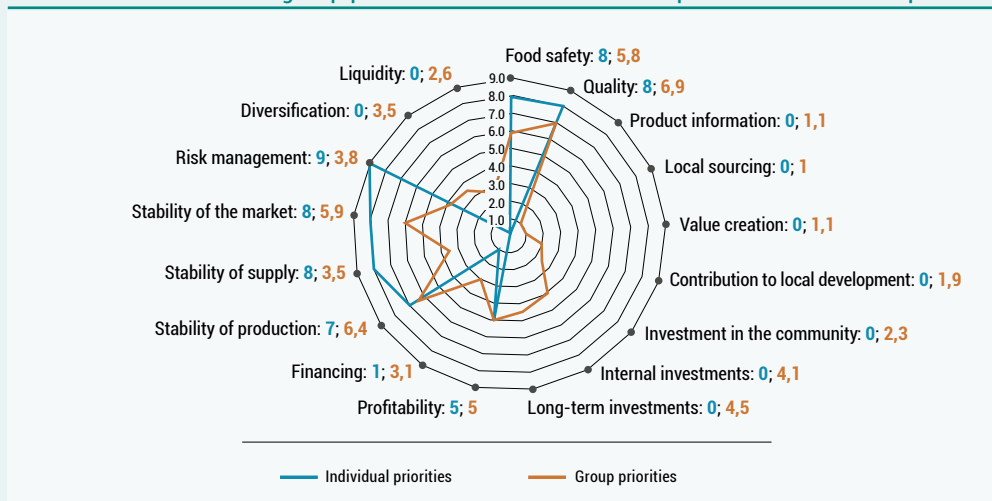
**EXAMPLE BOX 10**



**Priorities identified by Cocoa producers in Orinoquía (Colombia)**

The one-on-one interviews with cocoa producers in Orinoquía (see [Example Box 3](#)) led to a preliminary list of top concerns for each sustainability pillar. After the conversations, each interviewee received a report with graphs comparing their views with the average views of all internal stakeholders. The below figure illustrates the results for one producer (blue line), for the economic pillar (the orange line presents the group's overall scores for the various topics). In addition to the scores for the priority topics, the interviews also led to the identification of the most important issues for each topic, which allowed the GI practitioner to fine-tune the topic definitions to the context.

**FIGURE 14. Individual vs group priorities under the economic pillar: cocoa in Orinoquía**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.



Communication (starting with the consultations to identify a GI system's challenges) is a long-term endeavour aimed at ensuring the long-term engagement of GI producers and other stakeholders in the sustainability roadmap. Internal stakeholders should feel ownership over the selected priority topics to remain fully engaged, at the individual and the collective level, in the implementation of the roadmap.

As in any bottom-up process, the GI practitioner and board should be willing to receive later inputs and, if necessary, revise the list of priority topics and their definitions for the final version of the sustainability prioritization exercise. Depending on the GI organization's structure and governance system, the list of sustainability priorities may need to be formally approved by an assembly of producers or other decision-making body.

GI organizations with a large number of producers may communicate the results of the prioritization process in reports sent out via email, in various types of forums or committee meetings. All communication should demonstrate the importance of the prioritization exercise and highlight its bottom-up nature i.e. its focus on producers' perspectives on the GI system's challenges. Information Box 23 presents examples of how to present this information.

#### INFORMATION BOX 23



##### Communicating sustainability through storytelling

Most organizations use storytelling as a means to communicate about sustainability. For stories to be engaging, they must be relatable. Consider the following tips to create your narratives:

- Encourage stakeholders (GI producers, organization leaders and staff members, and others) to share their own sustainability stories to promote appropriation and offer positive role models. Stories should be a source of inspiration for day-to-day operations.
- Highlight concrete, tangible examples of choices made for priorities. Other producers can then explore how these choices align with their day-to-day work and with their own or their leaders' choices and behaviours.
- Good choice usually concerns a challenge that had to be overcome. Stories are interesting when the choices were not obvious and rather difficult to implement, so always highlight the challenge and the failures along the way to a successful implementation.
- Human stories, where the GI organization is not necessarily a protagonist but an enabler, make stories more relatable. Also, creating curiosity as to how the story ends, and highlighting the difficulties in making appropriate choices at the right time, may increase engagement with your audience.

Source: Amlani, A., Bertels, S. & Hadler, T. 2016. *Storytelling for sustainability. A guide*. Vancouver, Canada, Embedding Project. Cited 27 March 2023. <https://embeddingproject.org/pub/resources/EP-Storytelling-for-Sustainability.pdf>

## Communicating with external stakeholders

When communicating the results of the prioritization process to external stakeholders, priority should be given to stakeholders who were consulted, to reassure them that views were taken into account. It is highly recommended to organize meetings to present the conclusions reached so far, with a focus on the GI producers' perspectives.

Such meetings allow stakeholders to compare their views to those of other groups (which should be presented in an anonymous manner). Stakeholders with whom no direct relationship exists may also be invited to these meetings, which may help establish a continuous dialogue with key players.

For key external stakeholders who could not be consulted individually, formal communications may be sent out to inform them of the process and the conclusions reached so far. This may open the possibility for engagement in the next phases of the SSGI (assessment and improvement).

Finally, the GI organization may communicate the results of this phase of the exercise to local authorities and opinion leaders. This will not only strengthen the organization's position as a key player in confronting the challenges facing the GI system and the territory, but will also create opportunities to identify other key players and existing local programmes.

Depending on the objectives pursued, the level of engagement of the stakeholders may vary. So far, the GI practitioner has focused on certain levels of engagement: consult, monitor and inform. However, to build alliances for the implementation of initiatives during the improvement Phase of the SSGI, more demanding levels of communication must be considered (see Table 13).

TABLE 13

### External stakeholder communication and engagement approaches

Level of commitment	Goal	Communication	Nature of relationship	Engagement methods
Remain passive	No goal. No engagement.	No active communication.	No relationship.	Stakeholders' concerns expressed through protests, letters, media, websites, etc., or through pressure on regulatory bodies and other advocacy efforts.
Monitor	Monitor stakeholders' views.	One-way: stakeholder to GI system or GI organization.	Applies to GI product category leaders, regulators and product distribution channels (retailers).	Media and internet tracking. Existing reports (e.g. sustainability and CSR reports). If possible, targeted interviews and meetings of the bodies of the GI organization.

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Level of commitment	Goal	Communication	Nature of relationship	Engagement methods
<b>Inform</b>	Inform or educate stakeholders.	One-way: GI organization to stakeholders, there is no possibility for feedback.	Short- or long-term relationships with stakeholders ("We will keep you informed"). Crucial for those stakeholders with whom the GI organization wishes to develop a relationship.	Bulletins, letters, brochures, reports, websites. Speeches, conferences and public presentations. Open houses and facility tours. Road shows and public displays. Press releases, press conferences, media advertising, lobbying.
<b>Transact</b>	Work together in a contractual relationship where one partner directs the objectives and provides funding.	Limited two-way: setting of objectives and monitoring of performance according to the terms of the contract.	The terms of the relationship are set by contractual agreement: "we will do what we said we would" or "we will provide the resources to enable you to do what we agree."	Public-private partnerships, private financing initiatives, public financing initiatives, cause-related marketing, international cooperation projects.
<b>Consult</b>	Gain information and feedback from stakeholders to inform decisions made internally.	Limited two-way: the GI organization asks questions and the stakeholders answer.	Short- or long-term involvement: "we will keep you informed, listen to your concerns, consider your insights, and provide feedback on our decision."	Surveys, focus groups, workplace assessments, one-on-one meetings, public meetings, workshops, stakeholder advisory forums, online feedback and discussions.
<b>Involve</b>	Work directly with stakeholders to ensure that their concerns are fully understood and considered in decision-making.	Two-way, or multi-way between the organization and the stakeholders. Learning takes place on both sides. The stakeholders and organization act individually.	May be a one-off or a longer-term engagement: "we will work with you to ensure that your concerns are understood, to develop alternative proposals and to provide feedback about how stakeholders' views influenced the decision-making process."	Multi-stakeholder forums, advisory panels, consensus-building processes, participatory decision-making processes.
<b>Collaborate</b>	Partner with or build a network of stakeholders to develop mutually agreed solutions and a joint plan of action.	Two-way, or multi-way between the organization and the stakeholders. Learning, negotiating and decision-making on both sides. Stakeholders work together to take action.	Long-term: "we will look to you for direct advice and to find and implement solutions to shared challenges together."	Joint projects, voluntary two- or multi-stakeholder initiatives, partnerships.
<b>Empower</b>	Delegate decision-making on a particular topic to stakeholders.	New organizational forms of accountability: stakeholders have a formal role in the governance of an organization, or decisions are delegated out to stakeholders.	Long-term: "we will implement what you decide."	Integration of stakeholders into the governance structure of the organization (e.g. as members, shareholders, or on particular committees etc.)

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on: AccountAbility. 2015. AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard 2015. N.p. Cited 27 March 2023. [www.mas-business.com/docs/AA1000SES%202015.pdf](http://www.mas-business.com/docs/AA1000SES%202015.pdf)

# Phase 2

## Assessment

### OBJECTIVE

The assessment phase focuses on selecting appropriate metrics for the sustainability priority topics identified and creating a system to regularly review these metrics to measure the sustainability performance of the GI system.

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Provide the GI organization and producers with indicators to measure the GI system's sustainability performance for the selected priority topics;
- develop a system to obtain the information necessary to review the selected indicators, assigning responsibilities within the GI organization;
- prepare the basis for an efficient internal dialogue towards improvement of the GI system;
- foster a dialogue with potential allies to develop joint sustainability initiatives, and ensure managerial discipline to keep track of the impacts of sustainability initiatives and programmes; and
- evaluate the baseline performance with stakeholders and communicate efforts and achievements.

### ACTIONS

- Select the most appropriate indicators to measure current performance for each priority topic;
- establish a baseline and develop a monitoring system; and
- inform stakeholders about the system's current performance.

### DELIVERABLES

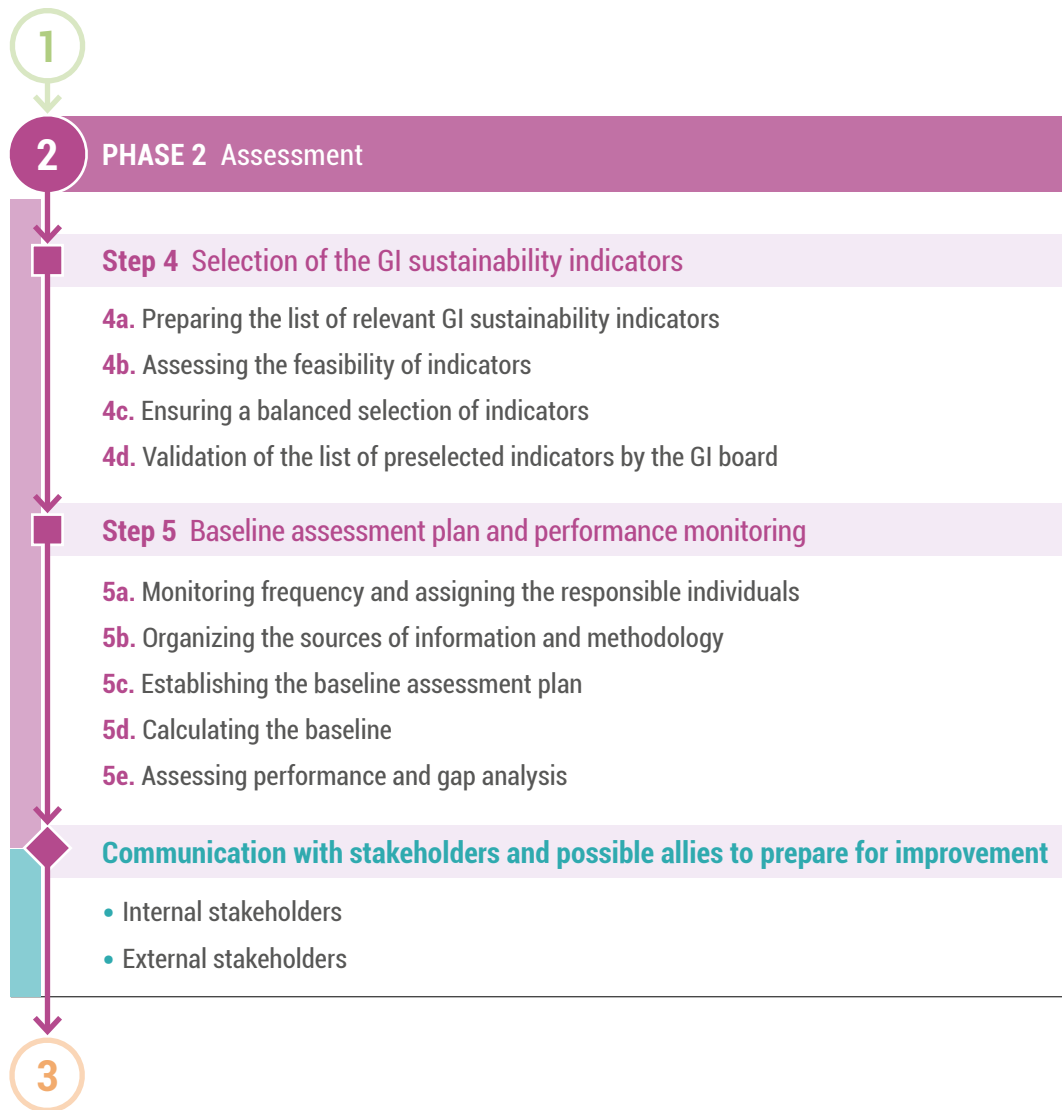
- A set of adapted sustainability indicators for the GI system;
- an assessment plan; and
- assessment of baseline performance against each sustainability priority, with selected indicators and benchmarks.



Figure 15 provides an overview of the flow of Phase 2.

**FIGURE 15**

**Overview of the assessment phase**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**Please note:**

GI organizations that have used a different prioritization methodology can use the assessment and improvement phases of this guide. However, they will have to classify the selected sustainability priority topics under the SSGI pillar/theme/topic framework (see [Annex 1](#) and [Step 2](#) of the previous phase) and make sure that the priorities are validated and communicated as suggested in [Step 3](#).

## Step 4

# Selection of the GI sustainability indicators

### Objective

Identify relevant indicators for each of the priority topics, to build a sound measuring system for transparent monitoring and evaluation of performance.

### Actions

The GI practitioner should:

- review the sustainability indicator database of the SSGI toolkit and the principles for sound evaluation;
- preselect balanced indicators from the database (or from other sources); and
- make a final selection of indicators, in agreement with the GI organization's staff and stakeholders (as applicable).

### Deliverable

Final list of indicators to measure progress on each sustainability priority topic, the frequency of measurement of each indicator and the name of the assigned individual responsible for monitoring.

## 4a. Preparing the list of relevant GI sustainability indicators

The SSGI sustainability indicator database is organized under the SSGI structure described in [Annex 1](#). It consists of four pillars: economic resilience, environmental integrity, good governance and social well-being. A total of 22 sustainability themes are classified under these four pillars: five for good governance, six for environmental integrity, four for economic resilience and seven for social well-being. A total of 62 sustainability topics are classified under the 22 sustainability themes.

Under this pillar/theme/topic structure, 442 sustainability indicators are categorized by topic: 135 for the economic dimension, 89 governance indicators, 102 indicators for the social dimension and 116 for environmental integrity.<sup>8</sup> Each topic may have one or more indicators for monitoring. A brief description of the structure of the SSGI sustainability indicator database can be found in [Table 14](#).

<sup>8</sup> At the date of publication of this guide. The number of indicators may evolve to include new sector indicators.



**TABLE 14**
**Structure of the SSGI indicators database**

PART 1: THEMES		
Pillar		
Theme		
Topic		
Topic definition		
PART 2: INDICATOR SOURCE, FORMULA AND CHARACTERIZATION		
Indicator name		
Formula		
Requirements		
Possible examples and/or significance		
Qualitative/quantitative		
Management or external indicator		
Source of information (internal/external)		
Objective/subjective		
Process/impact		
Key indicator (top indicators to be considered)		
PART 3: STANDARDS APPLICABILITY		
Broad sustainability	SDGs	Reference to the SDG indicators
	GRI	Reference to the GRI indicators
	ETHOS	Reference to the Ethos Social Responsibility Framework
Agriculture and food	UNCTAD-FAO	SDG-FAO crossreference for private sector SDG contribution
	SAFA	Reference to the SAFA code
	FAIRTRADE	Reference to the Fairtrade certification indicator
	RAINFOREST	Reference to the Rainforest Alliance certification indicator
	GRI agriculture and fishing sector standard	Reference to a specific GRI sector indicator
Key GI sectors	Wine & spirits	Applicability to this key GI sector
	Dairy & meat	Applicability to this key GI sector
	Fruits & vegetables	Applicability to this key GI sector
	Coffee, cocoa & tea	Applicability to this key GI sector

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PART 4: INDICATOR USAGE		
<b>Complexity (high/medium/low)</b>	Cost	Monetary resources needed
	Requirement of internal resources	Need of internal resources to obtain indicator
	Depth of analysis	Difficulty of interpretation
<b>Value chain stakeholder interest</b>	Farm	Shows whether the indicator may be of interest to actors belonging to different value chain stages
	Processing	
	Distribution	
	Consumer/retail	
<b>Indicator application</b>	Territory	The indicator may be applicable to one or more of these domains
	Value chain	
	Society	
<b>Scope</b>	Collective	Indicator may be used for monitoring individual and/or collective performance
	Individual	
<b>Self-assessment</b>	Y/N	

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Each indicator is described in detail, and has several attributes. Information Box 24 describes the different attributes of the indicators. Practitioners should use these attributes as a guide to choose the most appropriate indicators to monitor performance against the selected priority topics. In most cases, GI practitioners will have several indicators to choose from for each topic.

In many cases, the review of the indicators will demonstrate the need to start collecting information that until then was not collected systematically, or to use information that was being collected but not used to measure the GI system's performance. In other cases, the GI practitioner may find that the organization is already tracking indicators that are not in the SSGI database, but may be useful to the GI system's performance against specific priority topics; such indicators may be added to the database.



- society: the indicator concerns societal values or public goods beyond the territory of origin (e.g. cultural heritage, product quality, truth in labelling, traceability, transparency, etc.); and
- scope: does the indicator measure progress in individual or collective operations? For some indicators, measurements are reliable at the individual level (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions), while others are of a collective nature (e.g. deforestation in the territory). Some indicators can be used both individually and collectively (e.g. access to social security benefits by employees or producers).
- **Self-assessment:** can the indicator be calculated based on internal information or methods (e.g. self-assessments of performance, internal perceptions or evaluations).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Preselecting the indicators

The SSGI sustainability indicator database is a resource that is not tailored to any specific GI system; the indicators in the database should therefore be chosen in function of the GI organization's current state, context and priorities. The objective is to create a balanced and reliable portfolio of indicators that ensures that the priority topics are being properly monitored. To this end, the GI practitioner should review the indicators associated with each of the selected priority topics. It is important to consider the relevance of the attributes of the indicators in light of the topic definitions, as well as the local context (the GI organization and product, the territory).

To assess the relevance of the attributes of the indicators to the local context, the GI practitioner may need to review the initial research on the GI system ([Phase 1](#)) and the information obtained through the stakeholder consultations (see Phase 1, [Step 1](#) and [Step 2](#)). The following factors should be considered:

- the geography and other local conditions in the territory;
- the human and monetary resources available;
- the GI organization's experience with indicator monitoring; if the organization is already monitoring certain variables that are relevant to the selected priority topics, these variables may be included as indicators; and
- other monitoring in the territory: indicators that are already being monitored by other players may be used by the GI practitioner.

It is always preferable to start measuring with a less-than-ideal portfolio of indicators, rather than not measuring performance at all. In the case of a suboptimal indicator portfolio, the GI practitioner should develop a plan to boost the quantity and quality of the information that is used to measure the GI system's performance. Information Box 25 provides a number of general recommendations to create an efficient and credible selection of indicators.





## INFORMATION BOX 25

**General recommendations for developing a credible and efficient portfolio of indicators**

- Prioritize quantitative indicators over qualitative ones, as numbers provide more credibility and facilitate monitoring.
- Give priority to indicators that use internal sources, as far as the information is reliable and timely. Relying on internal indicators can be more efficient, less expensive and easier.
- Give priority to collective indicators to monitor collective initiatives. Ideally, indicators may be used to measure both collective and individual (farm or processing unit) performances.
- Find a balance between process and impact indicators to track both short- and long-term outputs; ideally, about half (and certainly not less than 30 percent) of all indicators used should be impact indicators.
- Focus on management indicators, as these will help improve the GI system's management and thereby increase efficiency. External indicators should be used mostly for communicating on the system's performance and improvements thereof to external audiences.
- Whenever possible, choose key indicators, as these are likely to be of interest to a wide range of stakeholders. In addition, the key indicators may be used under various sustainability frameworks (e.g. those used by certification bodies or the GRI) and can easily be connected to the SDGs. Using key indicators will make communication easier, and may facilitate the building of alliances with stakeholders who already use these indicators.
- Favour indicators that are relevant to multiple stages in the value chain, rather than using indicators that apply to a specific stage only; this will help incorporate the interests of a wide range of actors in the sustainability roadmap.
- GI organizations with limited experience in sustainability strategies may wish to focus on low or medium–low complexity indicators and self-assessment indicators.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The Toolkit provides GI practitioners with significant flexibility to use different attributes to select the most appropriate indicators for each topic. The below section proposes a procedure to preselect indicators.

At this point, the GI practitioner should start preselecting the most appropriate indicators to monitor performance against each of the selected priority topics. The Toolkit will automatically produce a list of indicators for the chosen topics; the preselection of the indicators will be based on the attributes for each indicator (see [Information Box 24](#)).

The practitioner may reach out to specialists or staff members of the GI organization, to ask them for their input on the most appropriate indicators and the availability of information. These interactions can help determine whether the data that are needed for certain indicators are already available (internally or externally), or whether it is necessary to start gathering information for some indicators.



The Toolkit automatically selects and displays the indicators from the SSGI sustainability indicator database for the chosen priorities. Often, a large number of indicators is produced. These indicators should be reviewed in light of the definition of each selected priority topic (Phase 1), to ensure that they adequately address the challenges faced by the GI system. A review of the attributes of the suggested indicators (formula, requirements, applicability and usage) will provide an idea of the GI organization’s ability to use them. Other key considerations in the selection process include the significance of the indicators, their relevance to the definitions of the priorities, and the degree of correspondence with the metrics used in other frameworks.

## Determining the number of indicators for each topic

GI practitioners should not limit their selection to just one indicator per topic. For very important priority topics, several indicators may be used, usually three, as this enables a better monitoring of the priority from different angles.

The GI organization’s capacities to obtain data on a regular basis should be considered when determining how many indicators will be used. Usually, 10 to 12 priority topics are selected (see [Information Box 19](#) on Phase 1). As a general rule, three to four indicators may be used per priority topic, although the exact number may vary from one topic to the next. At the preselection stage, it is better to consider several indicators per topic, some of which can be ruled out when making the final selection. Organizations with limited experience in the development of sustainability roadmaps can start with a limited number of indicators, and add indicators later on in the process (see [Information Box 26](#)).

### INFORMATION BOX 26



#### Considering a limited number of indicators at the start of the sustainability roadmap

Organizations with limited experience in the development of sustainability roadmaps can start with a limited number of indicators: about two indicators for each sustainability priority topic (although some topics may have only one indicator, and others two or more). Usually, 10 to 12 priority topics are selected (see [Information Box 19](#) on Phase 1), which means that the matrix of indicators will contain approximately 20 to 24 indicators. However, in such cases, the organization should aim at obtaining additional information in order to track more indicators in the future; this should be part of the baseline assessment plan ([Step 5](#)) and the improvement plan ([Phase 3](#)). If an organization can track a larger number of indicators, it should do so, as this additional information may help create alliances and obtain funding in the long run.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*



## Filtering indicators by sector

Initially, the GI practitioner may want to select those indicators that are considered most relevant for the product category to which the GI product belongs. The SSGI sustainability indicator database categorizes indicators according to four product categories: wines and spirits, dairy and meat, fruits and vegetables, and coffee, cocoa and tea. When selecting a product category in the Toolkit, the list of relevant indicators will be shown automatically (see [Toolkit Box 13](#)).

## Discarding unuseful indicators

For each priority topic, the practitioner should evaluate whether the suggested indicators are indeed appropriate to monitor the challenges faced by the GI system, based on the following questions:

- Does the indicator have a clear link with the definition of the priority topic?
- Is this indicator relevant for the GI system and/or organization?
- Would the indicator provide meaningful information to evaluate the priority topic?
- Are the information requirements for this indicator too complex?
- Is the information that is needed to calculate the indicator available, or can it be obtained, collected or processed within a reasonable period (e.g. one year)?
- Could the indicator be modified to better reflect GI organization priorities?

The GI practitioner can then use the Toolkit to review the remaining indicators for each topic (see [Toolkit Box 13](#)).

## Adding or modifying indicators

The SSGI sustainability indicator database is generic, and may not include all the indicators that are relevant to a GI system's specific context. At this point, the list of indicators may be modified or complemented based on the following criteria:

- Are there indicators that are currently being used by the GI organization, actors in the same product category or GI stakeholders that are relevant to the selected priorities? The search for additional indicators may include different sources, such as managerial reports of the GI organization or reports by public authorities or other key stakeholders. These new indicators should be considered for inclusion in the list.
- Should the suggested indicators be modified to better reflect the definition of the priority topic, or to make them more operational?
- Can the indicators be used in a collective (GI system) context?

The number of additional indicators can be substantial, depending on whether the GI organization has a tradition of management reports and public reporting on its activities (see [Example Box 11](#)).



## EXAMPLE BOX 11



### Selecting the most appropriate indicators: cocoa from Orinoquía

In the case of cocoa from Orinoquía (Colombia), 15 sustainability priority topics were identified. The SSGI sustainability indicator database contained 101 possible indicators for these 15 priorities, of which 25 were initially identified as relevant by the GI organization (Fedecacao). The GI practitioner analysed the organization's management reports to identify any currently used management indicators that could also help measure performance against the selected priorities. This analysis resulted in the addition of 13 indicators to the original list of 25. After a four-hour revision process to fine-tune indicators, a final list of 78 indicators was chosen for the baseline assessment (see the below table 15).

TABLE 15. Number of indicators for cocoa from Orinoquía

Pillar	Database indicators covering the selected priorities	Database indicators chosen by Fedecacao	Final selection
Economic	17	5	21
Governance	45	11	30
Social	13	5	14
Environmental	26	4	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>78</b>

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Important indicator characteristics

Of the various characteristics detailed for each indicator in the SSGI database, the following merit special consideration in the selection process.

### Collective vs individual indicators

GI systems are collective endeavours; therefore, indicators that monitor collective initiatives should be prioritized in the selection process. Some collective indicators (see Information Box 24) can be used to monitor both collective and individual efforts, while individual indicators can only be used for individual operations. Indicators that can be used for both collective and individual monitoring should be prioritized.

The data needed to track collective indicators may be obtained either for the GI system as a collective or by aggregating data for individual actors. Indicators such as “literacy of managers” (a governance indicator that assesses the share of managerial staff that can read and write proficiently) or “total production” can be used to measure both individual and collective performance. This may help individual GI producers compare their performance to that of the group and may create positive synergies for indicator tracking. GI practitioners should consider the best modalities to collect and aggregate data, not only for the organization but also for individual producers (e.g. by providing adequate feedback) (see Information Box 27).



## INFORMATION BOX 27

**Aggregating data for collective indicators**

The aggregation of individual data to generate collective indicators requires a system of reporting and verification of individual producers. Participation in this system may be voluntary or enforceable, depending on the topic and issue, and may require additional rules for the GI organization.

The meaningfulness of individual indicators should be considered carefully by reviewing *inter alia* the dispersion, representativity, average, median or high/low points of the observations. Individuals who provide data should be given feedback that allows them to compare their performance to that of the collective, to provide incentives to producers to participate in the monitoring exercise. It is important to ensure the anonymity of the individuals who provide data.

The data for collective indicators may also be obtained through other methods, for example reports by managers or control bodies, regular systematic reviews of the information collected, adherence to programmes that require specific attention to a specific sustainability priority topic, producer surveys (with adequate representation of producers by size, location, activity, etc.), stakeholder surveys or data from government bodies. Other sources of data for collective indicators include case studies, focus group discussions, structured interviews, systematic and recorded observations, earlier studies or surveys, satellite information, etc.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

**Key indicators**

The database has a category of “key” indicators which are commonly used under different sustainability frameworks and/or standards, or are especially relevant to GI systems. It is recommended – but not mandatory – to use these key indicators, depending on the GI organization’s capacities and experience. Using key indicators may simplify the communication with GI stakeholders and potential allies, for example with a view to defining goals for joint initiatives.

**Process or impact indicators**

Process indicators are associated with the execution of projects, initiatives or programmes. They are management tools used to evaluate the quality of processes and the performance of tasks. Meanwhile, impact indicators usually concern wider challenges in each field (economic, social, environmental or governance), where variables and their relationships are not easily measurable. They help verify whether an intended positive change has actually taken place, which usually requires a longer (or final) timeframe. For example, the number of trees planted is a process indicator, whereas the amount of carbon sequestered or the increase in farmers’ incomes resulting from the planting is an impact indicator.

It is recommended to combine process and impact indicators, as this enables the regular monitoring (and, if needed, adjustment) of actions towards improvement on a priority topic, as well as the measuring of the impact of these actions (which helps with the communication on the results).



## 4b. Assessing the feasibility of indicators

It is important to consider the feasibility of opting for certain indicators, based on the following indicator attributes:

- requirements and sources: the GI organization’s capacities to collect data, both currently and in the future;
- complexity of the indicators: the organization’s capacities to gather and analyse data;
- self-assessment: the organization’s ability to carry out the assessment on its own; and
- quantitative/qualitative: the ability of the organization to obtain the necessary quantitative and qualitative data.

### Requirements and sources

When selecting indicators, the GI practitioner should consider whether the GI organization has the capacities needed to measure the indicators. This exercise should be undertaken with great care. Its results should be reviewed by the staff members of the organization or external GI stakeholders. This dialogue with stakeholders may provide an opportunity to discuss the relevance of certain measurements for collective purposes, and may lead to the joint collection or sharing of data. Highly relevant indicators for which information is currently not readily available may be preselected with a plan to start gathering or processing the required data within a reasonable period of time.

### Complexity

Indicators may be very complex, which can make it costly to obtain the data necessary to monitor them. The complexity of indicators varies according to the context of the GI system. The ability of the GI organization to use complex indicators is often linked to its experience in dealing with sustainability topics. Organizations with limited experience are advised to start working with indicators of low or medium complexity; the complexity level of the indicators may be increased later on to satisfy the information needs of donors or other stakeholders.

The SSGI indicator database assigns different complexity levels to each indicator. The practitioner should assess whether this characterization reflects the characteristics of the product, territory, GI system or organization, as well as the organization’s ability to use the indicator. Information Box 28 lists a number of questions that can help practitioners evaluate the complexity of indicators.



**INFORMATION BOX 28**



**Questionnaire to assess the complexity of indicators**

These six questions can help evaluate the complexity of indicators in light of a GI system's characteristics and context:

1. Is the indicator easily understood by non-experts?  
 Yes  No (1 point)
2. Do you have the instruments or tools needed to measure the indicator?  
 Yes  No (1 point)
3. Is the information required to obtain or calculate the indicator easily accessible?  
 Yes  No (1 point)
4. Does measuring the indicator generate significant costs or expenses?  
 Yes (1 point)  No
5. Does obtaining or calculating the indicator take a long time?  
 Yes (1 point)  No
6. Do you require external support (specialists or organizations) to calculate the indicator?  
 Yes (1 point)  No

A score of zero to two points indicates that it is highly likely that the GI practitioner and the GI organization will be able to work with these low-complexity indicators.

A score of three or four points shows that the complexity of the indicators is low to medium; the practitioner should determine whether they are workable. This is likely to be the case if the GI organization has already gained some experience in sustainability, fully understands the meaning of the indicators, has access to the primary and secondary information needed to measure the indicator, and has the human resources required to make the calculations.

A score of five or six points indicates that the GI organization should be mature and experienced, and have the technical and professional capacities to measure these complex indicators.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

**Self-assessment indicators**

Under “usage”, the SSGI database specifies whether or not the indicator can be used for self-assessment. An organization’s ability to use self-assessment indicators depends on its characteristics and context. The practitioner should evaluate whether the organization has the capacities to monitor the indicator in a transparent manner; subjective self-assessment indicators may require external audits. External experts may be called upon to develop the data collection methods and monitor the measuring process; this will increase the efficiency of the self-monitoring exercise and boost credibility.



## Qualitative and quantitative indicators

Quantitative indicators are essential as they provide concrete numbers, which increases the overall strength of the assessment. However, their availability might be an issue (see Information Box 29); the GI practitioner should therefore assess the feasibility of obtaining the necessary information, if not for the first assessment, then in the future.

### INFORMATION BOX 29



#### Evaluating the availability of information

To evaluate a GI organization's capacities to obtain data to measure quantitative or qualitative indicators, GI practitioners may consider the following questions:

- Do we already have the information needed to measure the indicator?
- Is there a way to obtain historical information (for the past two to three years) on this indicator?
- Are significant resources (time, knowledge, money, etc.) needed to measure the indicator?

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

If availability is a concern, and the indicator is considered crucial for the priority topic, the GI practitioner should develop ways to obtain the necessary data, even in the longer term. For example, a first assessment can be based on estimates or subjective data (e.g. from surveys) for the indicator; a system can then be developed to obtain quantitative data for the next assessment. The modalities of such a system should be defined in the baseline assessment plan; [Step 5.c](#) provides suggestions.

A qualitative indicator is not numeric, but rather provides a description. Qualitative indicators can measure change over time against specific, predetermined criteria, and are often necessary to gain information on performance against certain topics. Their measurement can be based on a thorough analysis of the key issues, plans, targets or other topics of significance. Qualitative indicators can be measured with statements (e.g. not at all/insufficient/sufficient/meets the requested level/above expectations) or degrees of process implementation (e.g. not yet started/at the beginning/around mid-term/almost completed/archived).

The database contains 167 qualitative indicators and 13 mixed (quantitative–qualitative) indicators. To select the most appropriate indicators, the GI practitioner should evaluate the availability of data (see Information Box 29), ensure a good balance between qualitative and quantitative indicators (see the next step), and determine the minimum requirements for qualitative information. Table 16 suggests formula and requirements for various qualitative indicators. GI practitioners may adapt formulas and outcomes following similar models.





TABLE 16

## Suggested formulas and requirements for qualitative indicators

Indicator	Formula	Possible minimum requirements to assess the indicator
<b>Business plan</b>	Document describing the current status of an operation as well as its aims and objectives, setting out the strategy leading to their achievement over a period of at least five years.	The document must be revised once a year, and the GI practitioner must consult at least three members of the GI management team about its contents. If such a document is not known by them, the result of the assessment (and hence the indicator) must be negative.
<b>Decision-making process</b>	The GI stakeholders understand the GI organization's product strategy and reasons behind decisions to defend and promote the GI system.	Review the way in which the sustainability strategy was communicated to relevant GI stakeholders, within the scope of the indicator. Validate the awareness and understanding of the strategy of at least three stakeholder representatives.
<b>Nutrient contents</b>	The presence of specific and diverse macro- and micronutrients or living cells in the GI product, resulting from the product's link to its origin (biodiversity, soils, vegetation, processing practices, etc.).	Revise the results of at least three measurements of nutrient contents, and verify whether they are based on established protocols.
<b>Management practices on greenhouse gas emissions</b>	Management practices implemented to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.	Establish a set of minimum required practices, based on a review of studies by sustainability experts.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

In certain cases, it may be useful to gather perceptions and opinions from individual stakeholders, especially if no objective information is available. Such views can be obtained from surveys or through informal contacts or interviews.

GI practitioners may develop their own scoring method to evaluate a priority topic using subjective self-assessment indicators (the database categorizes 84 out of 180 qualitative indicators as “subjectively assessed”). Example Box 12 provides guidelines on how to use subjective self-assessment indicators. A credibility issue may arise when qualitative indicators are assessed in a subjective manner (database categorizes).

To guarantee the credibility of the roadmap, the GI practitioner must ensure that the GI organization has the ability to measure subjective indicators in a transparent manner, providing the material necessary for internal audits. Contributions from experts may be required to develop an efficient and credible methodology for self-assessment.

## EXAMPLE BOX 12



### Dealing with subjective indicators for self-assessment: Maroilles cheese

Maroilles cheese is a cheese made from cow's milk, produced in northern France, which has been registered as a protected designation of origin (PDO) since 1996. In 2021, 112 milk producers, six on-farm processors, four dairy cooperatives (milk collectors), five industrial processors and two cheese ripeners were involved in an analysis of the sustainability of the Maroilles production system, to establish a diagnosis and action plan.

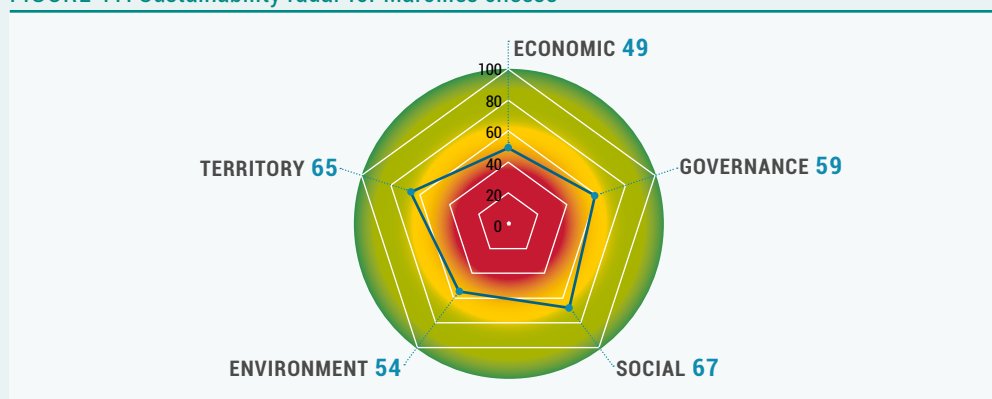
The analysis was coordinated by the Groupement Régional pour la Qualité Alimentaire (Qualimentaire), in partnership with national institutions (the Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité [INAO] and the Institut National de Recherche pour l'Agriculture, l'Alimentation et l'Environnement [INRAE]) and with contributions from international actors (FAO and the Association of European Regions for Products of Origin [AREPO]).

The analysis was based on the results of individual interviews with a sample of actors from across the sector. Together with these actors, an evaluation methodology was developed: a grid of indicators combining the standard dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and two dimensions specific to GIs (governance and territory). Interviewees' replies were registered on a score card or "qualimentary sustainability grid". For subjective self-assessment indicators, rating scale questions (from 1 to 10), were used. The scores were aggregated by pillar and presented in a graph or "sustainability radar".

FIGURE 16. Rating scale question on satisfaction and well-being in the work environment for Maroilles cheese

Score	Measurement	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
Degree of satisfaction and well-being in the work environment	On scale from 1 to 10, how do you rate your degree of satisfaction and well-being at work ?	1 to 2	3 to 4	5 to 6	7 to 8	9 to 10

FIGURE 17. Sustainability radar for Maroilles cheese



This assessment approach, based on the knowledge and perceptions of members of the PDO value chain, may be used as an interim method in cases where objective data are not immediately available, and until objective data can be obtained. For Maroilles cheese, this method was used to establish a collective action plan, based on a collective examination of the value chain and its current and future challenges.

Source: Attard, P. 2021. *Assessing the sustainability of Geographical Indications in the dairy and cheese sectors. A participatory action research within the PDO Maroilles cheese.* Norwegian University of Life Sciences. (Master thesis)



## TOOLKIT BOX 13

**Preselecting and selecting indicators to monitor performance against priority topics**

- Study documentation on the research and consultation process (Step 1 and Step 2 of Phase 1), and review the indicators currently used by GI stakeholders.
- GI practitioners should obtain advice as to the selection of indicators from stakeholders, staff members of the GI organization or other actors. Ideally, the Assigned individual who will be in charge of future monitoring should be involved in the indicator selection process.
- The toolkit automatically displays indicators of the SSGI database that measure performance against each priority topic selected in Step 3, by pillar. Go to **Tab 4.2.1 "Filtering ind-Economic"** of the toolkit, which provides a list of performance indicators for each selected topic under the economic pillar; then, go through the same process for the social indicators (**Tab 4.2.2 "Filtering ind-Social"**), governance indicators (**Tab 4.2.3 "Filtering ind- Governance"**) and environmental indicators (**Tab 4.2.4 "Filtering ind-Environment"**). Users may restart the process at any time by clicking on the gray box that cleans the format and information entered.
- Define a target number of indicators to be selected: all selected priority topics must have indicators, usually 3 indicators per priority topic are acceptable. The total indicator may vary depending the priority topic and may evolve according to the GI organization to capacities to monitor them.
- The suggested flow of the selection process is as follows:
  - Review the list of indicators provided. Additional indicators, including those currently used by the GI organization or by GI stakeholders, or interim indicators (see note below in this box), may be added to the list.
  - Start by typing the indicator at the bottom of the table, selecting the priority topic associated with the new indicator. For highly relevant indicators for which there is no information, a process to obtain the required information may constitute a new indicator in itself (see note below in this box).
  - Assign as many attributes as possible to each added indicator, in particular the "key", "GI product sector" and "collective" attributes. Current indicators may need to be modified to better reflect priority topic definitions.
  - Check the indicator attributes, in particular those related to indicator usage (see the attributes related to complexity, value chain interest, application and self-assessment) to ensure their relevance for the GI system and GI organization.
  - To discard irrelevant indicators, only indicators that are relevant to the GI product sector may be selected (if available). If the GI product sector has not been identified, skip this step. Discarded indicators may be highlighted in a different colour. GI practitioners may discard other irrelevant indicators based on the (amended) topic definition and/or the unavailability of information in the medium or long term (due to cost or other reasons).
  - Give priority to indicators that can measure both individual and collective performance.
  - Review those indicators that are marked as "key" indicators. They are strong candidates as they are commonly used by many sustainability practitioners and standard setting bodies.

Follows on the next page 

- Make a final indicator preselection by clicking on column AX. This preselection will be presented to the GI board or other decision-making bodies for their final decision.
- Once the indicator selection has been validated, indicate the frequency of monitoring for each selected indicator, based on relevance, information availability and/or other criteria.

Notes: highly relevant indicators should not be discarded, even if there is currently no information available. If there is no reliable information or process to obtain information available for highly relevant indicators, the desired indicator should be kept, and the process of obtaining the required information for its monitoring should be added as an interim indicator. Throughout the process, the GI practitioner should continuously review the approved priority topic definitions to ensure that the preselected indicators are relevant to the challenges and issues identified during the prioritization process.

The GI practitioner may use various filters to navigate the indicator database; this may result in different selection processes, with different weights given to certain indicator attributes. Whatever the procedure used, the practitioner should ensure that the selected indicators reflect the specificities of the GI system and the local context. If needed, review the resulting indicators once again with experts, staff members of the GI organization or other stakeholders.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

## 4c. Ensuring a balanced selection of indicators

The list of preselected indicators may be reviewed with staff members of the GI organization, key stakeholders and potential allies; if this review indicates that some of the preselected indicators do not adequately reflect the priority definition, different options should be considered. Note that the adequacy of indicators can be evaluated continuously, and indicators can be replaced or modified over time.

It is important to ensure a right balance between the selected indicators; a balanced indicator mix will provide insights into the performance against each priority topic from different perspectives, which enhances credibility.

The Toolkit has a tab that automatically checks the balance between what the indicators measure and how they are used; this tab may indicate that a review or extension of the list of selected indicators is needed. Example Box 13 provides an example of a balanced analysis, while Toolkit Box 14 describes this process of the Toolkit.



## EXAMPLE BOX 13

**Balancing indicators: the case of Queso Paipa**

The process of selecting assessment indicators for Colombia's Queso Paipa started with the review of 79 indicators of the SSGI indicator database for 12 selected sustainability priority topics. The members of the GI organization (Asociación de Productores de Queso Paipa) reviewed this list of indicators and preselected 33 indicators as most relevant for the priorities chosen. At this point, each indicator was subjected to a more thorough analysis of its attributes (such as complexity and relevance), and some indicators were modified slightly to ensure that the information required to use them was available. Following this analysis, a total of 25 indicators were chosen (11 qualitative and 14 quantitative indicators, 12 impact indicators and 13 process indicators). A balance analysis of this final list showed that all indicators had a direct connection to the SDG framework. Thirteen indicators were considered key indicators, and 21 indicators could be used based on internal sources. Most indicators were of medium or low complexity.

*Source:* Authors' own elaboration based on internal FAO reports of field missions and pilot testing (2022).

## TOOLKIT BOX 14

**Analysing the balance between indicators and frequency**

Once the initial indicators for all sustainability pillars are preselected, go to **Tab 4.3 "Indicator Balance"** of the toolkit. This tab will automatically display the attributes of all the preselected indicators. A balanced selection of indicators enhances the credibility of the monitoring system.

- Review the attributes of the preselected indicators. The final list of indicators must be balanced in terms of general attributes, applicability and usage (see [Information Box 24](#) and [Information Box 25](#)). If the list is not sufficiently balanced, the preselection process may be refined, in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders (see the process in [Toolkit Box 13](#)).
- The GI practitioner may wish to review the indicator selection if it is deemed that the indicator balance must be improved, or develop a plan to obtain information in order to add new indicators for monitoring.

*Source:* Authors' own elaboration.

## 4d. Validation of the list of preselected indicators by the GI board

The GI practitioner should now present the list of preselected indicators, as well as the results of the analysis of the balance between them, to the GI board. The board should be provided with information on the resources that are required to carry out the performance assessment, with an estimate based on the descriptions and attributes of the indicators. Also, the practitioner should stress that an efficient reporting framework is essential to the oversight functions carried out by the board itself. Once the list of indicators is approved by the board, the GI practitioner start developing the baseline assessment plan.



## Step 5

# Baseline assessment plan and performance monitoring

### Objective

Set up a plan to measure the current performance of the GI system against each priority topic, to establish a baseline for the regular monitoring of the impacts of the sustainability roadmap.

### Actions

- The baseline plan – and the system for future monitoring – will define the methods and frequency of the calculation of indicators, indicate sources of information and identify the individuals (the GI practitioner or members of the organization's staff) responsible for the monitoring of selected indicators. The plan may include strategies to obtain and process current or new information, based on the current or expected availability of information.
- The assigned individuals will gather the information required to establish the baseline performance against each sustainability priority topic.
- The GI practitioner will inform the GI board and stakeholders on the system's current performance against the selected sustainability indicators.

### Deliverables

A baseline assessment plan (including a data collection plan) to serve as a basis for the baseline sustainability assessment and monitoring; and a baseline report evaluating the GI system's current sustainability performance.

## 5a. Monitoring frequency and assigning the responsible individuals

Once the indicator portfolio is defined, the GI practitioner will need to make a number of decisions for each indicator, including:

- monitoring frequency: whether the indicator is to be monitored on a quarterly, biannual or annual basis; and
- the individuals responsible for gathering the information that is needed to calculate the indicators (e.g. staff members of the GI organization, external experts, stakeholders or allies, the GI practitioner). One assigned individual will be responsible for compiling all this information in a regular report to the GI board and internal or external GI stakeholders.



## 5b. Organizing the sources of information and methodology

The GI organization's staff members and their networks, stakeholders and potential allies may all help identify possible sources of information on indicators. The stakeholder consultation process and the research undertaken during the prioritization Phase may also indicate potential information sources. The GI practitioner should share all information regarding sources with the individuals responsible for the monitoring of indicators.

Information may be obtained from internal or external sources. Table 17 lists a number of external sources that are commonly used to obtain collective data for topics under different pillars. The list is non-exhaustive and may vary according to the GI system and its context.

**TABLE 17**

### Commonly used external sources for the monitoring of sustainability indicators

Pillar	External sources
Economic	Sector/industry economic performance records
	Economic think tanks and research institutions
	International trade statistics
	Ministry for the economy or government statistical bodies
	Local authorities/municipalities
	Control bodies
	Retailers, distributors, trade unions/guilds in the GI product sector
Governance	Government advisory bodies
	GI organization records
	Governance specialists
	Control bodies
Social	Social certification agencies
	Academic research institutions
	NGOs
	Cooperation agencies
	Local authorities/municipalities
Environmental	Environmental certification agencies
	Academic research institutions
	NGOs
	Cooperation agencies
	Authorities/ministry for the environment, government statistical bodies
	Local authorities/municipalities
	Public satellite data

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Consideration must be given to the systems and processes that should be established to continuously gather and process the required information in an efficient and easy way, as well as to the modalities of storing the data that will be collected, to ensure confidentiality and respect of national habeas data laws. The Toolkit offers templates for monitoring data; other Excel sheets can also be developed to register data. The individuals responsible for monitoring should present a proposal with sources of information and data collection and processing methods; this proposal should be reviewed by the GI practitioner and the organization’s staff. It may be necessary to obtain or process information that is currently not being captured or processed by the GI organization. The managers and board members of the GI organization should provide assistance to the practitioner and the actors responsible for monitoring in cases where there is reluctance to share the required information.

## 5c. Establishing the baseline assessment plan

The GI practitioner, the organization’s managers and selected individuals should now develop a baseline assessment plan establishing the system’s current performance against selected indicators and setting up a monitoring system. Information Box 30 provides an overview of the contents of such an assessment plan. The toolkit provides a template to organize the baseline assessment (See [Toolkit Box 15](#)).

### INFORMATION BOX 30



#### Contents of the baseline assessment plan

Ideally, a baseline assessment plan should include:

- a list of indicators by pillar and priority topic, with the rationale for their selection (e.g. the methodology used to choose them, the attributes that underlie their selection);
- the assigned individual responsible for producing each indicator information;
- the priority topic each indicator is monitoring (and its definition);
- information source(s);
- collection method;
- frequency of assessment;
- current availability of the information;
- frequency of submission of monitoring results; and
- potential partners interested in the topic and/or suppliers of data.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Data collection methods should ensure that data sources, collection methods and use (analysis, interpretation and reporting) are consistent. This requires first and foremost consistent definitions of indicators and of the variables used to calculate them; it may be necessary to review the list of indicators and adjust their description to the context.



Step 5  
Baseline assessment plan and performance monitoring





Clear definitions are particularly important for indicators that rely on qualitative and subjective information. For example, the questions in surveys should not vary too much from one survey to the next.

Some of the information needed to measure the indicators may not be readily available or accessible. Information may be:

- inexistent (no knowledge or sources, it must be built from scratch);
- insufficient or incomplete (additional information must be gathered or processed consistently);
- accessible but not currently used;
- available to be used; and
- already being used and analysed (the information may or may not be complemented).

If the required information is not available within a reasonable timeframe, the GI organization might adopt the following approaches:

- External estimations (obtained from the literature) can be used until own measurements become available (e.g. for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit produced).
- If the indicator itself cannot be measured yet, concentrate on the factors that may influence the GI system's performance against the topic (for example, if it is not possible to measure the amount of food lost, the production cost per unit can be analysed; if this cost is higher than usual, the practitioner may determine whether the rise in costs is due to losses during the production process).
- Gather samples to monitor the indicator (e.g. during an audit, inspection or focus measurement); these samples may provide information that could eventually explain issues concerning the entire production process (for example, contamination).

Regardless of the selected approach, it is essential to:

- undertake efforts to manage or understand the sustainability priority topic, even if the required information is not available; and
- keep in mind that the use of approximative data is a temporary solution, and that alliances should be built to obtain the “real” data.

Information regarding quantitative indicators can be collected using different scenarios, depending on data availability (see Information Box 31).

As part of the sustainability roadmap, the assessment plan should include strategies to improve the accessibility of information and enhance its analysis. Such strategies will improve the processes of data gathering and processing, and thus the quality of the monitoring and tracking. Not only the data collection methods, but also the priority topics, indicators and information used should be reviewed regularly, to continuously improve the GI system's sustainability (see [Phase 3](#)).

## INFORMATION BOX 31



### Scenarios for the baseline assessment of quantitative indicators

Depending on the scenario (A. the information is readily available, B. the information is obtainable and C. the information must be constructed and processed from scratch), different approaches can be considered to calculate quantitative indicators:

#### Scenario A: information on the quantitative indicator is readily available

The GI organization has sufficient historical information to establish a baseline for the indicator (data for the previous two to three years). Based on this historical information, and considering the requirements and examples proposed in the database, the person responsible (which may be the GI practitioner) can start measuring the indicator. The assigned individual in charge of collecting and analysing both historical and current information for the given indicator must calculate the current value of the indicator, which is the indicator baseline. A note will be made as to how frequently can the indicator be calculated, the lag to obtain results and how feasible is to obtain it in the desired frequency.

#### Scenario B: information on the quantitative indicator is obtainable

The GI organization does not currently have the information needed to establish a baseline, but relevant information and comparable data can be obtained from secondary sources (e.g. studies published by public authorities, allies or other stakeholders; data on the sustainability performance of similar products, within or outside the territory, from different value chain actors such as retailers or manufacturers).

Sustainability programmes or initiatives that are being implemented in the territory can also be studied. For example, the practitioner may look at their complexity, stakeholder expectations as to the metrics used to measure their performance, etc. In addition, the priority topics of these initiatives may be compared to the GI organization's own sustainability challenges.

#### Scenario C: the information must be constructed and processed from scratch

The assigned individual will start by consulting data on the sustainability performance of similar products within or outside the territory (e.g. data published by retailers or manufacturers that sell or use similar products, or data from local stakeholders who were consulted during the prioritization process). It is advisable to choose someone who is familiar with the priority topic to carry out this analysis. Furthermore, it is important to assess the resources (human, technical and financial) that would be required to measure the indicator on an ongoing basis, as well as the network of contacts that should be developed.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

It is recommended to organize the assessment plan by pillar and indicator, as the indicators belonging to the same pillar are often assigned to the same individuals.

The assessment plan should be presented to the GI board for approval, for several reasons:

- GI board members will be aware of reporting periods, and know when to expect progress reports.



Step 5  
Baseline assessment plan and performance monitoring

- In case an individual responsible for monitoring resigns from this duty, their replacement will find a clear description of the type of information, monitoring methods etc. in the assessment plan; this will ensure consistency in the monitoring results.
- The GI organization will strengthen its capacities to use indicators based on consistent methodologies and systems.

Example Box 14 provides an example of a baseline assessment plan for two indicators; similar plans should be developed for all selected indicators.

#### EXAMPLE BOX 14



#### Baseline assessment plan for two indicators for Santander cocoa, Colombia

Pillar	Economic	Environmental
Priority topic	Diversification	Land management and use
Refined definition	Food security and additional income from cocoa are prioritized in the productive units	Good agricultural practices are promoted in the GI territory to improve the use of soil resources
Indicator	Other income (not related to production)	Agroforestry
Formula	Percentage of farmers' income not related to cocoa production, from other crops or animal husbandry, from renting out land, nurseries or equipment, from the provision of services such as training, from the sale of own labour, etc.	Number of cocoa trees/shade trees/other trees planted on the farm
Information source	This information must be generated.	Producer characterization study by Fedecacao
Assigned/responsible individual/topic leader	Pending	Individual responsible for assessing the environmental topics
State of the information	Deficient, incomplete	Available
Expected delivery date for indicator calculation	March 2022	March 2022
Method	Percentage of income not related to agricultural production (based on a sample of producers who were part of the socioeconomic characterization study)	Internal approval is needed to access information
Interested stakeholders/potential allies	Colombia's Agency for Rural Development, local government agriculture secretary	Fedecacao, Colombia's Agricultural Rural Planning Unit, Colombia's Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development
Observations	Characterization surveys and cocoa statistics (the percentage of income not related to agricultural production is unknown; however, there is information on the number of days that producers work off-farm)	None
Frequency	Yearly	Yearly

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## 5d. Calculating the baseline

Once the necessary information has been gathered, the GI practitioner and other assigned individuals will calculate the outcomes for all indicators for the current period (the average or the end observations for a quarter, semester or year).

The calculation of indicators may require contacting some GI stakeholders to obtain the necessary information. Conversations with internal and external GI stakeholders may be helpful to pinpoint appropriate benchmarks. The GI practitioner, the assigned individual(s) and GI staff members may then wish to review the significance of each data point from a long-term perspective. Building on this discussion, the assessment plan could be slightly adjusted or fine-tuned (in particular regarding data frequency), while target goals for some indicators may emerge (these will be defined in a final manner after the results of the baseline assessment are known).

When calculating the baseline, GI practitioners should consider the following recommendations:

- To ensure consistency, adhere to the formula and requirements that were defined when the indicators were selected. Nevertheless, it might be necessary to adjust some variables, sources of information, units of measurement, etc. when calculating the baseline. Any modifications should be integrated into the Toolkit as a new indicator (see in [Tab 4.2.1 "Filtering ind-Economic"](#), [Tab 4.2.2 "Filtering ind-Social"](#), [Tab 4.2.3 "Filtering ind-Governance"](#), [Tab 4.2.4 "Filtering ind-Environment"](#) in the Toolkit and [Toolkit Box 13](#)).
- Once the baseline has been calculated, verify whether the results are coherent with the reality of the GI system's perceived performance. If not, mistakes may have been made. This is especially important for indicators that have never been measured before. In case of doubt, stakeholders who are familiar with the indicators and topic in question may be asked to validate the results.
- The baseline calculation is also an opportunity to review the selection of indicators. In certain cases, the monitoring results are not easily explainable or do not provide the information that is needed to make decisions. The monitoring results of every indicator should be thoroughly analysed, as there are cases in which a single indicator does not explain overall performance against a particular topic. Here, reviewing multiple indicators simultaneously may clarify the topic's current state and challenges. For example, when analysing producers' profitability, market prices and economic cycles should also be analysed in order to reach strong conclusions.
- If the calculation of an indicator requires too many resources (financial, technical or timewise), the indicator may be discarded or modified. The first calculation of an indicator is generally more time-consuming than subsequent calculations, when measuring and data collection systems have been put in place.

At this stage, it is important to consider the modalities of data storage and treatment (considering the quantity of data and the frequency of data collection); the GI practitioner should examine these modalities and present them to the board for approval. The Toolkit



offers a method to register monitoring results, but other types of Excel sheets can also be used to register data. All data should be processed anonymously, though collective analysis, in line with national privacy laws.

#### TOOLKIT BOX 15



##### Baseline assessment

Go to **Tab 5.1 "Baseline"** of the toolkit. This tab provides a template to define the Assigned individuals that will be in charge of baseline assessment and indicator monitoring. It is important to account for relevant information such as date of calculation or sources current / expected information availability to ensure monitoring will be possible going forward.

Defining the current or Baseline period (Period 0) it is also crucial to establish yearly goals and gathering data with the necessary frequency. See [Information Box 14](#) as well.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

## 5e. Assessing performance and gap analysis

The results of the baseline assessment provide an overview of a GI system's current performance against priority topics; they also offer an insight into the progress that needs to be made during the improvement phase, and the objectives that should ultimately be achieved.

A gap analysis is the process of comparing actual performance (against economic, social, environmental and governance topics) with desired performance to establish what is missing and define strategies to achieve the desired objectives. For each indicator, the gap analysis should demonstrate:

- the reasons behind the current performance level; and
- the desired performance level, to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe (although the goals will be defined during the improvement phase, in collaboration with allies).

### Understanding the reasons behind performance levels

It is crucial for GI organizations to analyse challenges and strengths, and identify the practices or limitations that lead to certain sustainability performances (good or bad). For example, it is important to evaluate the possible influence (positive or negative) of the GI organization's vision and of the GI specifications, among other factors.

All stakeholders, and in particular the GI organization and its members, have a high degree of responsibility in the definition and implementation of the roadmap is an essential aspect for the roadmap definition and implementation; stakeholders' respective degrees and types of responsibilities depend on the type of initiative and GI organization.



For every indicator, both internal and external factors may influence progress and achievements. Some external factors may be out of human control. For example, price swings or extreme climate events may lead to confusing short-term conclusions when evaluating a GI system's overall performance. In such cases, moving averages may be more appropriate to assess indicator performance.

Thus, the assessment of a system's current performance against each priority topic requires:

- a historical perspective to evaluate possible trends or cycles;
- a collective evaluation by the members of the GI organization and selected allies of the relative contribution of human actors (internal and external stakeholders of the GI system) or external forces (e.g. natural conditions).

## Evaluating performance gaps

The understanding of current performance gaps will be a key input when defining targets and goals for each indicator during the next phase (the improvement phase). The gap analysis must consider, among other elements:

- the need to achieve progress;
- the risk of inaction and maintaining current performance;
- good practices of competitors, product category leaders or other stakeholders; and
- the vision of the management team.

Establishing both current and desired levels of performance for each indicator may require discussions with specialists and GI stakeholders, and determining whether the current performance is satisfactory or not may be difficult. Industry benchmarks may be useful to determine the gap between current and desired performance levels. Other useful information may be drawn from sustainability reports by major industry players (local and international) e.g. the timeframes used for analysis, or the short- and longer-term perspectives regarding different priorities and indicators.

## Reporting on the baseline assessment

The report on the baseline assessment should list the results of the assessment for each indicator and provide an evaluation of the system's current performance against each priority topic, with an interpretation of the reasons behind this performance and an indication of possible progress. In addition, it is recommended to include an evaluation of whether the performances can be attributed to internal or external stakeholders, or linked to trends or crises that are beyond the stakeholders' control.

A GI system's performance against priority topics may be evaluated and presented using a traffic light scale, whereby different weights are assigned to the various indicators for each priority topic. Traffic light scales may be used for both assessment and monitoring, as well as later on for communication. Table 18 presents two example.



For each indicator, the GI organization should define its desired performance levels based on targets, ambition, risks and capacities to make changes; levels of acceptance might change as the GI organization evolves.

**TABLE 18**
**Examples of traffic light reporting on indicator and/or topic performance**

Example 1		
		Comments (examples)
Highly satisfactory (HS)	Expectations are surpassed.	The performance is due to the strong engagement of GI producers.
Satisfactory (S)	The minimum desired or possible performance (based on industry benchmarks) is achieved.	The performance was influenced by exceptional weather conditions this year.
Unsatisfactory (U)	The current performance level does not meet expectations.	The performance was affected by sanitary crisis.
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	The current performance level remains well below minimum expectations.	The performance was affected by an external, uncontrollable factor.

Example 2		
		Comments (examples)
Compliance/satisfactory	The performance is due to strong engagement of all producers.	
Noncompliant/ unsatisfactory	The performance is mainly due to external factors.	

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

At this stage, the assessment of the GI system's current performance against each sustainability priority topic can be presented to the GI board. The board may provide additional input and validate the methodology and scoring system. At this point, the targets for each indicator have not yet been defined (that is done during the following phase), but the feedback from the GI board serves as input for their further definition.

## Communication with stakeholders and possible allies to prepare for improvement

Once the baseline assessment has been presented and approved by the GI board, the GI organization should consider how to communicate with both internal and external GI stakeholders, to create the conditions for possible cooperation. The use of a traffic light system (see Table 18) to present the baseline results may facilitate communication and discussions.

### Internal stakeholders

The GI board should discuss the results of the baseline assessment and possible initiatives that could be undertaken by individual internal stakeholders. The discussion with internal stakeholders may shed light as to the role that could be played by the GI organization in the preparation of the improvement phase (see Information Box 32). For example, a GI organization may act as an influencer or facilitator to create the conditions for the implementation of initiatives at the level of individual production units; this may be done by developing public policy alliances, setting up cooperation programmes or even by refining the GI product specifications.

#### INFORMATION BOX 32



##### Possible roles of the GI organization during the preparation of the implementation phase

- **Leader/executor:** the GI organization is the driver and primary responsible in addressing the topic.
- **Articulator:** the GI organization is instrumental in establishing alliances and partnerships with stakeholders to address the topic.
- **Influencer:** the GI organization actively lobbies and presents the priority topic to those entities that may have the resources or ability to address the topic.
- **Supporter:** the GI organization is part of an extended group that addresses the topic, and acts on demand.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The discussion with the GI board and internal stakeholders should provide additional insights into performance gaps for certain indicators or topics, the urgency to tackle highly unsatisfactory performances, and possible public and private allies with whom to address challenges through joint initiatives, programmes or policies.





## External stakeholders

Previously identified potential allies can be contacted individually to provide an update on those findings of the baseline assessment exercise that are most relevant to them, and discuss possible ways to address the challenges faced by the GI system. External stakeholders may be approached through formal communications, thanking them for their participation in the consultation process and presenting a summary of findings, thus opening opportunities for in-depth, individual discussions.

The priority topics and performance gaps identified during the baseline assessment process can serve as material to approach policymakers, local authorities or cooperation agencies, highlighting the need to tackle those topics for which performance is unsatisfactory. This engagement will prove highly useful when developing the improvement plans for each priority topic.



# Phase 3

## Improvement

### OBJECTIVE

Conceiving and implementing initiatives that promote continuous improvement along the sustainability pathway, based on selected priorities and indicators. This phase includes the regular evaluation of these initiatives, priorities and indicators, as well as of the overall sustainability roadmap to ensure its relevance and adapt it to changes in the GI system's conditions and context.

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Establish a network of contacts, identify avenues for cooperation and formulate initiatives to improve the GI organization's sustainability performances, based on a set of objectives;
- adjust the GI system's sustainability roadmap in response to changes in its conditions and context;
- evaluate the implementation of initiatives to ensure their effectiveness; and
- communicate effectively on the progress made and on remaining challenges.

### ACTIONS

- Define the goals per sustainability priority and indicator;
- develop the initiatives that must be undertaken to achieve the targets and goals;
- identify and reach out to stakeholders and potential allies who might collaborate, financially or otherwise;
- identify the modalities for the GI organization to communicate on progress made (to the benefit of the organization);
- develop a communication plan to engage with internal and external stakeholders with two key objectives: maintaining their engagement and interest in the sustainability roadmap, and promoting the creation of partnerships and alliances to work towards sustainability goals; and
- identify the required changes, and set out the evolution of the roadmap.

### DELIVERABLES

- A detailed improvement plan and related monitoring system towards enhanced performances for each priority topic and its selected indicator(s); and
- a communication plan to maintain alliances and realize their benefits for the GI system.

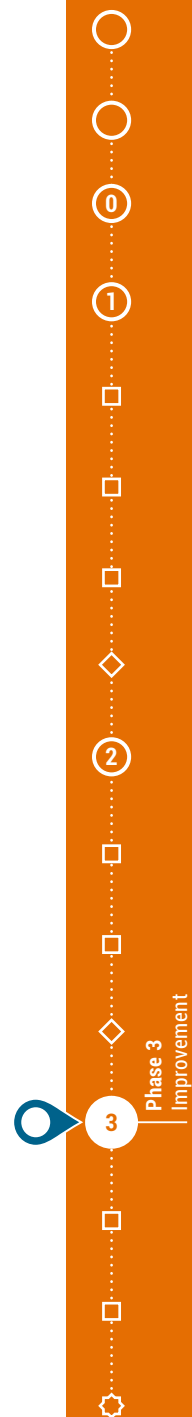
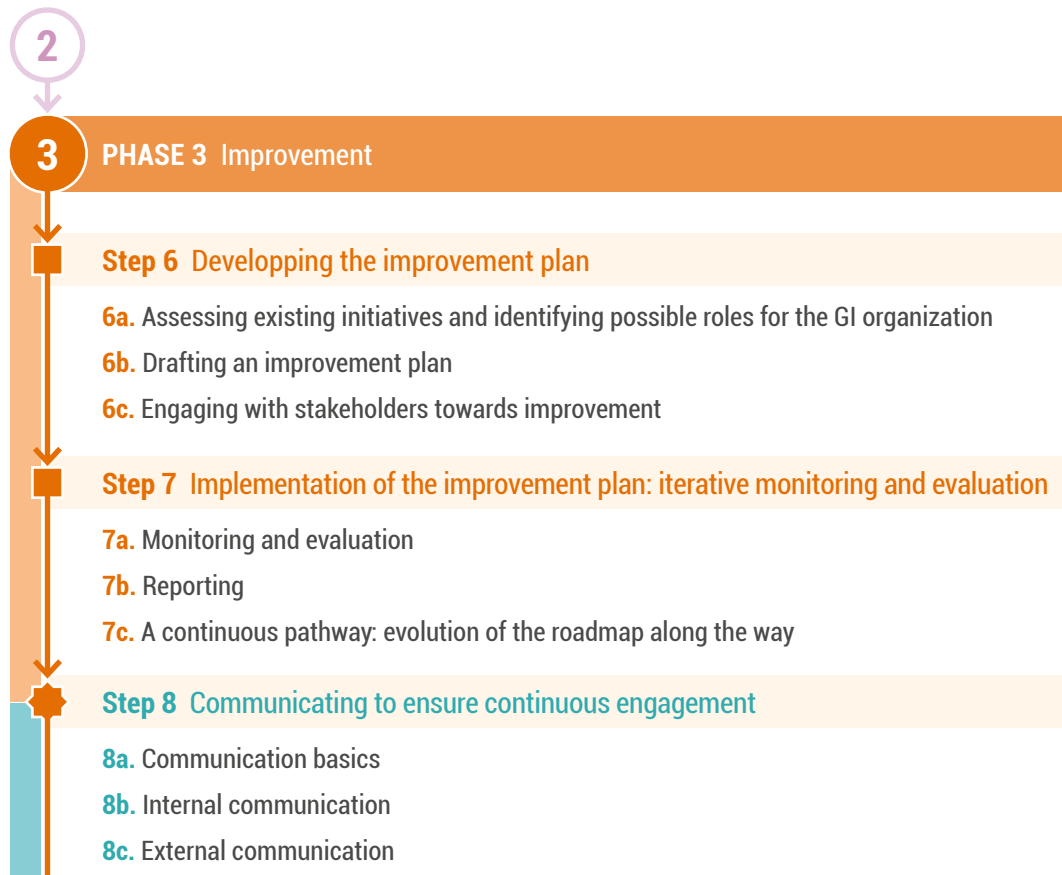


Figure 18 provides an overview of the flow of Phase 3.

**FIGURE 18**

**Overview of the improvement phase**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Step 6

# Developing the improvement plan

### Objective

Develop coordinated, viable plans for initiatives and actions that address all selected priority topics in the short, medium or long term.

### Actions

- Identify current initiatives, their contributions to the priority topics, and possible allies;
- define the roles of the GI organization and establish short- and long-term goals for each topic;
- establish a set of actions, contacts and possible avenues of cooperation to improve the sustainability performance of the GI organization and system; and
- consult stakeholders to fine-tune the improvement plan and implement actions.

### Deliverable

A map of the initiatives and actions to address priority topics led, articulated or influenced by the GI organization, and a detailed plan to improve performance for each priority topic (with a list of actors who will support the implementation of the roadmap).

## 6a. Assessing existing initiatives and identifying possible roles for the GI organization

### Mapping current initiatives that address the selected priorities

The information collected during [Step 1](#) and [Step 2](#) (on initiatives led by different GI stakeholders) as well as during [Step 4](#) and [Step 5](#) (baseline assessment against selected priorities) is now reviewed to map current and past initiatives addressing the priority topics. The GI practitioner can refer to the notes taken during the stakeholder consultations (see [Example Box 1](#) and the forms provided in the Toolkit, and [Toolkit Box 7](#) and [Toolkit Box 8](#)), as well as further research specifically related to priority topics.

The map of existing and past initiatives will contain the following elements:

- **associated priority topic and indicators (if applicable):** this analysis will identify “orphan” priority topics (i.e. topics for which no initiative has been taken). This may apply to governance priority topics that are internal to the GI organization;
- **estimate of the level of impact** (e.g. limited, significant, wide);
- **starting year and duration**, to determine if the initiative may be combined with other initiatives or if it should be extended, based on sustainability roadmap;



- **scope of the intervention** (e.g. the GI system, one GI organization, a portion of the production process, a product line, a specific group of people, etc.); and
- **the actor(s) implementing each initiative, and the stakeholders involved**, to identify potential key allies; current or past initiatives led by the GI organization or by GI producers could become models for future programmes or for other GI producers. It is important to evaluate the impact and costs of such experiences, to engage more producers.

The GI practitioner and the GI board should evaluate how each existing initiative may be integrated in the GI sustainability roadmap. The following questions can guide this evaluation, and proposals for new initiatives can be included in the mapping (see [Toolkit Box 16](#)):

- Can the initiative be reviewed in order to boost its impact on the priority topics, or can its duration be extended to include it in the GI system's sustainability roadmap?
- For an initiative led by external actors: how can the GI organization play a role in the initiative?
- What are the possibilities to obtain financial support towards implementation?

The mapping of initiatives allows the GI practitioner to identify success factors and potential allies. This helps:

- define ways to take advantage of past experiences;
- capitalize on opportunities and reduce the risks the GI organization is exposed to;
- align the expectations of the GI organization and those of potential allies for future joint initiatives;
- make decisions on the type of alliances needed; and
- based on the performance assessment and gap analysis made under Step 5, formulate viable indicator goals; this allows the GI organization to identify challenges for each priority topic.

Individual and collective initiatives by other actors in the GI value chain may be particularly relevant, as they may contribute to some priority topics and goals. These actors may act as pioneers, paving the way for other GI stakeholders to embark upon similar initiatives and efforts towards improving the sustainability of the GI system. Learning from experience helps gain confidence, and the GI organization may encourage the replication of existing or past initiatives by other actors in the value chain. The monitoring of existing and past efforts can be a part of the gradual or iterative improvement of the roadmap.

### **Analysing the maturity of each topic and identifying gaps in initiatives**

The analysis of existing and past initiatives helps determine the maturity level of each priority topic, in other words, evaluate the degree to which a topic is being addressed. This evaluation will help the practitioner identify priority topics for which initiatives or actions are lacking (to be addressed in the roadmap) and determine the impact of the different initiatives for each topic.

Information Box 33 provides some questions that will help determine the maturity level for each topic. The results of this evaluation can be presented in a mapping table (see [Toolkit Box 16](#)).

### INFORMATION BOX 33



#### Assessing the maturity level of priority topics

The maturity level of a priority topic indicates whether this topic has been addressed by the GI organization or GI stakeholders, and whether these initiatives have produced positive results. The following questions may help identify the maturity level of each topic:

- a. Has a risk analysis or analysis of opportunities associated with this topic been carried out?
- b. Are there current actions or initiatives that address the challenges associated with this topic?
- c. Is there a specific process or procedure that guides the actions dealing with this topic?
- d. Are the initiatives undertaken by the GI organization or potential allies producing the expected results and impacts?
- e. Is there a policy, code or statute that regulates activities related to this topic?
- f. Are there management indicators in place to review progress for each topic? Are they being monitored periodically?

The answers to these questions will allow the practitioner to determine the topic's maturity level:

- 1. Low maturity:** GI stakeholders and/or the GI organization have achieved little or no progress in addressing the priority topic: no, or not enough, initiatives are addressing the priority topic.
- 2. Medium maturity:**
  - the GI organization and/or stakeholders have begun addressing the topic, but more formal, systematic actions are needed, in addition to developing a system to monitor the results of the initiatives; or
  - some initiatives are in place but no positive results can be seen so far, meaning that these initiatives need to be adjusted.
- 3. High maturity:** the GI organization and/or stakeholders have developed initiatives and implemented actions, generating results that are or can be monitored, and their impacts are positive.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Determining the level of maturity for each priority topic can help the GI organization identify the best actions to include in the roadmap. Table 19 provides some suggestions. The analysis of the maturity of topics will also indicate whether there are actions missing for certain topics. Once the goals for each topic are defined, new actions or activities to be included in the roadmap can be defined.

Among these potential actions are the revision of the GI specifications to address specific issues, especially related to environmental and social aspects. Updating GI specifications



or introducing new rules applies to all GI producers in a controlled manner (through certification), and can therefore be an important measure, both in terms of impact and in terms of communication (through certification and labelling). Hence, the GI practitioner and board should consider whether priority topics are directly impacted by certain rules (or the lack thereof); if so, a discussion with all members should be launched to determine whether it is feasible to revise the specification.

**TABLE 19**
**Possible actions, according to the maturity level of priority topics**

Maturity level	Possible actions	Situation
Low	<b>The GI organization must formulate concrete steps that should be taken to address the topic, taking into consideration its internal capacities and possible alliances.</b> <b>Two main approaches can be adopted (possibly combined), depending on the topic:</b>	
	<b>1.</b> Gradual implementation of initiatives: start with a limited number of initiatives and/or stakeholders, and gradually increase the number of actions and actors over time (with indicators).	This approach is particularly appropriate for complex topics, for which not all GI stakeholders are ready to engage in the needed changes or where actions need to be tested and adjusted before they are extended to all.
	<b>2.</b> Addressing the priority topic in a comprehensive manner: implement a variety of initiatives for quick and visible impacts in the short or medium term.	The comprehensive approach may require the full engagement of actors in the value chain, considerable investments and the support of different allies. Indeed, where a variety of initiatives and actions are adopted, these should be developed in partnership with different allies.
Medium	<b>The GI organization should identify existing initiatives and analyse their impacts.</b> <b>A detailed workplan building on these existing initiatives may be developed in collaboration with the implementing actors, with the aim of improving or extending them.</b> <b>Different situations may coexist:</b>	
	<b>1.</b> Existing actions involve only some actors in the value chain; they should be extended to all actors to maximize impacts.	It is important to organize sharing knowledge and experiences among all the actors to learn from the initiators.
	<b>2.</b> The actors implementing the initiatives have lost interest or lack capacities; the importance of the actions should be stressed, support (knowledge, equipment, etc.) should be provided and impacts should be monitored to highlight results and recognize efforts made.	Alliances are crucial to provide support for the implementation of actions and the monitoring and demonstration of results.
	<b>3.</b> Assess the appropriateness of current initiatives and adapt or replace them as needed.	This approach may be useful for cases where actions were appropriate and gave results at some point, but where the GI system and/or organization have evolved and actions are no longer generating results.

Follows on the next page →

Maturity level	Possible actions	Situation
High	<b>Even when maturity levels are high, efforts may be made to improve communication on actions and progress made. Different approaches may be adopted:</b>	
	1. Extend the initiative or modify the actions to increase their reach and impact.	This approach may be useful for cases where the original initiative did not involve all stakeholders.
	2. Develop initiatives that can be improved by adapting them to the evolution or context of the GI system.	This approach can be adopted when existing actions have functioned well until now, but may be adjusted to better address needs in an evolving context.
	3. The impacts achieved are satisfactory and can be maintained without additional efforts: in such cases, the priority topic may be replaced by another topic in the sustainability roadmap.	In this case, the monitoring of the indicators for the original topic priority should continue during the next cycle(s) of the roadmap, to ensure that performance does not deteriorate; resources can be devoted to another priority topic.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## Review the GI organization's role in the initiative

The SSGI emphasizes that it is crucial to create the right conditions for GI organizations and producers to cooperate with different stakeholders, to make significant progress towards the selected sustainability priorities. Most GI organizations do not count with the financial or human resources needed to implement ambitious sustainability initiatives. However, they can leverage their standing as representative, legitimate organizations to reach a large number of producers and engage them as actors in wide-ranging sustainability initiatives.

Together with the board, the GI practitioner should evaluate the GI organization's expected roles for each priority topic (see also [Information Box 32](#)). It is important to consider the organization's strengths, which include human or financial resources, relationships, representativity, capacity to influence, governance and ability to develop sustainability programmes that address each of the chosen sustainability priorities. The development of programmes for topics with low maturity levels tends to take longer and require an influencer role. For topics with a higher maturity level, the capacity and interest of the GI organization to assume expected roles must be analysed. For topics under the governance pillar, the GI organization itself should lead efforts, as external actors should not be given power over the organization's governance system.

The analysis of expected roles will help engage stakeholders based on their respective strengths to address priority topics and goals. The roles of the various actors – which may change over time – must be validated by the GI board.





## TOOLKIT BOX 16

**Mapping current and possible sustainability initiatives**

Existing initiatives (currently being implemented, or developed but yet to start) related to the goals of each topic can be listed in **Tab 6.1 “Improvement plan”** of the toolkit. For each topic, the following information should be provided:

- Actions/initiative/programme (existing or to be launched). Include the name of the initiative, not the detailed description. Use a name that is meaningful for all stakeholders. After including current actions, the GI practitioner should evaluate whether those initiatives will lead to the achievement of the selected goals; if not, new actions and initiatives must be developed.
- Coverage of the initiative: stage of the initiative, stakeholders, geography and other relevant variables. For example, the scope of an initiative related to the health and safety of workers may be limited to operations staff, while an initiative to reduce the costs of inputs may concern only one raw material, rather than all purchased materials.
- Estimated impact: limited/significant/large.
- Topic maturity: after listing all the initiatives related to a topic, analyse the GI organization's maturity for each topic (see [Information Box 33](#)). The level of maturity depends on the goals defined for each topic; thus, two GI organizations that have implemented the same initiatives may have different levels of maturity if their goals are different.
- Starting date: year and month.
- Role of the GI organization: leader, articulator, influencer or supporter (see [Information Box 32](#)). If the GI organization assumes the role of leader/executor, a project manager must be appointed.
- If the GI organization is not the initiative's leader, the actor(s) that will lead/execute the initiative must be identified.
- List other relevant actors that are currently part of the initiative (e.g. the GI organization or external stakeholders).
- Possible funding: if financial resources are needed to implement the initiative, describe possible sources of funding.
- Goals: list the goals pursued by the initiative.

Go to **Tab 6.4 “Initiative Selection”** of the toolkit. Follow instructions to select most promising and impactful initiatives that may have greater impact on topic challenges and selected indicators.

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

**6b. Drafting an improvement plan****Defining goals for each priority**

The goals and their related actions must be discussed with possible partners, taking into account the GI organization's expected role in addressing each priority. Irrespectively of these discussions, the GI organization should develop its own views on short- and



medium-term goals for each priority (see Information Box 34). At this stage, it is crucial to have clear proposals for the roadmap, based on:

- the baseline assessment plan performed under [Step 5](#);
- results of current programmes and initiatives;
- the maturity level for each priority;
- advice from knowledgeable institutions or individuals; and
- publicly known priorities of government agencies.

#### INFORMATION BOX 34



##### Defining goals

A goal or a target is a state that is expected to be achieved in the future and is measured based on indicators. The achievement of goals requires a concerted effort of implementing one or more initiatives, policies and/or activities that take into account the GI system's needs and expectations, but also its capacity for implementing such actions. There are two steps to defining a target:

- define the long-term goal and deadline (e.g. halve carbon emissions by 2030); and
- decompose the long-term goal into medium- or short-term goals (e.g. reduce carbon emissions by 20 percent by 2025, and by 6 percent annually from 2026 to 2030).

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

Industry standards may be useful to determine goals. GI stakeholders and category leaders should be asked about their short- and longer-term perspectives regarding different priorities and indicators. It may also be useful to review the performance assessment and gap analysis made under [Step 5](#), as well as sustainability reports from major industry players (local and international).

Based on this information, the GI organization should determine (on itself or in cooperation with allies) short-term (one year) and medium-term (five year) goals for all priority topics, and their associated indicators. Each goal may be associated with a set of products, results, outcomes and impacts that may positively affect one or more of the indicators associated with each priority topic.

### Developing new initiatives to reach the goals

Having defined short- and medium-term goals, the next step is to determine what is needed to achieve the proposed goals by improving or adding to the existing initiatives listed during the previous mapping exercise.

Based on the analysis of existing initiatives and of the GI organization's roles, as well as the definition of the goals and further consultations (with the GI board and staff members, and stakeholders internal and external to the value chain), the GI practitioner should determine where and how the organization (and possibly allies) can address orphan



priorities or priorities that have not been fully addressed. This evaluation should take into account the organization's capacities and needs for support to find the most cost-effective way to achieve the goals.

New actions and initiatives may require additional resources; such resources may be provided through technical assistance to enterprises, individual or collective investment plans, or financial support from private or public funds.

Among the first actions to consider is the possible revision of the GI specifications to verify whether existing (or missing) rules impact the economic, social or environmental dimensions of the GI system and territorial sustainability. If so, a discussion with all members should be launched, as the GI specifications directly concern the GI organization and its members.

The reflection on possible gaps may also lead to the modification of the GI organization's roles or the creation of alliances with other stakeholders (see Information Box 35). Goals should be differentiated based on whether they require short-, medium- or long-term actions (see Information Box 36).

#### INFORMATION BOX 35



##### Combining roles: alliances between the GI organization and external stakeholders

In cases where the GI organization or a small share of its members have only developed marginal (yet successful) initiatives, it may be necessary to create alliances with cooperation agencies or other stakeholders to obtain more resources and escalate these initiatives to involve more GI producers. The GI organization may become the leader of the alliance's initiatives. Meanwhile, in cases where the GI organization has not developed any initiatives, however small, there might be a need for technical cooperation agencies or research institutions to devise effective ways to address sustainability topic.

*Source:* Authors' own elaboration.

To develop new initiatives or actions that can be led or facilitated by the GI organization, the GI practitioner should:

- differentiate between internal priorities and priorities that may be addressed in collaboration with potential allies;
- identify partners to implement actions, depending on the expected role of the GI organization (see the next paragraphs); and
- determine the timeframe and modalities of actions: immediate, gradual (progressively increasing the scope), iterative (repeated with a certain frequency), continuous (integrated in routine operations), etc.

## INFORMATION BOX 36



### Short- and long-term sustainability actions

It is important to distinguish between short-term actions (actions that are considered the most urgent and can be implemented immediately) and long-term actions (which may build on the results of earlier actions and are geared towards achieving long-term goals).

Short-term actions may result in quick accomplishments, which will encourage the GI organization and its partners to move forward; in addition, these early results can be used in external communication strategies, to generate interest in the initiative. Thus, early achievements will generate momentum for GI organization's sustainability roadmap and boost its internal and external credibility.

*Source:* Authors' own elaboration.

## Putting together the improvement plan

The GI practitioner can now develop a draft improvement plan with sustainability initiatives or actions to address priority topics. The list of initiatives may include both existing (improved or more ambitious) and new initiatives. For each priority topic, the draft improvement plan should specify:

- the roles that the GI organization will assume: leader, articulator, influencer or supporter (see [Information Box 32](#));
- the external stakeholders who may partner with the GI organization to work towards the goals for each indicator, and their strengths. Depending on the topic, potential partners may be public authorities, civil society, academic and research institutions, NGOs, cooperation agencies or actors in the value chain.
- for actors in the GI value chain, it is important to identify possible leaders or pioneers who have already taken action regarding the sustainability topic; these actions may be replicated or extended, for example by defining gradual improvement plans.

The improvement plan should also define the actions that must be taken to measure key indicators for which no data currently exist. The definition of these actions may constitute a specific part of the improvement plan.

Table 20 provides a simple format to present the information for each priority topic.

The improvement plan should be presented to the GI board for consideration and feedback, including on the proposed responsibilities for staff members to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the plan, and nurture alliance with potential partners.



TABLE 20

**Improvement plan for a selection of priority topics – Examples**

Topic	Role of the GI organization	Actions/initiatives (existing or to be launched)	Possible internal leaders (GI organization or other actor in the value chain)	Goals	Indicators & baseline assessment	Potential partners
Water	Articulator	Implement actions to improve water efficiency and increase capacities to reuse water. Tasks: ...	...	Reuse 50 percent of all water by 2020.	The current rate of reuse is estimated at 5 percent.	Environmental cooperation agencies, actors in the value chain with similar priorities ...
Local skill development	Leader	Invest in initiatives to boost the skills of the local workforce. Tasks: ...	...	Launch a formal programme with local accredited educational institutions, focusing on GI production techniques and efficiency.	There are no formal training programmes (in-person or virtual) related to GI production.	Technical cooperation agencies, government agencies, local educational institutions.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## 6c. Engaging with stakeholders towards improvement

At this point, the GI board, the GI practitioner, the GI organization's staff members and the persons assigned for each priority topic should solicit stakeholders to share their ideas on how to confront the challenges facing the GI system. The graphs and other materials that resulted from the consultation process may be used to start these conversations (see for example [Tab 3.1.3 \(Joint Interest Review\)](#), detailed in [Toolkit Box 9](#) and [Toolkit Box 10](#)).

### Engaging with internal GI stakeholders

The methods of engagement with internal GI stakeholders may vary depending on the size of the GI organization and the number of GI producers involved. It is crucial that the organization's staff members not only understand the importance of improving the sustainability roadmap, but also that they know that they can provide suggestions on how to devise new approaches to confront the defined priorities. Such input can be provided during general meetings with GI producers or during specific meetings with groups of stakeholders, led by the GI practitioner and department heads if it is the case. These meetings

may also help identify pioneering efforts and (un)successful experiences, which may be taken into consideration when formulating the improvement plan and defining realistic goals.

It is particularly important that the actions and initiatives to be led by the GI organization are validated by the GI producers and staff members, and especially actions that concern internal management or require efforts from GI producers.

Selected improvement actions may require the modification of certain GI specifications. As such modifications concern all GI producers, any modification should be discussed in a participative manner with all organization members (and possibly also with key partners in the value chain, depending on the specification). Public authorities may also be involved in the modification of specifications, to facilitate resulting changes at the regulatory level.

## Engaging with external GI stakeholders

To engage with external GI stakeholders, background information and proposals for engagement should be prepared. Concept notes for possible joint initiatives will provide potential allies with information on the context of the initiative and its importance for the GI system, as well as its relevance to the stakeholder's own stated priorities. Information Box 37 proposes a structure for these concept notes.

### INFORMATION BOX 37



#### Structure of concept notes for potential partnerships (three to five pages)

##### Title

Example: *Working together towards the further adoption of environmentally friendly production practices in our territory*

##### Tips:

- The title should be attractive and arouse curiosity.
- The title should be engaging and recognize the role of the potential partner.
- The title should incorporate a sense of vision and purpose consistent with the stakeholder's views and priorities.

#### 1. Context (why)

Suggested content for this section (approximately one page):

- introduction of the GI organization (including its mission) and the GI producers;
- overview of the methodology used to prioritize sustainability priority topics (following the FAO/oriGIn's methodology);
- summary of the baseline assessment and of the GI system's current performance against selected topic(s), and overview of the challenges faced when trying to reach benchmarks or goals; and
- indication of how the indicators used for the baseline assessment can also be used to monitor performance under wider sustainability frameworks that may be relevant for the stakeholder (the SDGs, the GRI or other frameworks indicated by the stakeholder in its publications).

Follows on the next page →



## 2. Rationale for the proposed project/initiative/policy

Suggested content for this section (approximately half a page):

- summary of statements (e.g. mission), reports, policy directives or strategies of the stakeholder, or summary of previous consultations with the stakeholder, that illustrate the importance given by the stakeholder to the priority topic;
- the rationale behind the concept paper i.e. the need to work together on topics of mutual interest;
- the importance of the topic for both the GI system and the stakeholder (highlighting the consultation process);
- overview of how the GI organization can contribute to joint initiatives e.g. by providing management expertise, organizing direct contacts with GI producers, lending credibility, activating its network of contacts, etc.; and
- illustration of how a partnership between the GI organization and the stakeholder is appropriate in a wider context of cooperation between other entities in different parts of the world to address collective challenges.

## 3. Goals and objectives of the project/initiative/policy (what)

Suggested content for this section (approximately one page):

- suggested initiatives that may be undertaken in the short, medium and/or long term;
- definition of viable short-, medium- and long-term objectives, based on the baseline assessment;
- possible roles of the GI organization and stakeholder; and
- possibility for the stakeholder to provide feedback and suggestions.

## 4. Approach

Suggested content for this section (approximately half a page):

- the benefits of partnering with a grassroots organizations such as the GI organization that has developed its own sustainability strategy;
- demonstration of the fact that the bottom-up approach to sustainability is consistent with previously described priorities;
- information on innovative approaches to address challenges; and
- suggested indicators to measure progress, impacts and results.

## 5. Overview of activities and estimated budget (how)

Suggested content for this section (approximately one page):

- pathway to structure the project;
- possible activities to be carried out within one/two/three years;
- the need for reporting and evaluation, to learn from project implementation; and
- estimated budget (by budget year);
- possible additional allies interested in the project.

## 6. Background on the GI organization and contact information

Suggested content for this section (approximately half a page):

- history and context of the GI system, GI product and GI organization (number of GI producers, importance of the system in the territory, strengths of the GI organization...), highlighting legitimacy, transparency and other governance features (in function of the governance indicators); and
- contact information and proposal to continue discussions (e.g. meeting).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Concept notes often constitute a first step toward progressive engagement with stakeholders. The GI organization must be willing to incorporate the views of potential partners and other stakeholders into the project design; this may require changes to the concept notes. The modalities of the discussions with stakeholders may vary depending on the stakeholder involved, the priority topic and its baseline assessment, resources and the expected impact of the initiative. The GI organization should participate as a key actor in all discussions, and reach out to all potential partners.

A consistent engagement strategy can help GI organizations acquire additional capacities overtime. This will increase their ability to lead and articulate more ambitious programmes, and finance their own operations. As the GI organization gains more experience in developing and maintaining partnerships, its credibility among GI producers and stakeholders in the value chain and territory will grow.

Long-term objectives may be adjusted to take into consideration medium-term results; this adjustment may lead to the development of new capacities and strategies for the GI organization (see Example Box 15).

#### EXAMPLE BOX 15



##### Managing partnerships: the case of Café Marcala

The recognition of Café Marcala as a designation of origin in Honduras has promoted the economic development of the territory of origin. The GI organization for Marcala coffee leads a number of programmes financed by cooperation agencies and is an active participant in the *Mesa del Café*, an informal network where all actors in the territory discuss their activities and share experiences. In addition, the GI organization is a key interlocutor of public authorities, such as the intellectual property agency in Tegucigalpa.

The organization's ability to act as a relevant actor in sustainability partnerships has helped finance its staff and operations. The organization has developed an organizational strategy focusing on four key areas: institutional management (focusing on governance, communication with GI producers and the transfer of knowledge), promotion (value promise of the GI and narrative to stakeholders, storytelling), protection (traceability, communication and dealing with infringements), and alliance building and project development and implementation.

*Source:* Authors' own elaboration based on internal FAO reports of field missions and pilot testing (2022).

### Fine-tuning goals to finalize the improvement plan

The goals that were proposed by the GI practitioner and GI board have now been discussed with internal and external stakeholders; they can now be fine-tuned with the agreed short-, medium- and long-term objectives. The fine-tuning process requires a common understanding among allies of the goals and expected outcomes of the initiative. The fine-tuning exercise should produce a detailed description of the initiative, its duration and its phases, as well as of the roles of allies and how actions relate to the indicator.





The summary of all initiatives for all priority topics constitutes the GI organization's improvement plan; each initiative will require monitoring. Table 21 proposes a format that can structure this process.

TABLE 21

### Template for the improvement plan: monitoring initiatives and their relationship with priorities and indicators

Pillar	
Priority topic	
Topic definition	
Suggested role of the GI organization for the topic	<i>Leader/articulator/influencer (see prioritization – Step 3)</i>
<b>Initiative 1 to address the topic</b>	<b>Title of the initiative</b>
Description	<i>Description of the initiative</i>
Duration	<i>Number of years</i>
Contact/responsible with in the GI organization	<i>Name/area (may be same person as determined in Step 5)</i>
Allies/partners	<i>Names</i>
Has the initiative been structured?	<i>Y/N</i>
Starting date for implementation	<i>Date</i>
Expected completion date of implementation	<i>Date</i>
Next steps	<i>Activities required for the next stage of implementation or structuring</i>
Owner(s)	<i>Name(s)</i>
<b>Sustainability indicator(s) that will be affected by the initiative</b>	
Indicator 1	<i>Name of indicator, from the list of selected indicators for the priority topic</i>
Frequency of monitoring	<i>Quarterly/biannually/yearly (from Step 5)</i>
Indicator 2	<i>Name of indicator, from the list of selected indicators for the priority topic</i>
Frequency of monitoring	<i>Quarterly/biannually/yearly (from Step 5)</i>
Indicator 3, and so on	<i>Name of indicator, from the list of selected indicators for the priority topic</i>
<b>Initiative 2 to address the topic</b>	<b>Title of the initiative</b>
Description	<i>Description of the initiative</i>
Same format as for Initiative 1	...

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Some of the priorities identified may require additional study before wide-ranging, high-impact initiatives can be developed. This applies mostly to low-maturity topic priorities where experiences and the understanding of particular phenomena or of the impact of initiatives are limited. In these cases, the improvement plan may focus on the acquisition of the knowledge that is required to develop and implement impactful initiatives in the medium to long term (see Table 22).

TABLE 22

## Example of an improvement plan for low-maturity priorities

		PRIORITY TOPIC		
		Soil conservation		
Priority definition	Notes (Adjusted) definition	Soils are becoming more acid, which affects productivity		
Actions/initiative/ programme (existing or to be launched)	<i>As a topic can have more than one action, information must be provided for each action.</i>	The local research center is carrying out a study to diagnose how widespread the problem is in the territory.	Studies have been carried out by the local university on agronomic practices that counter soil acidification; pilots for measurement must be developed.	Review possibilities to adjust the GI specifications to incorporate new practices that counter soil acidification.
Scope of the initiative		Research and understanding	Research and understanding	Costbenefit analysis, risk assessment
Expected level of impact		Potentially high	Potentially high	Potentially high
Starting date		Started 6 months ago	6 months from now	6 months from now
Role of the GI organization		Supporter	Articulator	Leader
Other actors involved in the implementation		University, environmental authorities	Cooperation with selected GI producers. Funding from ministry of agriculture.	GI organization internal review study; cooperation with selected GI producers.
Topic maturity		Low		
Possible funding		Already funded	Agricultural authorities	Own funding
Goals		Develop maps that show where the problem is more acute.	Immediate: ensure funding (within 3 months) and define the scope of work (within one month). Results: in approx. 3 years.	Overview of costs in 6 months, to incorporate as input into pilot study.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Improvement plans are dynamic and may be modified in view of the results of their implementation, the need to adjust indicators to improve their effectiveness, or changing conditions within the GI system. These changes will be the result of the iterative monitoring and evaluation of the sustainability roadmap (see [Step 7](#)).



# Step 7

## Implementation of the improvement plan: iterative monitoring and evaluation

### Objective

Monitor the implementation of all sustainability initiatives and establish a system to systematically review the relevance and effectiveness of initiatives, goals, indicators and priorities.

### Actions

- Design a monitoring plan for each priority and initiative;
- each individual responsible for monitoring a priority reports on the progress made, the difficulties encountered and/or adjustments of initiatives or indicators needed;
- the GI practitioner coordinates the regular monitoring and review of initiatives (both those that are in place and those that still need to be implemented); and
- the GI board, members and allies are presented with regular reports (at least on a biannual basis).

### Deliverable

A monitoring system for all initiatives associated with all priority topics, and regular reports.

### 7a. Monitoring and evaluation

A regular evaluation must be carried out to establish not only whether the initiatives are being implemented adequately, but also whether these initiatives – even if implemented successfully – are having the expected impact on indicators and their respective sustainability performance. Therefore, a monitoring plan should be formulated for each priority topic.

For each priority topic, the monitoring plan should:

- assign a person to monitor the indicators for the topic;
- provide all information regarding performance against indicators to the GI practitioner, to feed into the Toolkit (see [Step 5](#));
- determine the frequency of evaluation (as established in the assessment plan or revised);
- make reference to relevant metrics over the course of time: the execution of activities (yes or no), budgets (percentage disbursed), other resources invested and execution times; and
- draw attention to possible difficulties or delays, with explanations and action plans to correct these.



The Toolkit provides a scorecard to facilitate monitoring for each indicator (see Toolkit Box 17), with the following elements:

- the set of selected indicators and their formulas;
- the individual responsible for monitoring the priority topic (i.e. the person who submits data on performance against the indicators to the GI practitioner, who gathers all the information);
- the allies with whom initiatives are being implemented (if any);
- the role assumed by the GI organization;
- the end of period (yearly) goals; and
- the frequency of measurement for each indicator and the appropriate field to tabulate the measurements.

#### TOOLKIT BOX 17



##### Monitoring the implementation of the improvement plan

GI practitioners and GI Boards may use different monitoring systems that best fit their needs. Toolkit provides an example of possible monitoring with visual aids to present to GI Board on Improvement advances on selected quantitative indicators.

Go to **Tab 7.1 "Monitoring - economic"** of the Toolkit to monitor the quantitative indicators associated with the economic priority topics.

- You can display all indicators and topics that are monitored on a quarterly, biannual or yearly basis. Go to the quarterly, biannual or yearly indicator frequency table. Click on the "+" sign on the left to display the respective table.
- Update each table by clicking on the respective purple button.
- Set the first period (period 1), that is the first applicable quarter, semester or year for which indicators will start being monitored.
- For all quantitative indicators, add expected indicator improvement percentage as yearly goals of each indicator based on baseline assessment information. Follow the instructions to convert baseline data into percentages of desired goals to use graphs.
- Graphs comparing indicator performance and yearly goals will be displayed for annual, biannual, or quarterly indicators. You can click on each indicator next to the respective graph to review performance.

*Note:* in case performance indicators are added or altered, the table can be updated. Users can clean the table by clicking on the gray box and upload the new indicator information by clicking on the purple button (Step b). It is recommended to make a backup of the table before cleaning, so that previously uploaded performance data that were not modified can easily be pasted back again.

Follow the same steps for social (**Tab 7.2 "Monitoring - social"**), environmental (**Tab 7.3 "Monitoring - environment"**) and governance (**Tab 7.4 "Monitoring - governance"**) topics/indicators.

*Source:* Authors' own elaboration.



## 7b. Reporting

The monitoring information for all indicators for all priority topics must be consolidated to gain a broad perspective on the overall implementation of the sustainability strategy and its performance. A report containing this information must be presented to the GI board, members and stakeholders, in line with the assessment and improvement plans.

The individual responsible for the consolidation of the measurements (which may be the GI practitioner or a member of the GI organization's staff) should gather the information on all the initiatives, indicators and priorities submitted by the assigned individuals on a regular basis, in line with the assessment plan and in collaboration with allies.

Progress reports for the GI organization's managers and/or board may be drafted using a system similar to the one used to report on baseline performance under Step 5. The level of performance can be presented by:

- a single indicator;
- priority topic (aggregating the related indicators);
- groups of priority topics that are considered to contribute to the same broad theme of the roadmap; and
- pillars (economic, social, environmental or governance) as the maximum level of aggregation; the higher the level of aggregation, the greater the need to consider trade-offs between topics.

For each aggregation, it is recommended to start by considering quantitative and qualitative indicators separately. Table 23 provides an example of a reporting format.

The Toolkit (see [Toolkit Box 17](#)) provides a framework for monitoring and consolidating all the information.

Several reasons may explain why indicator performance results exceed or fail to meet expectations. These reasons may be related to the initiatives of the roadmap (success or failure) or may be independent from the roadmap. Performance results may not be as expected due to events that are external to the GI system (e.g. adverse or unexpectedly favourable weather conditions); they may also be due to internal factors such as the over- or underperformance of the teams in charge of initiatives, or a misalignment between initiatives and actions, and challenges.<sup>9</sup> If the performance results do not meet expectations, an analysis of the reasons why should be carried out (e.g. the initiative was not the most appropriate one, the initiative was not well designed, etc.). [Information Box 38](#), after, provides a list of questions to guide this analysis. Based on the results of the analysis, some initiatives may be eliminated or redefined, while others may be continued with additional external controls.

<sup>9</sup> In many GI organizations, part of the remuneration of the team members varies in function of their performance results.

TABLE 23

### Example of a reporting format for the monitoring of the performance of a sustainability initiative based on indicator types

		Examples by indicator type	
		Quantitative	Qualitative
Highly satisfactory (HS)	Expectations are surpassed	>100% performance for the agreed goal/period	Documents and studies were presented in a satisfactory manner and well before the deadline, allowing the organization to reach out to potential allies within the time period.
Satisfactory (S)	Minimum desired and/or possible performance, based on industry or other benchmarks	80% to 100% performance for the agreed goal/period	Documents and studies were presented on time, with adequate information.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Performance below expectations given the current state of the GI system	40% to 80% performance for the agreed goal/period	Documents and studies were presented on time, but key information is missing.
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	Performance well below minimum expectations	<40% performance for the agreed goal/period	Documents and studies were presented on time, but key information is missing.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

As the GI organization gains experience in the implementation of initiatives, it will acquire a better understanding of the efficiency of the indicators used (in terms of both their measurement and their significance). Indeed, the monitoring process may reveal that certain indicators do not adequately measure performance against a certain goal. For example, if the target is to reduce carbon emissions and the indicator chosen is *Total indirect greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>)*, changes in production levels are not taken into account; if such changes happen, a better indicator may be *CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit produced*.

## 7c. A continuous pathway: evolution of the roadmap along the way

Sustainability is a continuous pathway, building on iterative efforts in an evolving context. The local and wider context in which GI systems operate is subject to continuous changes, and the implementation of the roadmap is an evolving process, too. Thus, it is important to regularly evaluate whether the priority topics, goals and initiatives of the roadmap are still valid, or whether they need revision to align them with an evolved context.

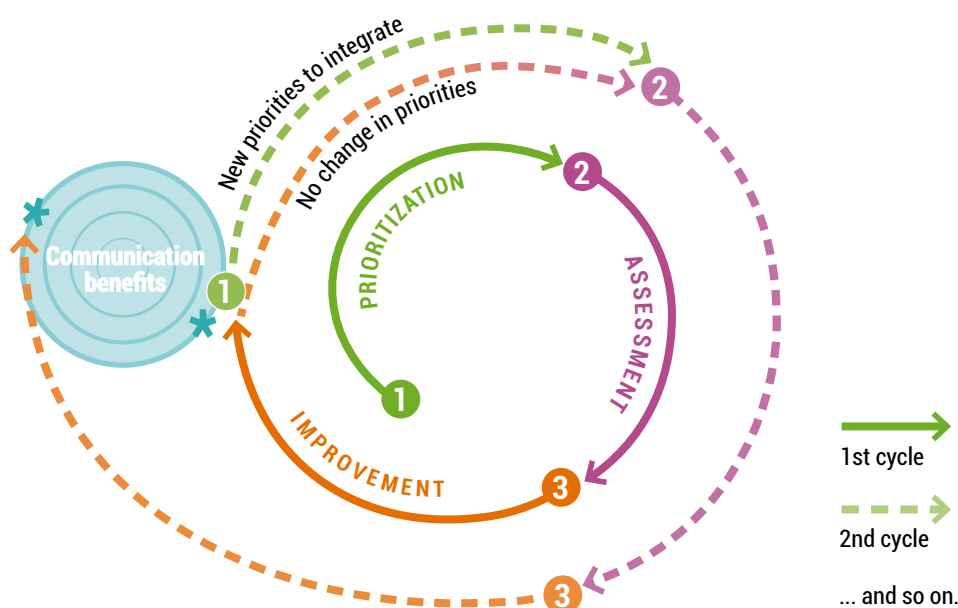
Indeed, the sustainability roadmap needs to be considered as a dynamic process (see Figure 19 below):



- The monitoring of the implementation of the improvement plan will eventually show that the goals have been achieved, or that the priority topics or initiatives must be (partially) reviewed.
- The achievement of goals may be communicated publicly (see [Step 8](#)). An example of an achievement is the adoption by all GI producers of more sustainable production or processing practices; these practices may be integrated in the GI specifications.
- For non-achieved goals, efforts towards gradual improvement and regular monitoring must go on.

FIGURE 19

### The dynamic process of the sustainability roadmap



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The GI practitioner, together with the assigned individuals responsible for monitoring, should regularly review the implementation process with this consideration in mind, questioning the effectiveness and appropriateness of initiatives/actions and priority topics along the road. Information Box 38 provides a number of questions that can guide this evaluation.

By evaluating sustainability performance and adjusting, where required, initiatives and programmes, GI organizations learn continuously. Goals and initiatives should be evaluated constantly to reflect this learning process and ensure that resources are used in a way that delivers the desired outcomes.

GI organizations must be ready to review the main assumptions that underlie their sustainability roadmap, as conditions may change over time. Over time, the indicators, goals and metrics that were selected at the start of the sustainability exercise may become irrelevant, which means that improvement plans may need reviewing or replacing. This exercise should be performed at least every five years for the overall roadmap, while the relevance of specific priority topics should be reviewed continuously, based on evolving conditions.

The continuous evaluation of the roadmap should involve regular consultations with stakeholders to discuss and agree on changes to initiatives or priorities. To organize these consultations, the GI practitioner may consult the following parts of this guide: [Step 2](#) on consultations regarding priority topics, [Step 3](#) for the validation of priorities, [Step 4](#) for the validation of the assessment plan, and [Step 5](#) for the validation of the improvement plan.

### INFORMATION BOX 38



#### Evaluating the implementation of the improvement plan: guiding questions

The following questions may guide the evaluation of the implementation of the improvement plan:

*For each sustainability initiative: is the initiative being implemented?*

**If not:**

- Why not?
- What corrections need to be made to the implementation design, activities, outcomes or goals?

**If yes:**

- Are there new learnings (new practices or approaches) to be considered from research, stakeholders or GI producers?
  - If yes, how can they be integrated in the improvement plan?
- Is the initiative having the desired effects for each indicator?
  - If not, which option is most appropriate:
    - adjust the initiative, with some corrections;
    - design new initiatives, building on current learnings; or
    - review the indicators that measure performance against the priority topic?

*For each priority topic: have conditions changed since the prioritization exercise?*

**If not:** adjustments only need to be considered at the level of initiatives.

**If yes:** there is a need to consider some changes, depending on the situation:

- The indicators, metrics or other information used to monitor performance may need to be reviewed, or the implementation of initiatives may need to be improved.
- The maturity of some topics has evolved, and this evolution has an impact in how the GI organization can deal with them (see [Information Box 33](#) on maturity levels, and [Table 19](#) on related actions). In this case, the following questions should be considered before formulating new initiatives:
  - What are the learnings?
  - Are there new initiatives by actors in the GI value chain actors to learn from?
  - Who are potential allies for the development of new initiatives?
- The topic is no longer a top priority for internal and external stakeholders, or the related goals have been achieved. In these cases, a new prioritization exercise must be started (see Phase 1), either by starting a new stakeholder consultation or by directly substituting the outdated priorities with new ones, based on the scoring of the previous prioritization exercise and selecting the priorities with the next highest scores. A new phase of the roadmap (prioritization/assessment/improvement) can be entered either for one priority only (looking at the indicators and metrics that may be used to monitor performance) or for a set of priorities or pillar(s), according to the importance of changes.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.





## Step 8

# Communicating to ensure continuous engagement

### Objective

Develop communication plans that are consistent with the mission and purpose of the GI organization, help generate interest, strengthen the engagement of GI stakeholders and attract potential allies.

### Actions

The GI organization develops a roadmap communication plan (the main elements, channels and audiences) and appoints a person to gather the information needed to generate relevant contents to communicate to target audiences, based on input from those responsible for the implementation of the improvement plan.

### Deliverable

A communication plan tailored to key audiences.

## 8a. Communication basics

A key determinant of the success of any sustainability roadmap is the strength of its communication plan. The GI organization should not only communicate progress towards sustainability (e.g. the achievement of milestones), but also communicate on challenges to improve allies' understanding and formulate adjustments. Recognizing challenges will lend credibility to the effort, as it is acknowledged that sustainability is a pathway and not a state that can be reached once and for all.

The overall objectives of any communication plan are to:

- generate interest and engagement among internal stakeholders (particularly the GI organization's staff members and producers), which may lead to changes in attitudes and behaviour;
- promote the recognition of the GI organization as a crucial and representative actor in the GI system and the territory;
- establish or strengthen relationships with key external stakeholders, which may lead to the creation of alliances; and
- document progress and challenges for actors in the value chain, which lends credibility to the roadmap and strengthens the sustainability credentials of the GI product in the marketplace.

A communication plan defines a set of objectives, a target audience, messages and contents, delivery methods and frequency of actions and initiatives. Messaging and delivery methods may vary according to the content, topics, indicator progress to be communicated and target audiences.

The GI sustainability indicator database classifies indicators as “external” or “management” indicators (see Step 4). External indicators may be communicated to several audiences, whereas management indicators are usually reviewed with a view to improve internal performance, and therefore communicated within the GI organization (to board members or producers).

The task of communicating progress using indicators for internal management (see [Table 18](#) and [Table 23](#) for examples) to external audiences or audiences with specific interests may be overwhelming. Information Box 39 provides some elements for GI organizations to consider when targeting specific audiences.

### INFORMATION BOX 39



#### Communicating progress to specific audiences

Sustainability management and performance is a field in which many actors and interests converge. Still, not all stakeholders are interested in all performance metrics. Also, the GI organization might decide to not to communicate indicators until certain milestones are achieved.

A number of basic instruments for communication, such as sustainability reports, may be produced regularly (e.g. once a year, every two years). Such reports contain a broad range of information, but may also lack the detail that certain stakeholders (and especially allies and potential allies) may require. Also, as these reports condense a large amount of information, messages may become too complex and confusing.

GI organizations may therefore evaluate what type of information is most appropriate for which key stakeholder groups, and develop tailored communication channels to share this information. External GI stakeholders tend to prefer information about impact indicators, while internal stakeholders may be more interested in process and impact indicators. A possible way to determine which information is most relevant to a stakeholder group is the following:



Once each stakeholder’s information needs are determined, strategies to deliver the information should be developed. Delivery methods may include presentations during meetings, reports sent out via email or social media posts. Since the development of a specific communication strategy for each different stakeholder group requires time and other resources, the GI organization may decide to formulate a communication plan that works for various groups.

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.



Those in charge of developing the communication plan (including target audiences and key communication objectives) may ask for support from the GI practitioner to understand the GI system, the value chain and the GI stakeholder map (see [Step 1](#)). Information Box 40 provides a framework of questions that can guide the development of the communication plan.

The overall communication plan can be then further developed into a communication strategy for internal stakeholders and one for external audiences.

#### INFORMATION BOX 40



##### Key questions to guide the development of a communication plan

1. What is my communication objective?
2. What is my target audience?
  - GI producers and board members;
  - current and potential allies;
  - actors in the value chain; or
  - influencers and decision-makers in the territory.
3. What are the possible delivery methods, depending on my target audience?
  - producers and board members: meetings, regular communications (e.g. emails, newsletters);
  - allies: formal letters, website, one-on-one meetings;
  - actors in the value chain: tradeshow, website, newsletters; and
  - influencers: media, one-on-one meetings, formal letters.
4. What is the possible content of the messages?
  - the legitimacy of the GI organization as a representative of GI producers;
  - the challenges facing GI producer and stakeholders;
  - efforts made to address challenges, willingness to share perspectives and experiences; and
  - progress made towards the implementation of a sustainability strategy.
5. Which activities can be used to publicly deliver messages?
  - public statements;
  - conferences;
  - interviews;
  - sustainability and progress reports; and
  - announcements when key milestones are reached.
6. How will the impact of the messages be measured?
  - website: unique visits/length of visit;
  - the number of people attending meetings, number of meetings;
  - surveys;
  - number of downloads of reports; and
  - media attention.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## 8b. Internal communication

Internal communication efforts focus on the GI producers, as well as on the GI board and staff members.

A number of internal communication elements have already been delivered: the explanation of why a sustainability pathway is needed and the definition of the priority topics (Phase 1), as well as consultations and the validation of the sustainability roadmap (Phase 2, Step 6 and Step 7). Building on these previous elements, it is important to communicate regularly on progress made and challenges faced during the implementation of the improvement phase.

Communication is key to ensure the commitment of the GI organization's staff to the roadmap, so that they adequately carry out their assigned tasks. Also, communication at this stage is key to increasing GI producers' level of interest and engagement towards priority topics that require additional efforts or towards new learnings coming out of the continuous process of evaluation.

### Informing: content of the messages

The contents of the messages to internal audiences may include:

- remembering the background and the main elements of the improvement plan:
  - why the GI organization has chosen to develop a sustainability roadmap;
  - how the sustainability roadmap was built (based on GI producers' priorities and opinions);
  - what the priorities are, and why they are important;
  - the roles of the GI organization and the efforts requested from members; and
  - alliances and main initiatives.
- progress made (main achievements);
- problems faced, and current and future challenges; and
- evolutions under consideration.

Particular emphasis should be given to the governance priorities of the roadmap and their related indicators, as they directly concern the GI organization's members and internal processes. Information on governance priorities should be shared with the organization's governance bodies on a regular basis, to allow them to keep track of progress and performance in these areas. Other key indicators to emphasize are those related to the GI organization's internal management, as they directly impact the GI system's performances at the collective and individual levels.

### Increasing engagement

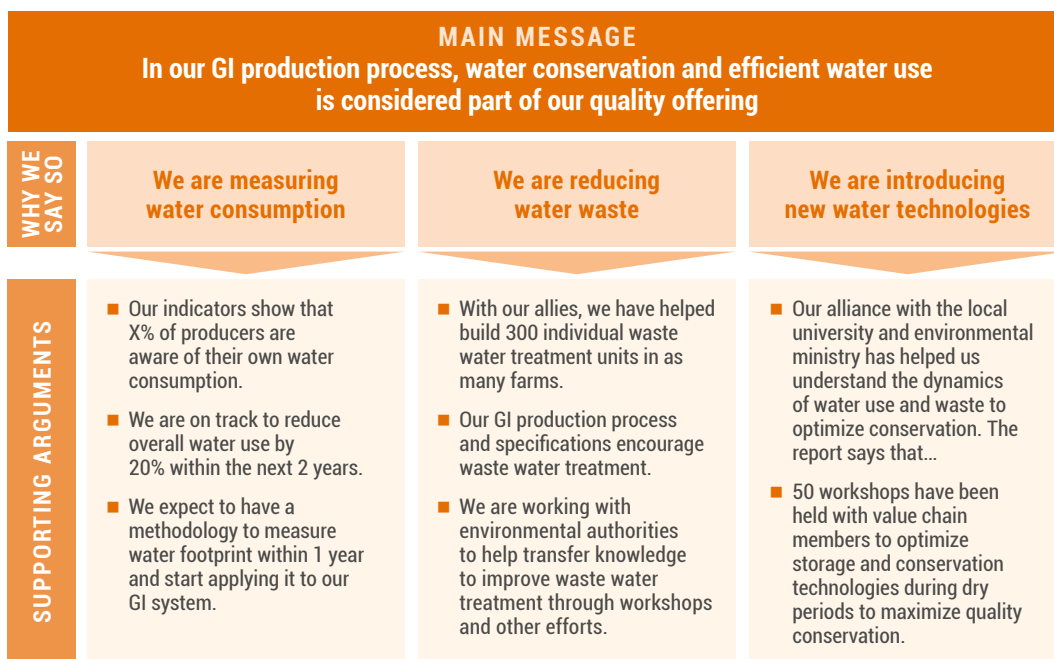
Certain initiatives and programmes may require specific communication efforts to motivate GI producers to become engaged. For such cases, generic communication might not work, and messages must be tailored according to the specific priority topic. The overall message regarding a specific topic may be substantiated with expected action points and supporting



arguments. Messages may be adapted to specific audiences (in some cases, a single producer) or venues. An example of a “single issue” or “single topic” is water; Figure 20 provides an example of a possible communication plan for this theme, aimed at GI producers.

FIGURE 20

**Example of messaging on a single issue (water) to create interest and encourage GI producers to engage**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Wider messaging on the sustainability roadmap may require a more complex narrative. Information Box 41 illustrates a possible way to communicate the benefits of a sustainability roadmap to internal audiences.

**INFORMATION BOX 41**

**Suggestions for a communication plan to illustrate the benefits of a sustainability roadmap to GI internal stakeholders**

**Objective:** encourage GI producers to engage in the sustainability strategy.

**Main message:** *The sustainability roadmap is crucial to ensure the long-term competitiveness and viability of the GI system.*

**Messages:**

- GI producers are key actors for sustainability.
- Sustainability is important. By implementing a sustainability roadmap, the viability of the GI system and of producers' way of life can be ensured.
- Investing in sustainability reduces economic risks and makes sense from a cost-benefit perspective.

Follows on the next page

**Narrative:** it is recommended to organize the narrative around the need to implement the initiatives defined in the roadmap to guarantee the competitiveness and viability of the GI system in the medium term. Sustainability initiatives should be viewed as investments and not expenses; it should be stressed that they not only guarantee the continuity of operations but can also increase their efficiency, and that these investments should be evaluated over a longer period of time. It is recommended to use a rational and clear business language. For example, two scenarios may be presented for a given challenge, with a cost–benefit analysis for both: a) the scenario of inaction (everything remains the same), where negative effects on incomes or operations (e.g. interruptions) are taken into account as costs; and b) the scenario of the progressive implementation of the sustainability roadmap, where cost efficiencies are found and the continuity of operations is guaranteed.

**Formats:** it is recommended to present successful and unsuccessful cases, or action and inaction scenarios; this can be done in testimonials or interviews delivered as short videos or podcasts. Such formats are relevant to both members and non-members, and can be used for operations of different sizes and in different regional contexts. It is best if the spokespersons are the GI producers themselves; they can explain the importance of certain practices and their benefits (e.g. in terms of the environment). Ideally, messages should contain some surprising facts that call people’s attention. For example, the message can focus on the benefits of improved water usage practices, combined with content focusing on the challenges related to water in the territory; this information can be delivered in video and audio clips with testimonials by leading GI producers on how they use water resources. Possible channels (alone or combined) to disseminate messages include:

- websites and flyers with key messages and examples of successful implementation;
- short PowerPoint presentations used by the GI organization's staff members in (in)formal meetings with producers;
- short video clips;
- messages sent through private social networks or via email and WhatsApp;
- posts on public social networks (e.g. Facebook, YouTube and others);
- other digital media (digital newsletters, brochures);
- messages sent out through media owned by the GI organization (magazines, website); and
- ceremonies (e.g. an award ceremony for GI producers who have successfully reduced their use of water).

**Monitoring:** it is recommended to develop a content grid for the communication related to an objective/topic; such a grid facilitates the monitoring of the communication effort, its delivery and impacts. For each topic to be communicated, indicate the message contents and the related formats as explained above, for a defined period (the considered timeframe). Include information on the actions implemented and the media reached, as well on the actions’ impacts by using a number of management indicators (considering the possibility to extend the actions, if needed).

*Source:* Authors' own elaboration.



## 8c. External communication

External communication efforts focus on stakeholders who are not part of the GI organization, but are, or may become, interested in the organization's sustainability roadmap. These include other actors in the value chain (e.g. business partners), both inside and outside the GI territory (e.g. the local government, NGOs and other actors).

Current and potential private allies are particularly important; the GI organization must establish effective communication channels and action plans to create opportunities for engagement with these allies. Particularly important stakeholders who may be interested in the sustainability roadmap include current and potential buyers of the GI product, and specifically consumers; a special communication strategy, linked to the organization's marketing strategy, may be set up to target these buyers.

Other crucial stakeholders are public authorities, both at the national level (especially if sustainability is included in public regulations) and at the local level. It is important to build public-private alliances focusing on public goods. Therefore, it is crucial to consider NGOs involved in sustainability matters and the local press and other media, to ensure that information concerning the public interest is spread.

### Communication to encourage the formation of alliances

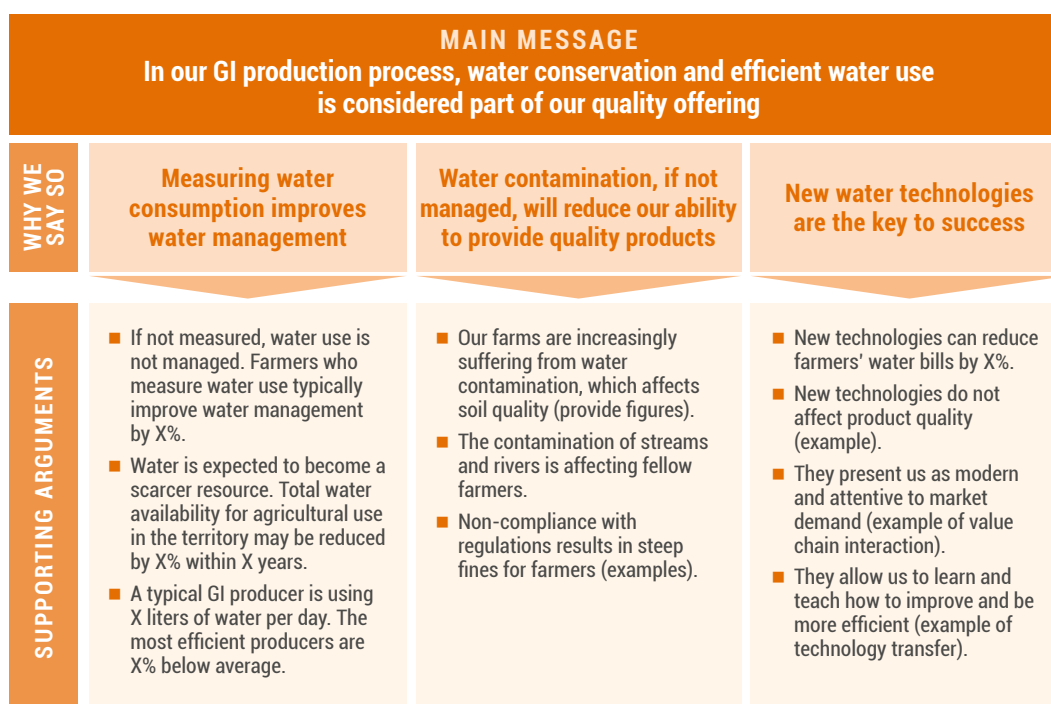
Building alliances with external stakeholders requires one-on-one communication efforts. During the prioritization and assessment phases, it was recommended to inform external stakeholders on progress made towards the development of the sustainability strategy; at this point, a communication plan should target these stakeholders (including both current and potential allies) to inform them on further progress. Such a plan (which may include regular meetings) may be based on similar communication plans for internal audiences.

It is important to recognize the contributions of stakeholders towards the development of the GI system's sustainability roadmap, as well as of allies involved in the implementation of sustainability initiatives.

Some external stakeholders may be interested in singular priority topics. For such "single issue" audiences, tailored messages should be formulated to show progress related to that particular topic. Figure 21 provides an example of "single issue" communication on the use of water; the figure demonstrates the importance of consistent, targeted messaging.

FIGURE 21

### Example of messaging on a single issue (water) to create interest and encourage external stakeholders to engage



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

It is recommended that at least once a year a compendium of indicators be made available to external stakeholders, to inform them about the progress made and the challenges faced. This type of communication should be seen as an opportunity to develop or consolidate alliances for sustainability and underline the priorities of the GI producers (as compared to those of the stakeholders).

### Communication to promote the roadmap in relevant markets

The GI organization must communicate with intermediate buyers, retailers and consumers; this communication must be in line with the organization's marketing strategy and address the target audiences' expectations and demands (e.g. related to social aspects).

Depending on the audience, this communication may take the form of general reports or specialized sustainability reports. The latter are usually required for business-to-business (B2B) communication based on specific frameworks and indicators (such as GRI or SASB) and provide a detailed analysis of the roadmap and its sustainability indicators. Indicators from sources such as GRI are designed for external communication purposes. Meanwhile, general communication aimed at multiple audiences may be structured around the SDGs or sustainability pillars to communicate progress on key metrics; these general reports can coexist with detailed reports (see Example Box 16).





EXAMPLE BOX 16



**Café de Colombia – general reports on sustainability**

The GI organization for Café de Colombia regularly publishes a sustainability report, which can be accessed online. Readers can review the organization's different initiatives by pillars and actions/priorities (see Figure 22) or by SDGs (see Figure 23).

FIGURE 22. Example of sustainability report based on the sustainability pillars

**SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY**

At the FNC we seek to make coffee, in the short, medium and long term, a profitable business that contributes to the economic and social development of coffee-growing families, always favoring protection of natural resources.

**Our sustainability proposition is developed in four fundamental dimensions, each with a specific strategic objective:**

**ECONOMIC**

Economic dimension

SEE MORE

**ENVIRONMENTAL**

Environmental dimension

SEE MORE

**SOCIAL**

Social dimension

SEE MORE

**GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Governance dimension

SEE MORE

Source: Colombian Coffee Growers Federation. 2023. Sustainable strategy. In: *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia*. Bogotá. Cited 6 June 2023. <https://federaciondefeteros.org/wp/sustainability/?lang=en>

FIGURE 23. Example of sustainability report based on the SDGs

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Along with a materiality update, we also analyzed our contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

After a review of the SDGs, the national goals established in Conpes 3918 of March 15, 2018 and the actions and programs carried out, contributions were identified in 15 of the 17 goals, which were related to the material topics defined in the previous exercise.

The following figure shows which SDGs we are contributing to.

Source: Colombian Coffee Growers Federation. 2019. *Informe de sostenibilidad*. Bogotá. [www.flipsnack.com/federaciondefeteros/informe-de-sostenibilidad-2015-2018.html](http://www.flipsnack.com/federaciondefeteros/informe-de-sostenibilidad-2015-2018.html)

Apart from general communication efforts such as those in Example Box 15, the communication plan may need to target specific markets or market segments with elaborated messages delivered through dedicated channels. Such messages may focus on business-to-consumer (B2C) certification (e.g. deforestation-free certification) (see Example Box 17).

### EXAMPLE BOX 17



#### Third-party certification under the sustainability roadmap of Café de Colombia

As part of its sustainability roadmap, the GI organization for Café de Colombia helps farmers achieve voluntary third-party certification in line with their growing conditions. The organization also reports on these efforts; this information allows coffee brands to make sustainability claims in function of consumers' expectations in specific markets (see Figure 24).

FIGURE 24. Voluntary third-party certification for Café de Colombia



Source: Colombian Coffee Growers Federation. 2019. *Informe de sostenibilidad*. Bogotá.



GI organizations must determine which type of communication can create added value by demonstrating producers' compliance with regulations and customer requirements through the achievement of priority topics. Example Box 18 illustrates how GI organizations can communicate their collective achievements and goals.

GI organizations can boost their credibility by consistently monitoring priority topics and indicators while acknowledging that challenges remain. While the formats of communication may vary, the contents of the messages must be consistent across all delivery mediums.

### EXAMPLE BOX 18



#### Communicating the achievement of sustainability targets to support market differentiation

GI organizations must develop their communication plans in view of the specific demands of certain markets, as well as of broad consumer trends. One of these trends is that consumers increasingly demand information on producers' efforts towards environmental sustainability, and particularly climate change mitigation.

The Scotch whisky association regularly publishes reports on its environmental strategy and progress towards environmental targets. Figure 25 lists the achievements the association has communicated.

FIGURE 25. Example of environmental achievements communicated

##### Reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions

- > 39% of primary energy use comes from non-fossil fuel sources. Reaching our 2020 target of 20% four years earlier than we had planned, in 2016.
- > Energy efficiency in distilleries improved by 13% against a 2020 target of 7.6%.
- > Many of our members have switched from higher to lower or zero carbon-emitting fuels and continue to make significant investments in energy efficiency and renewable technologies.
- > Together, these achievements have helped us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 53% between 2008 and 2020.

##### Water management

- > Water efficiency has improved by 22% since 2012.
- > Distillers have introduced detailed site water audits that are driving progress.

##### Circular economy

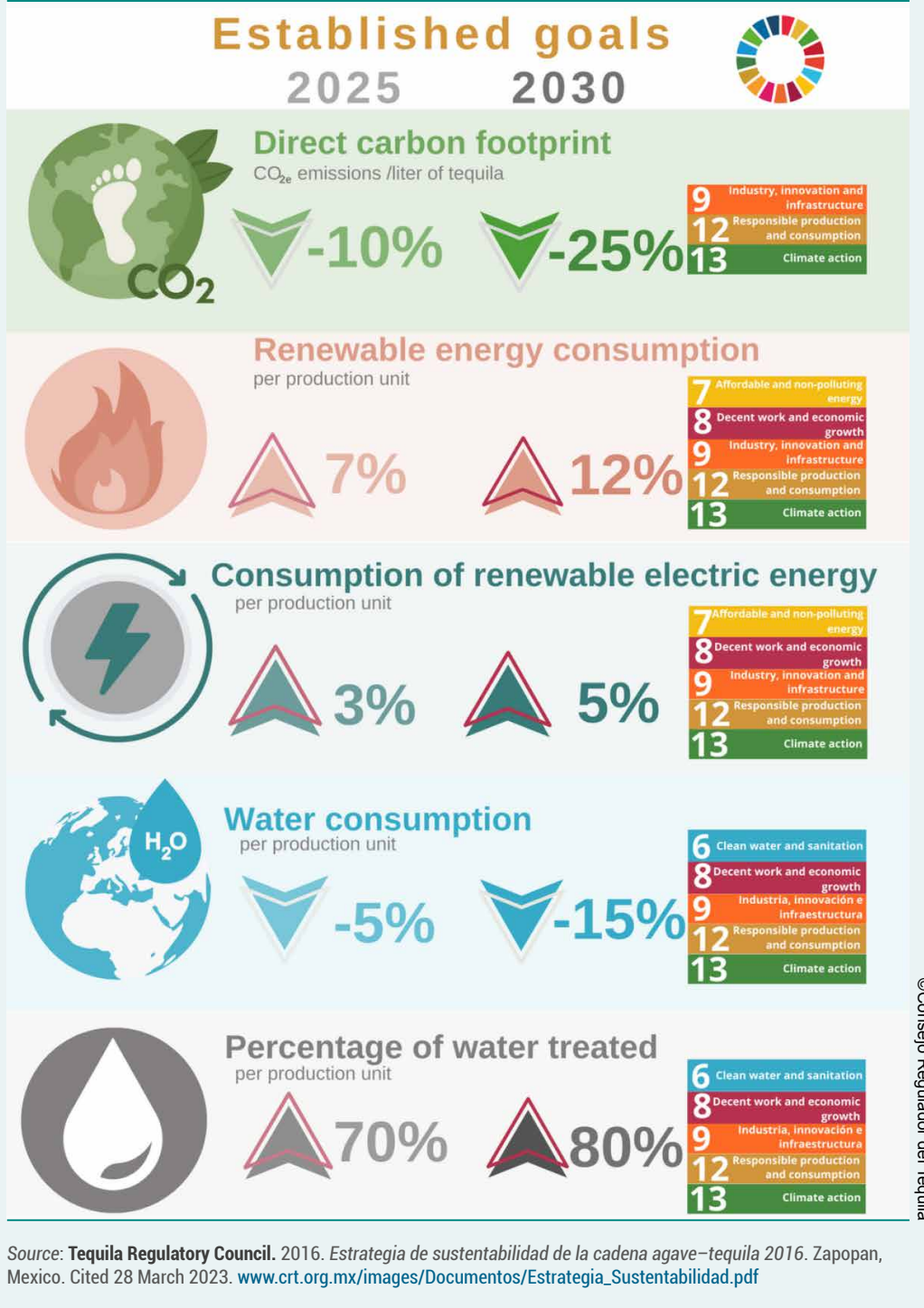
- > Our members have reduced general waste to landfill to just 1%.
- > We continue to collaborate with waste management companies to bring landfill use down further.
- > 94% of packaging is reusable or recyclable.
- > The recycled content of our product packaging is 37%. Glass has the biggest impact on this target.
- > We continue to explore how supplies of high-quality glass bottles can be maintained whilst increasing their recycled content.
- > Our overall packaging weight has increased by 2.6% since 2012, reflecting that Scotch Whisky is increasingly a premium purchase. This is one of the key challenges to address and one we are now focused on.

Source: Scotch Whisky Association. 2023. Our progress so far. In: *Sustainability*. Edinburgh. Cited 6 June 2023. [www.scotch-whisky.org.uk/insights/sustainability/our-progress-so-far](http://www.scotch-whisky.org.uk/insights/sustainability/our-progress-so-far)

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In Mexico, the Tequila Regulatory Council provides similar information, focusing on progress made by individual GI members towards sustainability targets (see Figure 26).

FIGURE 26. Example of progress towards environmental goals communicated (based on a 2016 baseline assessment)



# Conclusions

GI organizations can provide a crucial contribution towards the sustainability of their GI system, which is intrinsically linked to the sustainability of the local territory and the local food (or handicraft) production system. With sound governance as their major asset, GI organizations can become significant sustainability players and activate their networks of value chain actors and other public and private stakeholders to address challenges associated with local resources, natural and human, and build alliances to develop and implement a sustainability roadmap.

A sustainability roadmap is an evolving instrument for GI organizations and their allies to engage on a sustainability pathway. Indeed, sustainability is not a state of good or bad performance, but rather a pathway to progress towards a sustainability priority. To define these priorities and develop a pathway that optimizes the impact of efforts, trade-offs must be considered, capacities and resources evaluated and alliances built. The GI organization, possible allies and other stakeholders must collaborate to jointly identify the priorities that will contribute most to increased sustainability and generate synergies that maximize the impacts of the roadmap. Therefore, a carefully designed stakeholder engagement process focusing on alliance building and communication is crucial.

Priorities may evolve, and the possibility to consider new priority topics must be part of any sustainability pathway. Also, gradual improvement and iterative actions are essential elements of this dynamic approach to strengthen the GI system.

Another crucial aspect of the methodology proposed in this publication is its focus on the territory: priorities and actions must be tailored to the specific local context and challenges. This approach reflects the nature of GI systems, which build on the link of a product to its origin and the specificities that originate from the particular local human and natural conditions of a territory.

This participative and place-based process allows GI organizations and their members to better understand and manage the complex aspects of sustainability. The GI system, and in particular the GI specifications, can become a powerful tool to contribute to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of local development.

This guide and toolkit, together with the database of sustainability indicators, provide step-by-step indications with illustrations and templates to encourage GI organizations to embark on a sustainability journey, with a participative approach tailored to local realities.

By identifying priority challenges, assessing their status, formulating an improvement plan and monitoring its results, the GI organization can enhance the sustainability performance of the GI system in all its dimensions: economic, social environmental and governance. Sustainability is a pathway: by embarking on a sustainability roadmap, GI producers can continuously improve their efforts to address challenges in an evolving context and communicate progress to all stakeholders, including allies and consumers.

The tools presented in this guide are practical and flexible, and can be adapted to any context. Users of this guide are encouraged to provide feedback on the use of this guide in their GI systems; this information could then be presented as a series of case studies with lessons learned in different sectors.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Feedback can be sent to the following email addresses: [GI@fao.org](mailto:GI@fao.org) and [info@origin-gi.com](mailto:info@origin-gi.com)

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## Websites for further information

### FAO

#### On geographical indications:

- [www.fao.org/geographical-indications/en](http://www.fao.org/geographical-indications/en)

### Global Reporting Initiative

#### On the global standards for sustainability impacts:

- [www.globalreporting.org/standards](http://www.globalreporting.org/standards)

## SASB Standards

### On materiality:

- [www.sasb.org/materiality/sasb-materiality-map](http://www.sasb.org/materiality/sasb-materiality-map)

## United Nations

### On sustainable development:

- <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
- [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships)
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11803Official-List-of-Proposed-SDG-Indicators.pdf>

### On corporate social responsibility efforts by companies:

- <https://www.globalcoffeeplatform.org/our-work/coffee-sustainability-reference-code/>
- <https://utz.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Code-of-Conduct-Summary.pdf>
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- [www.heinz.com/sustainability/supplychain/sustainable-sourcing.aspx](http://www.heinz.com/sustainability/supplychain/sustainable-sourcing.aspx)
- [www.groupe-auchan.com/fileadmin/documents/2016/CSR\\_section\\_of\\_the\\_2015\\_management\\_report\\_-\\_Auchan\\_Holding.pdf](http://www.groupe-auchan.com/fileadmin/documents/2016/CSR_section_of_the_2015_management_report_-_Auchan_Holding.pdf)

# Glossary

**Articulator** A GI organization can assume the role of articulator in the definition, implementation and measurement of sustainability initiatives or programmes. In this case, the GI organization is not the leader of the initiative or programme but is active in exposing the need to tackle a defined sustainability priority, which may lead to specific initiatives by interested stakeholders through alliances and/or public policies addressing priority related challenges. The articulator can also play a role in the coordination of actions or actors, while the implementation of the initiative or programme is the responsibility of a third party or alliance.

**Assessment** The second phase of the Sustainability Strategy for Geographical Indications (SSGI). During this phase, a baseline is drawn to measure current performance, using selected indicators.

**Assessment plan** The assessment plan identifies the indicators and formulas (where applicable) to be used to measure performance for each sustainability priority topic, the individual(s) in charge of collecting the information to calculate the indicator, and the sources of information and methodology to be used.

**Assigned (or responsible) individual** This is the person (or entity) in charge of collecting the information needed to calculate indicator benchmarks and measure performance for each sustainability priority topic (see Phase 2 of this guide).

**B2B** Business-to-business. This term is generally used in cases where the GI product is an ingredient, rather than a final product; the GI organization sells the product to other businesses that use it as an ingredient or process it, before it reaches the final consumer.

**B2C** Business-to-consumer. This term is generally used in cases where the GI product is a final product that reaches the consumer directly; the GI organization sells the product to distributors, retailers or final consumers.

**Baseline** The starting point with which future performance on priority topics is compared. The baseline is calculated after the implementation of the assessment plan.

**Baseline assessment plan** This plan lays down the indicators and formulas (where applicable) to be used to measure current or initial performance against each priority topic (before the improvement plan is implemented), the individual(s) in charge of collecting the information that is needed to calculate the indicator, and the sources of information and methodology to be used.

**Bottom-up process (bottom-up approach)** This is a decision-making approach whereby the GI producers are given the opportunity to define their own priorities in function of their local challenges and context.

**Business strategy** See strategy.



**Code of practice** See GI product specifications.

**Communication** Communication is a crucial overarching component of the SSGI. A communication plan ensures that internal and external stakeholders are engaged throughout the process of the definition and implementation of the sustainability strategy.

**Communication plan** The communication plan lays down communication objective(s) for specific audiences, and ways and means to reach these objectives. The plan should include the use of metrics to measure its effectiveness. A GI organization's sustainability roadmap may include several communication plans.

**Control body** The control body is the entity in charge of ensuring compliance with the GI product specifications. The control body may be an independent entity, a public agency or an entity belonging to the GI organization (depending on the GI product and the country and applicable legislation).

**CSR** Corporate social responsibility. CSR refers to initiatives and policies implemented by companies, GI organizations, individual GI producers or other GI stakeholders aimed at improving the well-being of communities and society through various environmental and social measures.

**Engagement (engagement process)** The process by which the GI organization identifies, selects and consults GI stakeholders about their views on sustainability priorities. It also includes the development of relationships and alliances with key stakeholders to jointly implement initiatives, projects or programmes aimed at improving the GI system's sustainability performance.

**Consultation engagement** This type of engagement includes all the steps that are required to select and reach out to stakeholders to obtain their views on sustainability priorities and on ways to assess and improve the GI system's performance against these priorities.

**Cooperation engagement** This type of engagement includes initiatives and actions to develop and sustain the interest and cooperation of stakeholders who are interested in addressing priority topics. As a result of these efforts, the parties may agree to jointly leverage resources, gather information and/or implement initiatives as part of the sustainability improvement plan.

**ESG** Environmental, social and governance. These are the three pillars of the ESG framework, used by businesses to report on the risks and opportunities inherent to their activities to investors. A company's ESG score is evaluated by investors, together with the financial risks.

**Executor** A GI organization can assume the role of leader or executor in the implementation of sustainability initiatives or programmes, individually or in collaboration with third parties. This means that the GI organization directly implements the initiative and is responsible for its execution with its own funds, or with third party funds, or as a primary actor of an alliance.

**GI** Geographical indication. The World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) defines a GI as

*an indication which identifies a good as originating in the territory of a member (country), or a regional locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin (art. 22.1).<sup>11</sup>*

The term GI can be used to associate a product's attributes and/or reputation with its origin. Officially registered GIs may take legal forms such as appellation of origin, protected denomination of origin or protected geographical indication (depending on the national legislation); these are intellectual property (IP) rights included in an IP register. Certain countries protect GIs through certification marks, collective trademarks or specific regulations.

**GI agricultural producers** See GI primary producers and producers of raw materials.

**GI board** The GI board is the decision-making instance within the GI organization that must approve the various elements of the sustainability roadmap. Depending on the GI organization, the GI board can be an ad hoc sustainability committee, the board of directors, the general assembly of members, or an appointed committee of GI producer representatives. The GI board must validate the results of the sustainability prioritization exercise and must be updated regularly on progress towards the implementation of the sustainability pathway.

**GI infringement** GI infringement is the unlawful use of a protected GI, either by producers who belong to the GI system but do not comply with the GI product specifications, or by producers who do not belong to the GI system but use the GI to differentiate their products.

**GI organization** The GI organization leads the GI system; it is the key actor promoting and defending the intellectual property rights associated with the GI product. The organization usually gathers GI producers (who must comply with the GI specifications) and other stakeholders to represent them, defend their interests, and lead and coordinate initiatives of the GI system. GI organizations may take various forms, including associations, partnerships, consortia, regulatory councils, public-private partnerships or interprofessional associations, or even informal groups. The GI organization is in charge of day-to-day management of the GI system.

**Horizontal GI organization** These are GI organizations that are involved in one specific stage of the value chain of a GI product (e.g. the production of raw agricultural materials, or of handicrafts).

**Vertical GI organization** These are GI organizations that represent operators active at various stages of the value chain of a GI product (e.g. primary producers and processors). These organizations are often referred to as interprofessional organizations. Examples of vertical GI organizations include organizations for cheese that group both dairy producers and cheesemakers, or organizations for spirits such as the Tequila Regulatory Council in Mexico (which groups agave producers, Tequila processors and bottlers).

<sup>11</sup> The WTO's 1994 TRIPs Agreement does not lay down a specific legal system for the protection for GIs, leaving this task to signatory countries. If a country has established a formal registration process for GIs within its territory, then a product registered in this way can be referred to as a "protected GI". However, a GI may also exist without protection or without seeking protection, unless the name or product is considered generic.

**GI practitioner** The GI practitioner is the person or team that has been assigned with the task of leading and coordinating the activities to define a sustainability pathway for a GI system. GI practitioners can be members of the GI organization's staff, or persons tasked specifically with the development of the sustainability pathway. The GI leads the prioritization and assessment phases of the pathway, and formulates the improvement plan together with stakeholders.

**GI producers** These are producers of the GI product who comply with the GI product specifications and can therefore use the GI seal on the product. They can be GI primary producers or producers of raw materials or GI processors, possibly belonging to the same GI organization.

**GI primary producers and producers of raw materials** These are GI producers who belong to the GI organization and comply with the GI product specifications. They may be crop farmers, livestock breeders, fishermen, foresters, miners or any other primary producers from the agriculture, forestry, fisheries or mineral sectors. For GI systems based on agricultural products, they can be referred to as GI agricultural producers.

**GI processors** These are members of the GI organization who comply with the GI product specifications; their main activity is to process or transform raw materials into the final GI product. They are part of GI producers.

**GI product** A GI product is a product whose quality and reputation are intrinsically linked to the territory where it is produced; a GI product is named or recognized as a reputed product that originates from this territory. The GI product may be registered and protected under national GI laws and regulations. However, for the purposes of this guide, a GI product does not need to be formally recognized as a GI by the authorities.

**GI product category** The overall product category to which a GI product belongs (e.g. wines, spirits, coffee or dairy products).

**GI product specifications (code of practice/book of requirements)** This document describes the specific attributes of the GI product in relation to its geographical origin. It describes the product and its production process, and lays down requirements regarding production and/or processing methods, packaging, labelling, etc. Any producer who wishes to use the GI seal must comply with the requirements laid down in the GI specifications.

**GI seal** An authorized seal, symbol or other sign that is used by GI producers to certify that they comply with the GI product specifications.

**GI stakeholders** GI stakeholders are all interested parties that are directly or indirectly concerned with the GI product and the GI system. They include actors in the GI value chain (GI producers, distributors and traders of the GI product, buyers, etc.), as well as cooperation agencies, research centers, NGOs and other entities that are in some way involved in the GI system. National or local government entities that are involved in programmes and policies affecting the GI system (including those related to the legal and institutional framework for GI organizations, such as IP authorities and IP rights enforcement agencies) are also GI stakeholders.

**Internal GI stakeholders** are the actors who are directly interested and concerned by the functioning of the GI system and its performance – hence the term “internal”. The internal stakeholders include the actors in the GI value chain who comply with the GI specifications (and in particular the GI primary producers and processors) and the GI organization’s staff members who are involved in the local management of the GI system. The internal stakeholders should play a leading role in the definition of the sustainability roadmap.

**External GI stakeholders** are stakeholders outside the GI organization who play a role in the functioning of the GI system or are impacted by it; they can become allies in the development of the sustainability pathway. External stakeholders include academic and research institutions, government actors, cooperation agencies and other actors in the GI value chain (e.g. suppliers, intermediaries, distributors and primary producers/processors) who do not belong to the GI organization.

**GI stakeholder category** A stakeholder category is a group of GI stakeholders who perform similar activities or share the same broad interests. Internal GI stakeholder categories include primary producers, processors, staff members of the GI organization and other actors involved in the value chain of the GI product. External GI stakeholder categories include academic or research institutions, groups of clients and consumers, control bodies, NGOs, cooperation agencies, public authorities, influencers and inhabitants of the territory, and other actors in the value chain of the GI product category.

**GI stakeholder group** Stakeholder groups are subgroups within stakeholder categories. Stakeholder groups are composed of GI stakeholders with common characteristics and therefore similar views and interests. For example, the category of GI producers may be divided into different groups according to output volumes, locality in the territory or other variables that reflect the diversity of the specific GI system. Meanwhile, actors in the category of government stakeholders may be grouped according to their specific functions, such as intellectual property authorities, local authorities, national environmental authorities or other relevant authorities dealing with the GI product category.

**GI system** A GI system includes all stakeholders, resources and activities that contribute to the production of a GI product. A GI system is generally understood to be linked to a registered GI. A GI system includes GI producers and other stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in the value chain of the GI product, including (but not limited to) public authorities, NGOs, research institutions, extension services providers and other institutions linked to the GI product (for example, tourism operators in the territory). It also includes stakeholders in the territory who are interested in the natural and cultural conditions that make it possible to produce and commercialize the GI product.

**Goal** Goals are the targets defined in the improvement plan for each indicator and sustainability priority topic; they should be reached within a specified period of time.

**GRI** Global Reporting Initiative. The GRI provides guidelines for companies to conduct sustainability reviews of their operations and their impacts on the economy, the environment and the communities where they operate or which they may influence. GRI is widely used by major suppliers and retailers. For more information, see [www.globalreporting.org](http://www.globalreporting.org).

**Improvement** The third component or phase of the SSGI. During this phase, a gap analysis is made based on the baseline assessment for selected sustainability indicators. These key metrics enable the development of an improvement plan with achievable goals, and communication on challenges and progress made for each priority topic. The improvement phase also involves the regular evaluation of each priority and initiative to ensure that the expected impact is being achieved and that corrections or changes are made timely.

**Improvement plan** The improvement plan is part of the improvement phase. The plan details the programmes, projects or actions developed and implemented by the GI organization (possibly in collaboration with allies) to achieve the objectives set for each sustainability priority topic, and defines the GI organization's role in them. The plan also identifies possible allies and stakeholders who are or can become involved in the development of initiatives dealing these priorities.

**Indicator (sustainability indicator)** A measurement, signal or guide that provides information on a GI system's performance and progress towards a sustainability priority and/or the effectiveness of the GI system's sustainability improvement plan.

**Indicator balancing** Indicator balancing is the exercise made during the selection process of the sustainability indicators to ensure that there is a balance of indicator attributes; this enhances the credibility of the monitoring and assessment system.

**Influencer** A GI organization can assume the role of influencer i.e. an actor that motivates governmental, private or non-governmental actors to concur with the importance of a prioritized sustainability topic and include this topic as a priority in their own initiatives or policies.

**Initiative (sustainability initiative)** A (sustainability) initiative is the programme, project or set of actions that address one or more sustainability priority topics with the objective of improving performance against the selected indicator(s).

**Key indicator** Key indicators are sustainability indicators that are commonly used by sustainability practitioners, under different sustainability methodologies and frameworks.

**Leader** See executor.

**Materiality** This term refers to the relevance and significance of a topic to a GI organization or GI system. In this guide, a material topic is a sustainability priority topic that influences the decisions, actions and performance of a GI system and/or its stakeholders.

**Maturity** This term refers to the degree of attention given to a sustainability topic; it indicates whether the topic is being addressed or needs to be addressed in the near, medium or long term, given its potential impact on the GI product.

**PDO** Protected designation (or denomination) of origin, a type of GI defined in and protected by European Union legislation. A designation of origin is a name of a region, location or (in exceptional cases) country that is used to describe an agricultural product or foodstuff:

- a. originating in that region, location or country;
- b. the quality or characteristics of which are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors; and
- c. the production, processing and preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area.

**Priority topic** See sustainability priority topic.

**Roadmap** See sustainability pathway or sustainability roadmap.

**SAFA** The Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems is a framework developed by FAO to assess the sustainability of food and agriculture systems, considering the four pillars of sustainability: economic, social, environmental and governance. For more information, see [www.fao.org/nr/sustainability/sustainability-assessments-safa/en/](http://www.fao.org/nr/sustainability/sustainability-assessments-safa/en/).

**SASB** Sustainability Accounting Standards Board. The SASB has developed the SASB Standards, which guide the disclosure of financially relevant sustainability information by companies to their investors. Available for 77 industries, these standards identify the environmental, social and governance issues that are most relevant to financial performance in an industry. The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) assumed responsibility for the SASB Standards in 2022. For more information, see [www.sasb.org](http://www.sasb.org) and [www.ifrs.org](http://www.ifrs.org).

**SSGI** Sustainability Strategy for Geographical Indications, a framework developed by oriGIn and FAO to help GI organizations and GI systems develop their own GI sustainability pathway.

**Stakeholder consultation** See engagement – consultation engagement.

**Stakeholder cooperation** See engagement – cooperation engagement.

**Stakeholder engagement** See engagement; stakeholder engagement includes both stakeholder consultation and stakeholder cooperation.

**Strategy** In this guide, strategy refers to the GI organization's business plan or business strategy. The strategy includes a vision or purpose and key objectives. In the context of the SSGI, strategy refers to the overall FAO–oriGIn strategy to help GI systems and organizations develop their own sustainability roadmap.

**Sustainability pathway (sustainability roadmap)** The GI sustainability pathway or roadmap is the result of the participatory process led by a GI organization to define objectives and develop activities in collaboration with allies, with the aim of improving the GI system's sustainability based on the SSGI. The pathway is based on a regular exercise of reviewing a GI system's sustainability priorities, assessing performance using selected indicators and implementing improvement plans, either independently by the GI producers and/or GI organization, or in alliance with internal or external GI stakeholders.

**Sustainability pillar (pillar)** A (sustainability) pillar is a dimension of sustainability under the SSGI: economic resilience, environmental integrity, social well-being and good governance.

**Sustainability priority topic (priority topic)** A (sustainability) priority topic is a topic selected by the GI organization to focus its sustainability efforts on. They can also be referred to as material topics. They are selected after Phase 1 of this guide, following the SSGI taxonomy of pillars and themes (see Annex 1).

**Territory** The territory is the delimited geographical space in which a GI product is produced. In a territory, a community has built collective documented or tacit know-how to produce a GI product based on a system of interactions between a physical and biological environment and a set of human factors. The sociotechnical trajectories in this system of interactions reveal an originality, confer a typicity and (can) create a reputation for a GI product originating in that territory.

**Theme** Under to the SSGI framework, each sustainability pillar (or dimension) groups a number of sustainability themes, which in turn group a number of sustainability topics.

**Top-down process (top-down approach)** A top-down process is a decision-making approach whereby certain actors (e.g. public authorities or market leaders) define policies or select priorities without consulting actors in a less influential position (as opposed to a bottom-up approach).

**Topic** For the purposes of this guide, a sustainability topic is a broad concern that may affect the GI system's overall performance in any of the four sustainability pillars. A topic is equivalent to a sustainability subtheme under the SAFA structure.

# Annexes





# Annex 1

## Structure of the Sustainability Strategy for Geographical Indications: themes, topics and guiding questions (with number of indicators)

### Overview of themes, topics and number of indicators<sup>12</sup>

Theme	Topic	Number of indicators	Theme	Topic	Number of indicators	Theme	Topic	Number of indicators	Theme	Topic	Number of indicators
Economic resilience			Good governance			Social well-being			Environmental integrity		
Investment	Costs	15	Accountability	Holistic audits	5	Community safety and health	Food security and nutrition	6	Animal welfare	Animal health	5
	Internal investment	2		Structure and leadership	8		Public health	3		Freedom from stress	2
	Long-term investment	10		Transparency	12		Workplace safety and health provisions	15	Atmosphere	Air quality	5
	Profitability	14	Ethics	Due diligence	5	Cultural diversity	Indigenous knowledge and traditions	3		Emissions	11
Local economy	Local procurement	4		Holistic management	Mission statement and purpose	5	Decent livelihoods	Opportunities to improve	4	Biodiversity	Ecosystem diversity
	Local value Creation	10	Full cost accounting		2	Capacity development for increased GI system productivity		7	Genetic diversity		5
Product quality and information	Product quality	10	Sustainability management plan	3	Fair access to means of production	5		Poverty and quality of life	16		Species diversity
	Food safety	7		Conflict resolution		4	Producer and employee retirement		2		
	Product information	9	Participation		Legitimacy	15		Demography	Producer and worker demographics	5	Land and landscape
Soil quality	11										

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<sup>12</sup> At the date of publication of this guide. The number of indicators may evolve to include new sector indicators.

Theme	Topic	Number of indicators	Theme	Topic	Number of indicators	Theme	Topic	Number of indicators	Theme	Topic	Number of indicators
Economic resilience			Good governance			Social well-being			Environmental integrity		
Vulnerability	Diversification	6	Rule of law	Stakeholder dialogue	14	Equity	Gender equality	8	Materials and energy	Efficient use of inputs and materials needed for production	11
	Liquidity	10		Civic responsibility	5		Non-discrimination	3		Efficient energy use	6
	Risk management	9		GI product compliance and infringement prevention	8		Support to vulnerable people	2		Waste reduction and disposal	9
	Stability of markets	17		Resource appropriation	3	Labour rights	Child labour	4	Water	Interaction with water systems	10
	Stability of production	8			Forced labour		3	Water use		8	
	Stability of supply	4					Terms of employment and contracting	10			
						Freedom of association and rights to bargaining	2				
						Rewarding commercial practices	Buyer practices of GI products	3			
							Incentives for suppliers of GI products	1			
<b>4</b>	15	135	<b>5</b>	13	89	<b>7</b>	19	102	<b>6</b>	15	116

## Themes, topics, topic definition/description and key guiding questions

### SUSTAINABILITY TOPICS UNDER THE ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PILLAR

Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/description	Examples of key guiding questions
Investment	1	Costs	Understand the cost of production to ensure that pricing and market strategies reflect the amount of resources and labour used in production. <sup>13</sup>	Is the cost of production of the GI product known? Is it tracked regularly? Is family labour accounted for? Are the costs of upgrading production processes to comply with the GI product specifications known? How significant are the certification costs?
	2	Internal investment	Investments to maintain and optimize performance with current capacities and under current conditions.	Can the GI production process be improved by keeping plantations young and productive? Are GI producers maintaining their productive capacity by replacing obsolete/old plantations and/or equipment?
	3	Long-term investment	Investments aimed at production expansion and/or improvement of technology, product quality and/or processes to enhance long-term profitability.	Can the economic performance of the GI production process be improved by investing in technology or new processes (e.g. more environmentally friendly) that comply with the GI product specifications? Is the production process viable? Are GI producers willing and able to invest to expand their productive capacity, such as by improving crops, expand processing, improve postharvest facilities or increase productivity?
	4	Profitability	Capacity to generate a positive net income for GI producers.	Have GI producers been able to obtain reasonable profits, on average, over the past five years? Are they considering switching to other products/sectors? Is profitability high enough to maintain/increase production levels? Are technical advances to improve profitability and efficiency being implemented?
Local economy	5	Local procurement	Positive economic effects of the GI system for local suppliers.	Do GI producers buy their inputs locally, at reasonable market prices? Do local conditions facilitate local procurement? Must certain key ingredients prescribed in the GI specifications be obtained from local producers? Are these producers economically viable?
	6	Local value creation	The GI production process benefits local economies through the creation of employment and the payment of local taxes.	Can the production of the GI product be effectively carried out in the territory? Does economic activity in the territory related to the GI product benefit the local finances and local public investment? Do those who benefit from the value that the GI product generates live in the territory? Does the GI product system favour the creation of formal associations and other positive externalities that contribute to local development?

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<sup>13</sup> See FAO. 2016d. *Handbook on agricultural cost of production statistics. Guidelines for data collection, compilation and dissemination*. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/ca6411en/ca6411en.pdf>

Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/description	Examples of key guiding questions
Product quality and information	7	Product quality	The GI system favours quality production processes and controls that facilitate compliance with the GI product specifications and standards, and encourage the active use of the GI symbol.	What is the share of producers who currently or potentially comply with GI specifications in the territory? What is the volume of GI products currently being commercialized, and what is the share of products with the GI symbol on the label? Are quality processes and controls routinely used within production units and in control points?
	8	Food safety	Potential food hazards inherent to the GI product or the agroecological areas where the GI product is produced, and/or the possible contamination of food with potentially harmful substances.	Do the GI production and distribution processes present food hazards or contamination risks? Do GI producers/organization apply the procedures needed to monitor/avoid hazards and contamination? How are phytosanitary products applied and with what frequency? Is there enough knowledge about possible hazards and/or contamination? Are there product recall procedures?
	9	Product information	Complete, correct and accessible information for consumers and all actors in the value chain; proper GI product positioning.	Does the nature of the GI product require the disclosure of specific information to buyers, authorities and/or consumers? Does the GI product narrative, symbol and marketing reflect its value and attributes? Do GI producers/organization have traceability systems in place for the GI product and key inputs?
Vulnerability	10	Diversification	No dependance on a single source of income or a single market.	Does the income of GI producers depend on only one product/service? Does the income of GI producers depend exclusively on agricultural activities? Do GI producers/system depend on one market or distribution channel?
	11	Liquidity	Ability to sustain appropriate levels of financial liquidity for normal business operations, and ability to access liquidity in times of temporary adverse economic, environmental and/or social conditions that may hamper normal business operations.	Is the monthly income of producers enough to cover production costs? Are there significant differences between the cash flows resulting from GI sales and the resources needed to purchase inputs or make investments? Are external resources/financing available to cover liquidity shortfalls when needed?
	12	Risk management	GI producers and the GI organization understand the major risks they face and have considered possible risk management and mitigation actions, based on available means.	Do external conditions pose a threat to the continuity of the GI system? Have GI producers/organization evaluated the possible effects on production volumes, quality and access to markets of climate change and climate variability, and have they incorporated these considerations into their operations and strategies to meet the GI specifications? Are there plans in place to address or mitigate major risks? Are there risk hedging instruments or policies in place that can be used to reduce price volatility or other risks?
	13	Stability of markets	Demand for the product is consistent and does not depend on a single buyer, and market prices are remunerative, transparent and can be anticipated through available market mechanisms or instruments to make long-term commitments.	How likely is it that products may not be sold at an appropriate time/price? How volatile are GI product prices? Are prices and incentives known by market actors, and are they determined objectively? Does the income of GI producers depend on only one buyer?
	14	Stability of production	GI production trends (quantity and quality), and steps to maintain and/or improve production.	How likely is it that expected production levels are not reached? Do GI production levels change significantly from year to year/season to season due to factors other than changes in demand? Does the production of the GI product vary due to changes in weather patterns (climate variability) or a higher incidence of pests and diseases?
	15	Stability of supply	Capacity to ensure that inputs (goods and services) are delivered on time, in order to reach expected production levels/quality.	How likely is it that required inputs for GI production are not found at an appropriate time/price? Is the production of the GI product affected by a lack of key inputs?

## SUSTAINABILITY TOPICS UNDER THE GOOD GOVERNANCE PILLAR

Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/description	Examples of key guiding questions
Accountability	16	Holistic audits	Internal monitoring and review	Do the GI producers/organization implement regular audits, performed by capable individuals or third parties?
	17	Structure and leadership	Ability of the GI organization's senior managers and governance bodies to avoid conflicts of interest, operate according to the organization's mission and/or code of conduct and provide internal stakeholders with evaluations of their performance.	Do the GI board's composition rules ensure that new and diverse members have access to top decision-making bodies? Are there programmes in place to ensure that decision-makers enhance their capacities to perform according to their responsibilities? Do the GI producers/organization implement regular audits, performed by capable individuals or third parties?
	18	Transparency	Effective access of stakeholders to procedures, policies, decisions and decision-making processes, as well as information on financial performance. Ability to contest the GI organization's decisions following impartial internal processes.	Does the GI organization keep formal minutes of meetings? Does the GI organization have anticorruption policies/policies to manage conflicts of interest? Do the GI organization's reports provide relevant and transparent information to stakeholders, including regular activity reports and reports on the use of financial resources? Are product specification controls reliable and in conformity with agreed procedures?
Ethics	19	Due diligence	Decision-makers consider the potential external impacts of their decisions.	Are decision-making bodies of GI producers/organization aware of the possible risks and consequences of the decisions they make?
	20	Mission statement and purpose	Stakeholders have a clear understanding of the long-term role of the GI system in the collective product strategy and of its expected benefits.	Do GI producers/organization have a clear mission and strategy? Is there an understanding among internal and external stakeholders of the actions and strategies being implemented by the GI organization?
Holistic management	21	Full-cost accounting	The measurement of and reporting on business performance takes into account the direct and indirect impacts on the economy, society and environment.	Do GI producers/association measure the non-monetary impacts of GI production? Do GI producers/association take into account the GI system's sustainability impacts when measuring its overall performance?
	22	Sustainability management plan	A sustainability management plan (with a long-term strategic and holistic sustainability view, consistent with the mission and purpose of the organization) has been endorsed by the GI organization's internal stakeholders and decision-makers. The plan includes considerations regarding the possible negative social and environmental impacts of the GI system and mitigation strategies.	Do GI producers/organization have long-term objectives? Are these objectives regularly reviewed? Is there an implementation plan to reach these objectives? Is this plan regularly reviewed? Is there a system in place to monitor the accomplishment of objectives?

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Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/description	Examples of key guiding questions
Participation	23	Conflict resolution	Resolution of conflicts with stakeholders through collaborative dialogue based on established procedures, respect, mutual understanding and equal power.	Are there established procedures for internal stakeholders to voice their concerns? Does the GI organization know the complaints that its stakeholders have? Are the GI organization complaint procedures followed and verified?
	24	Legitimacy	A GI organization's reputation and ability to influence, based on its ability to represent the interests of GI producers and ensure compliance with internal decision-making rules. It also rests on active communication and understanding of the GI organization's activities by internal and external stakeholders.	Is the GI organization generally viewed as representative of the interests of its members? Does the GI organization know the degree of compliance with its own decision-making rules? Are the GI organization's decisions generally accepted by its stakeholders?
	25	Stakeholder dialogue	Engagement in and communication of decision-making processes and their implementation to all GI stakeholders.	Do GI producers/association make a regular and structured effort to identify stakeholders, their interests and priorities? Do GI producers/association reach out to key stakeholders to communicate their collective strategies and priorities? Does the GI organization regularly reach out to internal stakeholders to understand their concerns and explain its plans and decisions? Do internal stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in the GI organization's decision-making bodies?
Rule of law	26	Civic responsibility	Compliance with all applicable laws. Involvement in the improvement of regulatory frameworks that may affect the GI system.	Are GI producers/organization aware and knowledgeable of local, national and international laws, regulations and standards that apply to the GI production and commercialization processes? Does the GI organization have the ability to defend its members' interests before relevant authorities? Are there strategies to enhance compliance with applicable regulations?
	27	GI product compliance and infringement prevention	Actions undertaken by GI stakeholders to remedy, restore and/or prevent any infringements of applicable regulations, including the GI product specifications. Also, the procedures to deal with possible GI infringements by external stakeholders and other actors.	Does the GI organization have a system to detect GI product infringements within and outside the territory? Is this system being monitored and implemented? Is the system to ensure compliance with GI specifications by GI producers/in the territory perceived as fair and objective? Are there strategies in place to help GI producers implement corrective actions to ensure compliance with specifications?
	28	Resource appropriation	Respect for collective goods and services; facilitate GI producers' access and legal rights to resources such as land and water.	Does the GI organization have knowledge of incidents regarding the illegal appropriation of resources that affect GI stakeholders? Do producers have ownership titles of the land they use? Are there policies for using common resources such as water? Are they being implemented?

## SUSTAINABILITY TOPICS UNDER THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING PILLAR

Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/ description	Examples of key guiding questions
Community safety and health	29	Food security and nutrition	The GI production system promotes healthy diets and supports an ecologically harmonious and local food and agriculture system, based on the right of peoples and communities to define this system themselves.	Does the GI production system promote healthy local diets? Does the GI production system help to preserve and use traditional, heirloom and locally adapted varieties or breeds? Does the GI product comply with nutritional labelling regulations, and does it enhance access to nutritious food (reducing and/or eliminating processing, artificial ingredients and additives that may affect the long-term health of consumers)? Does it provide adequate information to consumers?
	30	Public health	GI product operations and business activities do not affect the healthy and safe lifestyles of the local community by polluting or contaminating water, air and soils.	Can GI production/processing affect the natural capital in the territory or the health of communities? Have complaints been received/ have incidents been reported within the community for public health issues? Do current GI product specifications consider the possible effects of water, air or soil contamination?
	31	Workplace safety and health provisions	The work environment is safe, hygienic and healthy and caters to the satisfaction of human needs, such as clean water, food, accommodation and sanitary installations. GI production processes do not endanger or affect the health of those involved in its production in the short, medium or long term. Permanent, seasonal and family workers are covered by an insurance against accidents in the workplace.	Do GI producers/organization provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees? Do GI product specifications and production processes consider the well-being of producers, contractors and employees? Have there been incidents related to health and safety in the workplace? Are facilities adjusted to workers' needs? Is there health and workplace accident insurance coverage for GI producers and their workers (including family members)?
Cultural diversity	32	Indigenous knowledge and traditions	Recognition and/or protection of traditional and cultural knowledge, to ensure its conservation.	Does the GI product have a link to traditional/cultural knowledge, hence helping to preserve valuable traditions and knowledge? Does the GI production process promote the revival and transmission of traditional practices and knowledge?
Decent livelihoods	33	Opportunities to improve livelihoods	The local community has access to infrastructure (including roads), the internet, capacity development opportunities and other services that allow the GI system to grow, and GI producers and employees to improve their livelihoods.	Are transportation costs substantial relative to the total costs of production? Are the transportation costs of inputs higher than in major urban centres? Do GI producers have access to electronic means of payment under competitive conditions? Are there programmes in place to enhance producers' computer literacy?
	34	Capacity development for increased productivity in the GI system	GI producers and workers have opportunities to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to enhance their performance and undertake current and future tasks required by the GI production process. Availability of resources to provide further training and education.	Have GI producers/organization identified gaps in their skills and knowledge and in that of employees and contractors? Do producers and employees have access to training opportunities to acquire the skills and knowledge they need? Have those involved in the GI production system been trained on the GI product specifications, and do they understand the need to enforce compliance with them?

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Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/ description	Examples of key guiding questions
Decent livelihoods	35	Fair access to means of production	Access to means of production, including land, equipment, capital and knowledge.	Are current (and prospective) GI producers able to access to the needed means of production in the territory? Does the GI organization provide information or services that can help GI producers access the means of production they need? Do GI producers have legal rights to their land and other key means of production?
	36	Poverty and quality of life	Producers and employees enjoy a livelihood that satisfies at least the basic human needs, and allows time for family, rest and culture.	Does the GI territory provide public goods to GI producers and their employees, including access to cultural activities, education for children and health services, required to satisfy at least their basic needs? Is the GI product a source of local pride, and does the GI system provide opportunities to improve the community's standard of living? Do GI producers and their employees receive a net income that surpasses poverty levels and/or legal minimum wages?
Demography	37	Producer and employee retirement	Producers and workers have access to retirement benefits/ health coverage through public and/or private social security and other schemes designed to provide for them in older age.	Do GI producers have access to retirement and long-term health coverage schemes in later age? Are GI workers enrolled in public and/or private retirement and long-term health coverage schemes?
	38	Producer and labour demographics	Sociodemographic characteristics of producers (such as gender, age, educational level, health) that help ensure the continuity of the GI system and the engagement of new generations in GI production processes.	Have GI producers/organization identified risks related to the sociodemographic characteristics of producers and employees? Is working in the GI product value chain an attractive proposition for younger generations? Are working conditions for those engaged in GI production improving?
Equality	39	Gender equality	Absence of gender disparities concerning hiring, remuneration, access to resources, education and career opportunities. Both male and female household members can represent their family farms or family-run operations in the GI organization.	What is the ratio of men to women working for GI producers/ organization? Do women have the same opportunities and remuneration as men? Do women have access to land tenure or decision-making processes? Do GI producers/organization have policies to promote gender equality? Are these policies being implemented? Are women in any way hindered from representing their family farm or family-run businesses in the GI organization?
	40	Non-discrimination	Non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all GI producers, employees or prospective workers based on race, creed, national or ethnic origin, gender, age, handicaps or disabilities, union or political activities, migration status, citizenship status, marital status or sexual orientation.	Do GI producers/organization have policies of non-discrimination? Are these policies being implemented? Have GI producers/ organization received complaints about discrimination or a lack of equal opportunities? Can all producers who comply with the GI specifications obtain GI authorizations in a similar, non-discriminatory way?
	41	Support to vulnerable people	Provide support and make accommodations for vulnerable groups, including young or elderly employees, women, the disabled, minorities and socially disadvantaged groups.	Do GI producers/organization have initiatives to support vulnerable people, including ethnic minorities? Does the GI process promote the involvement of vulnerable people in different production stages?

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Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/ description	Examples of key guiding questions
Labour rights	42	Child labour	No use of child labour that may harm the physical or mental health or hinder the education of minors (in the GI system itself, or in the supply chain).	Are there children working for the GI producers/organization (as defined by local law)? Is there a risk that children's involvement in the GI system affects their health, development or ability to study?
	43	Forced labour	Absence of forced, bonded or involuntary labour conditions and/or abusive terms of engagement (in the GI system itself, or in the supply chain).	Do employers keep their workers' identification cards or passports? Can workers quit at any time, without incurring costs? If loans to employees or contractors are made, are they made in writing, at reasonable rates (not higher than commercial lending rates), with clearly defined costs and payment terms?
	44	Terms of employment and contracting	Maintenance of legally compliant and legally binding, transparent contracts and/or agreements with all employees or workers that are accessible to both parties and clearly cover the terms of work. Any deductions of remunerations should be previously agreed upon to avoid abuses by employers. GI producers and employers have access to social security benefits as required by law.	Are employment or contracting relations clearly written? Do both parties have copies of contracts? Are payments to workers made on time in accordance with contract specifications? Are the terms of work clearly defined and transparent to employees? Do producers, contractors and employees have access to the social security benefits foreseen by the law?
	45	Freedom of association and right to bargain	All persons in the enterprise can freely execute the right to negotiate the terms of their employment, either individually or as a group.	Does the nature of GI production require contracting personnel on a full-time or part-time basis? Can prospective or current contractors/employees exercise their right to free individual or collective negotiation?
Rewarding commercial practices	46	Buying and selling practices for GI products	Transaction prices reflect current market conditions and the quality attributes of the product, and are recorded. Prices are established through honest negotiations. The standards for the GI product that determine its price are well known by both buyers and sellers. The instruments used to measure the weight and other components of transactions, as well as price sources, are reliable.	Do GI producers/organization have the ability to negotiate a sales price that reflects compliance with quality specifications? Do GI producers obtain a price that provides an incentive to produce high-quality products? Are all elements that determine a GI producer's income clearly understood by the producer? Are the sources and instruments that determine price, weight and physical and other product attributes reliable? Does the evidence of transactions involving GI products comply with local regulations (such as formal invoices) and are these transactions recorded for future audits, if necessary?
	47	Incentives for suppliers of GI inputs	The importance of key suppliers is recognized, with the understanding that the long-term viability of these suppliers is intrinsically linked to the long-term viability of the GI product system.	Do GI producers/organization recognize the contribution of key suppliers to the success of the GI product? Are there policies or other instruments whereby the GI system provides incentives to GI input suppliers? Do GI producers/organization promote sound and transparent commercial relationships with suppliers, enforcing clear quality specifications and traceability?

## SUSTAINABILITY TOPICS UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY PILLAR

Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/ description	Examples of key guiding questions
Animal welfare	48	Animal health	Animals are kept free from hunger and thirst, and conditions are provided to prevent injuries and diseases.	Do GI producers/organization implement animal health practices?
	49	Freedom from stress	Animals are kept under species-appropriate conditions and free from discomfort, pain, injury and disease, fear and distress.	Do GI producers/organization implement practices to prevent animal stress? Do GI producers/organization implement humane animal handling practices?
Atmosphere	50	Air quality	Prevention of air pollution and air contamination that may affect workers and surrounding communities.	Do the GI production activities and processes generate air pollutants, odours or emissions that may affect neighbours or local communities? Do GI producers/organization monitor these emissions? Do GI producers comply with regulations regarding these emissions, and have they taken steps to mitigate their effects? Have GI producers/organization developed/implemented practices to prevent air pollution?
	51	Emissions	The main greenhouse gases (GHG) are water vapor (H <sub>2</sub> O), carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ), nitrous oxide (N <sub>2</sub> O), methane (CH <sub>4</sub> ) and ozone (O <sub>3</sub> ); their emissions affect air and atmosphere quality and may contribute to ozone depletion.	Do the GI production activities and processes generate greenhouse gases? Have GI producers/organization identified and measured these emissions? Do the activities and processes related to the production of key inputs for GI production generate greenhouse gases? Have the key input providers identified and measured these emissions? Have GI producers/organization implemented practices to prevent, mitigate and capture greenhouse gases, or taken steps to compensate these emissions?
Biodiversity	52	Ecosystem diversity	The diversity, functional integrity and connectivity of natural, semi-natural and agrifood ecosystems, and its conservation practices in the territory/landscape/area where GI production units are located.	Does the GI production system pose risks to the diversity of the ecosystem? Are steps being taken to preserve surrounding forests and their connectivity? Are steps being taken to preserve marine habitats?
	53	Genetic diversity	The diversity of varieties, cultivars and breeds of domesticated and local species that are part of or relate to the GI product specifications; they may enhance the ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions while conserving GI qualities.	Does the GI product rely on a single genetic lineage, group of varieties or species, according to the GI specifications? Does the GI production rely on locally adapted varieties or rare/traditional varieties? Is research/investment undertaken to ensure such lineage can be preserved under changing environmental conditions (e.g. through genetic improvements)? Have GI producers/organization implemented schemes to produce with genetic lineages other than the most common ones, if viable?
	54	Species diversity	The diversity of wild species living in natural and semi-natural ecosystems and/or domesticated species living in agricultural, forestry and fisheries ecosystems.	Have GI producers/organization developed production schemes that promote species diversity (e.g. crop rotation or intercropping)? Do GI production activities and processes affect species diversity? Have GI producers/organization developed practices to conserve species? Are they being implemented?
	55	Sustainable fisheries	Fishery practices that include a strategy for species conservation.	Have GI producers/organization implemented a strategy to promote the conservation of fish species? Do GI producers/organization comply with regulations regarding fishing licences and practices?

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Theme	SSGI topic number	Topic	Topic definition/ description	Examples of key guiding questions
Land and landscape	56	Landscape, land management and use	The location of the GI units of production complies with zoning/ planning laws in the territory; production practices take into account landscape conservation and regeneration.	Does the location of the GI production unit(s) comply with local zoning/land use regulations? Do land management strategies favour the conservation of biodiversity within the production area? Are agroforestry or similar practices used to maximize biodiversity? Can the GI production system coexist with other land uses? Do GI producers/organization apply different management practices such as agroforestry, crop rotation, etc.? Does the GI system favour landscape conservation and/or regeneration?
	57	Soil quality	Healthy soils provide the best conditions for current and future plant growth. Soil conservation and regeneration practices avoid soil degradation, desertification and the loss of fertile land by ensuring the protection and enhancement of the soil's physical, chemical and biological properties.	Do GI production practices (e.g. fertilization practices) present risks of soil contamination or of changes in the soil's texture or chemical composition? Have GI producers/organization designed or applied practices aimed at preserving soil quality? Do GI production practices present risks of soil degradation (e.g. soil loss or erosion)? Have GI producers/organization designed or applied practices to avoid soil degradation? Are they actively used? Do GI producers/organization apply practices of soil conservation and rehabilitation? Are they actively used?
Materials and energy	58	Efficient use of inputs	Efficient use of inputs and materials needed for production. Recycling and recovery of materials.	Have GI producers/organization identified and measured the key inputs used for production, including fertilizers, energy and packaging materials? Do GI producers/organization have strategies and processes in place for the efficient use of those inputs, according to specific production conditions? Are they actively used? Are there strategies in place to optimize input use and reuse/recycle the materials used in production?
	59	Efficient energy use	Efficient use of energy and energy sources.	Do GI producers/organization measure the energy used to produce the GI product? Have they designed or implemented energy saving practices? Are they actively used? Do the GI producers/organization use renewable energy sources?
	60	Waste reduction and disposal	Waste generation is prevented, and waste is disposed of in a way that does not threaten the health of humans and ecosystems.	Do GI producers/organization measure the generation of waste as a result of GI production? Do they implement policies for waste disposal/waste reduction?
Water	61	Interaction with water systems	Access to quality water is provided when required, and the pollution of the water needed for the GI production process is prevented. Disposal practices for water and other liquids are in place.	Do GI producers discharge water or liquids as part of the GI production process? Do the activities and processes involved in GI production generate water pollutants? Is the quality of the water used/discharged measured? Do GI producers/organization implement actions and practices to prevent or reduce water pollution? Do water discharge practices comply with regulations? Have GI producers/organization identified the risks posed by the use and discharge of water to the water cycle or ecosystem? Is the water currently used by GI producers obtained legally?
	62	Water use	Access to (ground and surface) water is provided in the required amounts.	Does the GI production process require the extraction and use of water? Are there any target water usage, water harvesting or water reusage parameters? Do GI producers/organization monitor the amount of water withdrawals and/or the use of ground and surface water?

## Annex 2

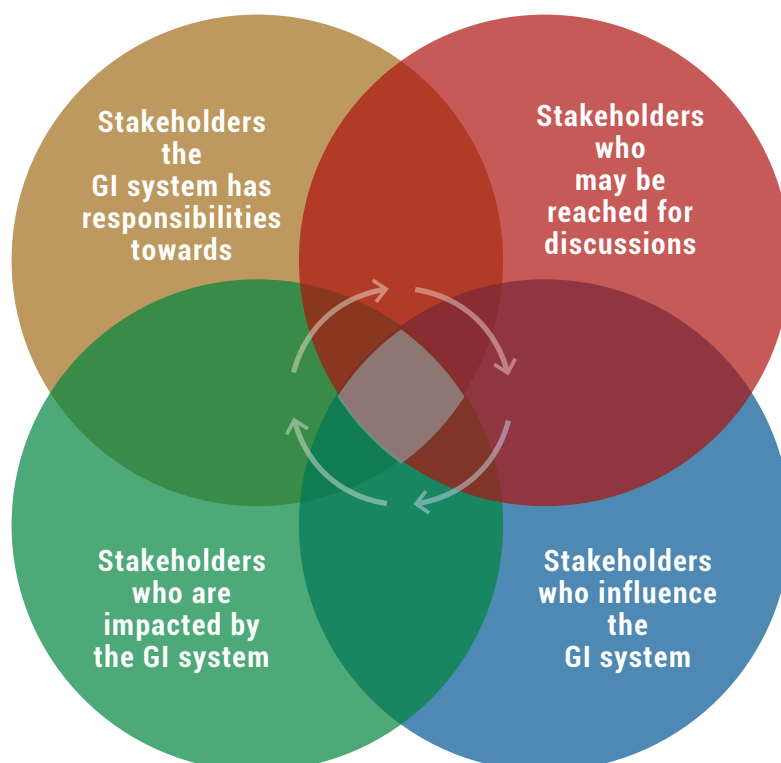
# Stakeholder engagement

### Identifying and classifying stakeholders

Several dimensions can be considered when identifying and classifying stakeholders:

- **by influence:** which stakeholders exert a high degree of influence on the GI system (e.g. regulators, decision-makers, etc.);
- **by responsibility:** which stakeholders does the GI system have legal, financial or operational responsibilities towards (e.g. suppliers, regulators, employees and their families, etc.);
- **by impact:** which stakeholders are affected by the GI system and its operations (e.g. local communities); and
- **by access:** which stakeholders are reachable for a meaningful discussions on sustainability.

The below figure provides an overview of the various categories of stakeholders to consider in the mapping exercise, and illustrates how they can interlink or overlap.




Certain stakeholders may belong to all these categories; these stakeholders should be prioritized for engagement.

## Levels of stakeholder engagement

No engagement	
Exploratory	Ad hoc engagement with stakeholders when opportunities or challenges arise; engagement is focused on learning and exploring topics, and often dependent on individual commitment.
Developing	Engagement processes are sound, with a good design and considerate of stakeholders' needs; however, management systems are patchy, the impact of engagement on actual decision-making is uncertain, and there are no clear performance objectives addressing the topic.
Embedded	Engagement processes are sound, feed into operational decision-making and are embedded in core management processes. Engagement is systematized to ensure that the topic is adequately addressed.
Strategic	Engagement processes are of high quality, embedded in management and governance processes, and linked to business strategies. Topics are thoroughly addressed, often with the objective of bringing about systemic change on a local and global level.

## Engagement approaches: guidelines to developing stakeholder profiles

Stakeholders' views and expectations	<p>Stakeholders have their own views on topics, potential problems, their causes and solutions. Stakeholders who invest time in engaging with a GI organization expect a "return on investment" i.e. responses and actions. Stakeholders' views and expectations should be thoroughly understood; some stakeholders may only expect an open and honest discussion, while others may expect the GI organization to implement operational changes or adhere to certain performance standards.</p> <p>Stakeholders' expectations should be compared to what the organization wants to and can do about a topic, given its resources and strategic objectives (these "margins of movement" are further considered in the next step).</p>
Stakeholders' knowledge of the topic	Be clear about the stakeholder's knowledge of the topic. Some stakeholders know more about a topic than you, and you can learn from them. Others know far less, and you may want to inform or educate them. This may be particularly important if their actions can have a strong direct or indirect impact on the GI system, for example when they influence public policies on a topic.
Legitimacy of stakeholder representatives	Individuals or organizations often function as representatives of a larger group of stakeholders. Be clear about who a representative speaks for. Are they elected or recognized representatives? Do they have legitimacy, is their expertise recognized and do they enjoy broad support? Can representatives provide sample opinions that reflect the views of the broader community?
Willingness to engage	Successful engagement requires willingness on both sides. If there is unwillingness, it is advisable to investigate the reasons for this. Sometimes, unwillingness to engage may be due to circumstances that can be controlled and changed. In other cases, the stakeholders' right not to engage should be acknowledged.
Possible impacts (negative or positive) of the representative on the GI system	Be clear about the possible impacts of the stakeholder on the GI system. How can the stakeholder contribute to the organization's objectives? Can the stakeholder stop the organization from achieving them? A stakeholder's indirect impacts on the system, i.e. through other stakeholders, should also be considered. Some stakeholders' potential impacts on the GI system or on the stakeholder engagement process may be so significant that there is a definite necessity to engage with them.

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Cultural context	Consider the specific cultural context of the engagement (e.g. language, customs for social interaction, gender issues, etc.). This context has an impact on the methods chosen for engagement, as well as on the resources required. The consideration of cultural issues should ideally be undertaken together with someone familiar with that culture, from within or outside the organization.
Geographical scale of stakeholders' operations	The geographical scale at which a stakeholder operates, or is willing to operate, should match your engagement plans and objectives. If you need someone who can engage on a global issue (e.g. climate change), the stakeholder should possess a significant degree of credibility, legitimacy and oversight (e.g. the World Wide Fund for Nature). Meanwhile, an issue such as the environmental implications of the construction of a new factory, can be better addressed in collaboration with the local administration or community.
Stakeholders' capacities for engagement	Stakeholders should be treated as a scarce resource, and their attention and time should be appreciated. Smaller organizations may have very limited financial means and staffing capacities.
Relationships of stakeholders with each other	If you are intending to engage with different stakeholders at the same time or in the same location, or maybe even involve them in the same activity, it is important to understand their views of and relationships with each other. Tensions between stakeholders can have very negative influences on the outcomes of your engagements with them.

## Engagement methods: questions to select engagement methods

Needs and objectives of the GI organization and stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the engagement method allow us to establish the kind of relationship that we want?</li> <li>2. Can the method generate the short- and/or long-term outputs needed to reach our strategic objectives?</li> <li>3. Will the method generate the qualitative or quantitative information that the GI organization needs to make decisions?</li> <li>4. Does the organization have sufficient resources and time to implement this method or mix of methods?</li> </ol>
Stakeholder profiles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Does the method work for the stakeholders with whom the organization wants to engage?</li> <li>6. Is the method in line with the stakeholder's location and mobility?</li> <li>7. Does the method suit the stakeholder's current level of awareness and understanding?</li> <li>8. What practical issues need to be addressed in order to make the engagement accessible/attractive to the stakeholder?</li> </ol>
Context of the relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Does the organization's current relationship with the stakeholder allow this engagement approach?</li> <li>10. Have we known the stakeholders long enough?</li> <li>11. Is the method suitable for the number of people we need to engage with?</li> </ol>

## Annex 3

# List of sources used for the SSGI indicator database

CATEGORY	SOURCE	Indicator source	Indicator source name
Sources related to broad sustainability issues	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2016)	x	SDG's
	Global Reporting Initiative (Global Report Initiative, 2022)	x	GRI
	Bellagio STAMP. principles for sustainability assessment and measurement (Pintér <i>et al.</i> , 2012)	x	
	The ETHOS indicators (ETHOS Institute, 2019.)	x	ETHOS
	UNCTAD guidance on core indicators for reporting on contributions towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (UNCTAD, 2019; FAO, 2021b)	x	UNCTAD-FAO
Sources related to sustainability in agricultural and food systems	FAO's guiding principles for the development of sustainable food value chains (FAO, 2014b)		
	FAO's tool for agroecology performance evaluation (test version) (FAO, 2019b)	x	FAO TAPE
	Indicators: measuring up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (FAO, 2017b)		
	Indicators to monitor and evaluate the sustainability of the bioeconomy (FAO, 2019d)		
	Operational guidelines for the design, implementation and harmonization of monitoring and evaluation systems for climate-smart agriculture (FAO, 2019c).	x	FAO SMART
	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (USAID, 2019)	x	Women's empowerment in agriculture index (WEIA)
	Self-evaluation and holistic assessment of climate resilience of farmers and pastoralists (SHARP) (FAO, 2015)	x	FAO SHARP
	Strength2Food (Bellassen <i>et al.</i> , 2016)	x	Strength2Food
	The COSA measuring sustainability report (Committee on Sustainability Assessment, 2013)	x	COSA
	The 10 elements of agroecology (FAO, 2018)		
	Scope and precision of sustainability assessment approaches to food systems (Schader <i>et al.</i> , 2014)		
	The social dimension of sustainability in agriculture (Janker & Mann, 2020)		
	Compendium of indicators for nutrition-sensitive agriculture (FAO, 2016c)	x	Indicators for nutrition-sensitive agriculture (FAO)

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CATEGORY	SOURCE	Indicator source	Indicator source name
Sources related to sustainability in agricultural and food systems	Feed the Future results framework (USAID, 2016)	x	Feed the Future (USAID)
	Food Sustainability Index (Economist Impact, 2023)	x	FSI
	FAO guidelines for the sustainability assessment of food and agriculture systems (SAFA) (FAO, 2014a and 2014b).	x	SAFA
	Review of indicators of sustainability in agriculture (Latruffe <i>et al.</i> , 2016)		
Sources related to sustainability in GIs	Methodological issues for GI sustainability assessment (Arfini & Pizzamiglio, 2017)		
	Initiatives to promote and evaluate the sustainable practices dedicated to GIs in France (Observatoire des Signes d'Identification de la Qualité et de l'Origine en Hauts-de-France, 2019, Attard, 2021, INAO 2021)	x	INAO & Observatoire SIQO
	Guide for the evaluation of geographical indications, by FAO and the University of Florence (Belletti & Marescotti, 2021)	x	FAO-UNIFI
	Guide to assessing the conditions and impacts of geographical indications (Calvo, Consuegra & Estrada, 2017)	x	INSUCO-IPI
Sources related to sustainability standards and certifications	Bonsucro production standard for smallholder farmers (Bonsucro, 2018)	x	Bonsucro
	C.A.F.E. practices (Starbucks) (SCS Global Services, 2019)	x	C.A.F.E. practices
	Rainforest Alliance (2017)		
	Sustainable Agriculture Framework (Sustainable Agriculture Network, 2018).		
	UTZ (Rainforest Alliance, 2021)		
	The Alliance for Water Stewardship standard (Alliance for Water Stewardship, 2022)	x	Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) standards
	Better Cotton Initiative Principles and Criteria (Better Cotton, 2020)	x	BCI
	Fairtrade standard for small-scale producer organizations (Fairtrade International, 2019)	x	Fairtrade International
Sources related to specific topics	The post-2020 biodiversity framework (OECD, 2019)	x	OECD
	Ethos Corporate social responsibility (Ethos Institute 2023)	x	ETHOS
	EX-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-ACT) (FAO, 2016a)		
	FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022- 2031. (FAO. 2022)		
	Legal Assessment Tool (LAT) for gender-equitable land tenure (FAO, 2014c)		
	Land degradation assessment in drylands (FAO, 2016b)		





# Developing a roadmap towards increased sustainability in geographical indication systems

Practical guidelines for producer organizations to identify priorities, assess performance and improve the sustainability of their geographical indication systems





# Developing a roadmap towards increased sustainability in geographical indication systems

Practical guidelines for producer organizations to identify priorities, assess performance and improve the sustainability of their geographical indication systems

FAO and the Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network (oriGin) have been collaborating since 2016 to develop the Sustainability Strategy for Geographical indications (GIs). GIs are signs used on products that originate from a specific territory and possess qualities or a reputation related to that origin. Through their establishment and management, GIs can stimulate endogenous development when ensuring leadership by local producers, product specifications that are tailored to local conditions and recognition by buyers of products' origin-linked qualities.

This strategy for sustainable GIs aims to highlight and strengthen the relationship between GI systems and sustainability, raise stakeholders' awareness of their role in GI sustainability and boost the sustainability performance of GI systems.

This guide provides a practical step-by-step roadmap for GI organizations that wish to engage on their own sustainability journey. The roadmap consists of three key stages:

- 1 prioritize sustainability topics for the GI system and engage with public and private stakeholders;
- 2 assess needs and establish a baseline for each priority topic; and
- 3 monitor and improve the GI system's sustainability performances, and regularly review the roadmap in collaboration with allies.

Communication is the fourth crucial and transversal component of the roadmap; it improves efficiency during the process and allows stakeholders to share and celebrate the results.

By following the eight steps outlined in this guide, with detailed guidance, examples and models, GI practitioners will be able to design a sustainability roadmap for their GI system, together with stakeholders.

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