

# Delta Project

Wednesday 22 June: 14:05 – 15:00 (55 min)

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## With Speakers:



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| Better Cotton

## Facilitator:



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Delta Project

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## Background, partners, funders

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- 3-year project (03/2019-06/2022) funded by SECO through the ISEAL Innovation Fund
- **Aim** : Develop a **common framework** to measure and report **sustainability performance** in the agricultural commodity sector, in line with the **SDGs** and shared priorities in **cotton & coffee**.
- **Consortium** : Better Cotton, GCP, ICAC-SEEP Panel, and ICO
- **Key partner** : Cotton 2040 Working group on **Impact Metrics Alignment** (Better Cotton, CMiA, Cotton Connect, Fairtrade, MyBMP, OCA, TE, Forum for the Future, Laudes Foundation)



## Rationale

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- Lack of common narrative about what sustainable cotton (or other agriculture commodities) is and its benefits
- Confusion around standards' sustainability messages
- No clear demonstration that sourcing of sustainable cotton actually links to environmental and socioeconomic progress at farm level.
- No clear benefits for the farmers who are providing the data





## Objectives

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- Build multi-stakeholder and cross-commodity consensus for sustainability measurement on key common goals
- Harmonize approaches to assess continuous improvement and progress towards SDG commitments made by private & public sector actors
- Add value to farmers from their own sustainability performance data







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Delta Sustainability Framework

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## Delta Framework expected benefits

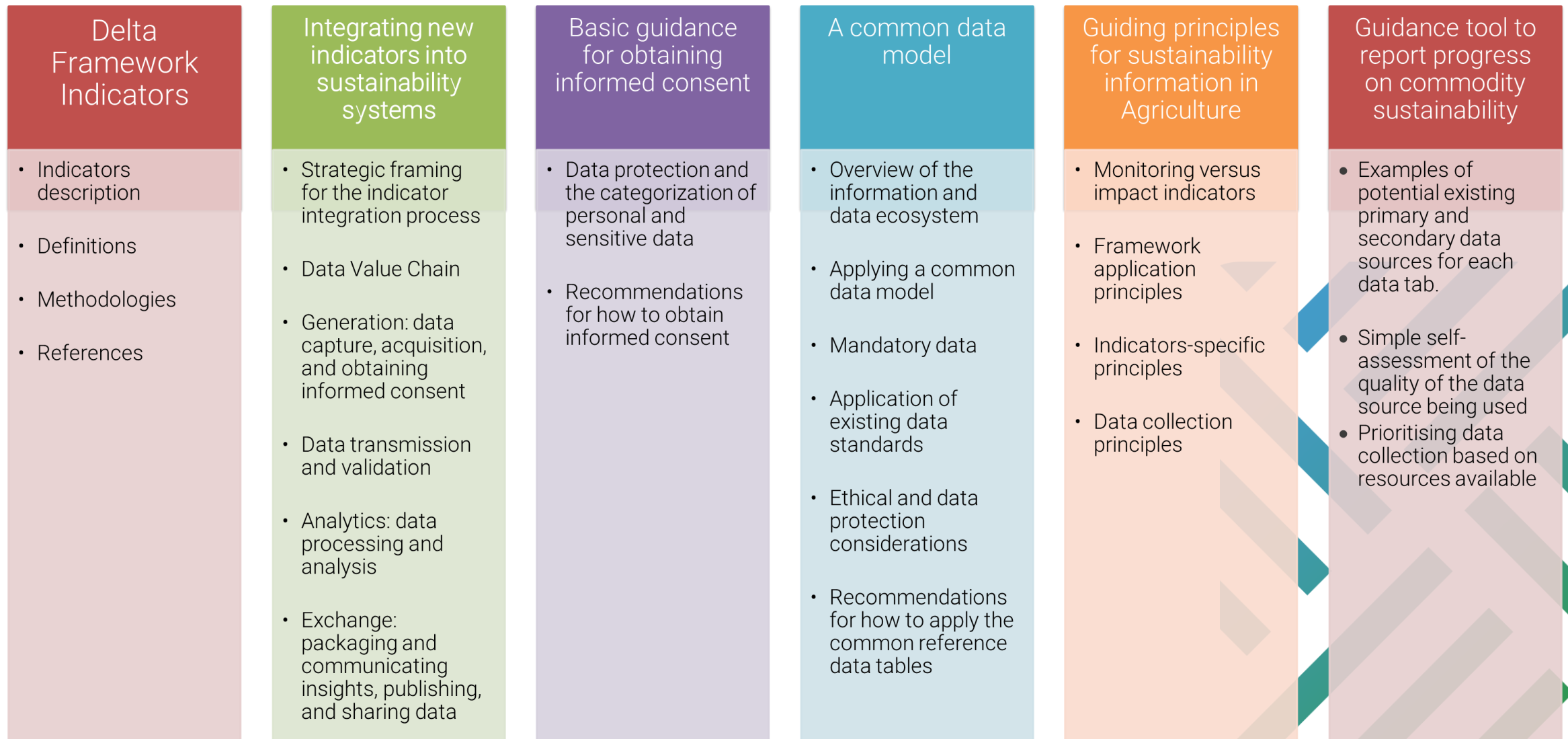
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The Delta Framework was developed with the aim to:

- Be integrated in the Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) Systems of **Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS)** working in agriculture;
- Support **national reporting** on the commitments set by the SDGs and the ratification of international conventions on chemicals, climate change, biodiversity, and labour rights;
- Inform **farm management plans** to ensure an environmentally and financially sustainable agricultural operation;
- Facilitate **transparent communication** with consumers on the actual benefits of sustainably produced goods.



# Delta Framework components





## Delta Framework Consultations

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Consultations to agree first on shared sustainability priorities, and then on the most suitable indicators to measure progress in each area:

- 17 events / 120 people / 54 organisations
- Private & public actors in agriculture
- Sustainability Standards and Cotton 2040 Impact Metrics Alignment working group
- Expert groups and specialized organisations: Global Soil Partnership, Australian Cotton Research and Development Cooperation (CRDC), CARE International, etc.



# Delta Framework Indicators

A common set of 15 cross-commodity indicators selected based on the following criteria:

- Farm-level
- Impact / Outcome
- Limited number
- Alignment with existing sector frameworks, GCP and SEEP
- Global Relevance to measure progress towards SDGs
- Usefulness for global commitments, for comparability & aggregation
- Feasibility to integrate in regular MEL systems: easy of data collection and costs - Pilots to validate feasibility in several countries



## Delta Framework Sustainability Indicators

A common set of environmental, social, and economic indicators to measure sustainability at farm-level across cotton and coffee sectors



### Environmental Indicators

- 1 Use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHP)**  
Unit: kg active ingredient (a.i.) of HHP per ha of harvested land
- 2 Pesticide risk indicator**  
Unit: risk model based on kg a.i. of pesticides applied per ha of harvested land
- 3 Irrigation Water Management**
  - 3.1 Water extracted for irrigation**  
Unit: water extracted for irrigation (blue water) per ha of harvested land
  - 3.1 Irrigation efficiency**  
Unit: percentage of water actually required for irrigation over water extracted for irrigation
  - 3.3 Water productivity**  
Unit: yield (kg of cotton lint or GBE) per m<sup>3</sup> of water consumed per ha of harvested land
- 4 Top soil carbon content**  
Unit: grams of organic carbon per tonne soil per ha of harvested land
- 5 Fertiliser use by type**  
Unit: kg a.i. of N, P, K per ha of harvested land  
In future: Nitrogen Use Efficiency
- 6 Forest, wetland and grassland converted for cotton or coffee production**  
Unit: ha of forest, wetland or grassland converted to cotton or coffee production
- 7 Greenhouse gas emissions**  
Unit: kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per kg cotton lint or GBE



### Economic Indicators

- 8 Average yield**  
Unit: kg cotton lint or GBE per ha of harvested land
- 9 Gross margin from cotton and coffee production**  
Unit: USD per ha seed cotton or GBE  
In future: Living Income
- 10 Price at farm gate** (for premium-based organisations)  
Unit: local currency per tonne of seed cotton or GBE
- 11 Proportion of workers earning a legal minimum wage**  
Unit: daily average earnings for farm labour compared to (rural) minimum wage in USD or local currency, by gender

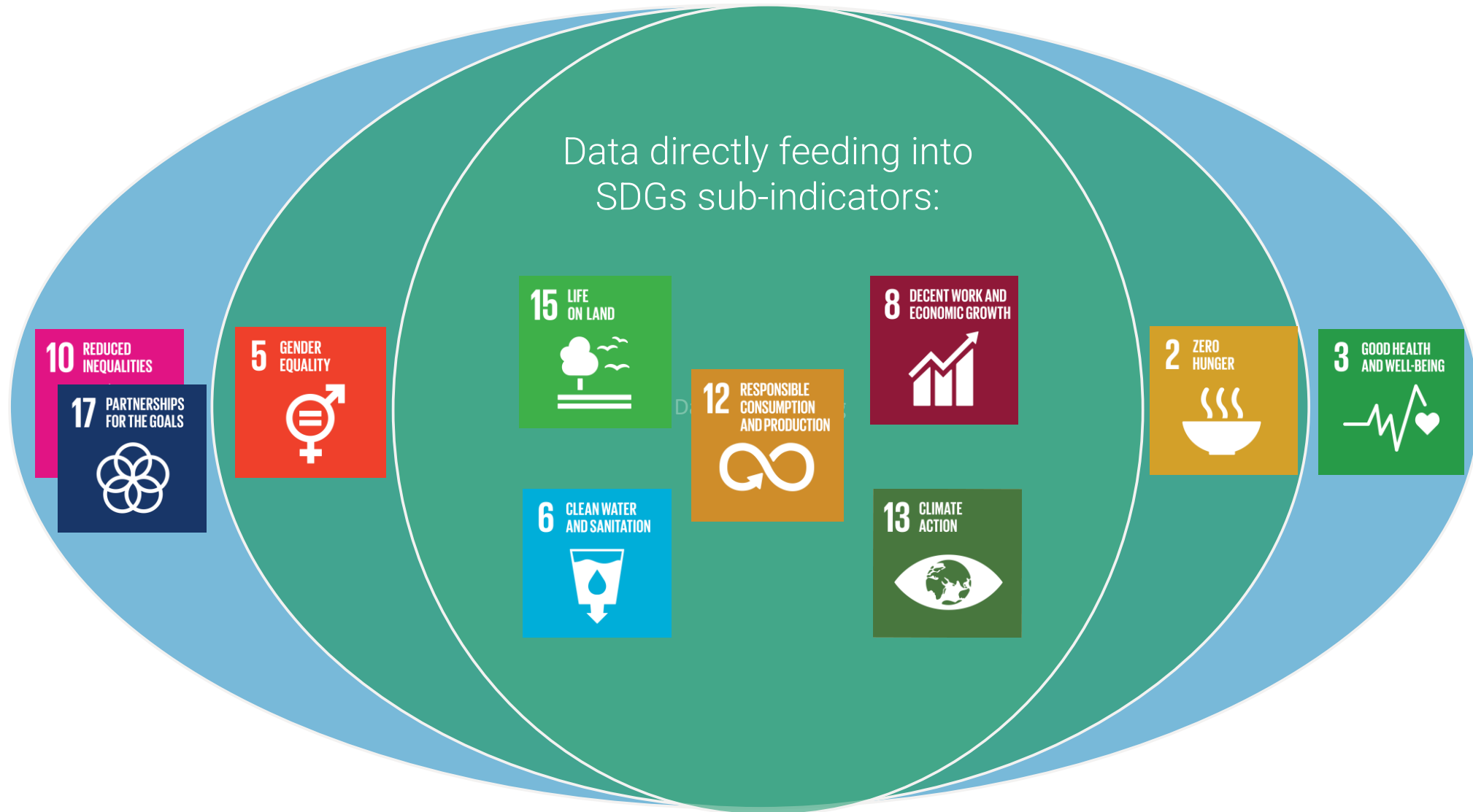


### Social Indicators

- 12 Incidence of the worst forms of child labour**  
Unit: number of children aged 5 to 17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age
- 13 Incidence of forced labour**  
Unit: number of people aged over 17 years engaged in forced labour, by sex and age
- 14 Women's empowerment**  
Composite indicator assessing leadership, decision-making and control of economic assets
- 15 Frequency of fatalities and non-fatalities on the farm**  
Unit: percentage of fatalities and non-fatal injuries in the reference group, by gender



# Alignment with SDGs



## Environmental Indicators

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### Agrochemicals

Highly hazardous pesticides and pesticide risk to biodiversity  
Fertilizer use and NUE

### Water use

Withdrawal, efficiency and productivity

### Soil Health

Soil Organic Content

### Deforestation

Forest, wetland and grassland conversion

### GHG Emissions



## Economic Indicators

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### Yield

Average yield

### Price

Price at farmgate

### Gross Margin

Gross margin from cotton and coffee production (in future: Living Income)

## Social Indicators

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### Wages

Proportion of workers earning a legal minimum wage

### Labour

Incidence of child labour and forced labour

### Gender

Women's empowerment

### Safety

Number of fatalities and non-fatalities on the farm



# Indicators reporting

## Target



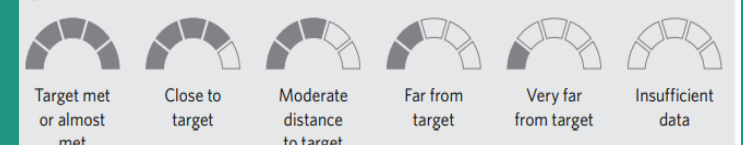
0 for some indicators  
Users to set specific values  
or report on  $\pm$  %

**Recommended frequency:**  
3 years for Environmental  
1 year for Economic  
5 years for Social

## Progress towards set targets

### SDGs examples

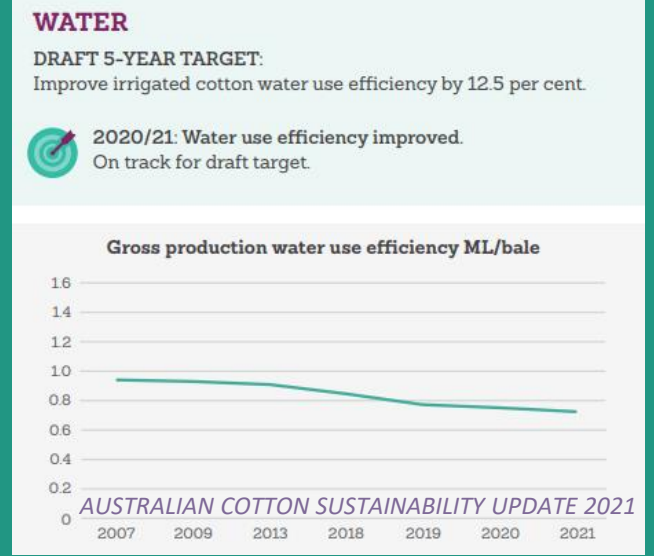
**Current level**



**Trend (colour and arrow, arrowhead)**

- Substantial progress/on track (Green arrow)
- Limited or no progress (Orange arrow)
- Fair progress but acceleration needed (Yellow arrow)
- Deterioration (Red arrow)

## Changes over time




### FERTILIZER USE KG/ha




## Methodological development

A horizontal dotted line in a teal color, extending across the width of the slide.

- 
- A vertical teal bar on the left side of the slide, with a gradient from light to dark teal.
- Water irrigation indicators – adaptation of metrics developed by the Australia Cotton Research Institute
  - Topsoil carbon – guidance on the selection of one metric for soil health sought from the Global Soil Partnership
  - Deforestation – use of the **Global Forest Watch** for coffee, possible adaptation to cotton in future
  - GHG emissions – collaboration with **the Cool Farm Tool** team on data requirements and relevance to cotton
  - Gender – new *ad hoc* **Women Empowerment Index** developed by CARE International

## Gaps

- No water metrics included for rainfed agriculture
  - No open-access GPS-based tool for land use changes in cotton available as of now
- 
- A decorative pattern in the bottom right corner consisting of several overlapping, diagonal bars in shades of teal and green, creating a geometric, abstract design.





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Delta Framework & the  
sustainability community

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## ISEAL Credibility Principles A foundation for impact



## Innovation and improvement priorities include....

1. Meaningful measurement of progress
2. Transparency about results
3. Continual improvement
4. Adding value for users (supporting sector action, sustainability reporting, farmer improvement)

ISEAL is the global membership organisation for ambitious, collaborative and transparent sustainability systems. We're driving collective efforts to tackle the most pressing sustainability issues and create a world where markets are a force for good.



# ISEAL and the Delta Framework

- ISEAL Innovations Fund
- ISEAL Innovations Accelerator: Learning partner
  - Facilitating cross-pilot learning on indicators and on integration of indicators into systems (Indicator integration guidance)
  - Bringing lessons to and from wider sustainability systems community
  - Exploring the future of the Delta Framework
- Experience and frameworks for measurement and data sharing
  - Living income, GHG, landscape scale measurement, etc
  - ISEAL Core metadata



With support from  
State Secretariat  
for Economic  
Affairs (SECO) and  
Laudes Foundation

# Key takeaways and considerations for next steps

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1

An indicator framework is a living thing. It is never 'done'; it needs constant nurturing and evolution.

2

The direction of evolution for the Delta Framework will depend on its key constituencies and objectives.

3

Indicators are only the first part of the challenge – next come measurement at scale, interpretation of results, reporting to support action....

4

There are important tensions between the needs of global actors and of farmers and producers. Watch out for inequities in the allocation of costs and benefits.







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**Future of Delta Framework in the  
sustainable cotton sector**

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## Textile Exchange – Delta Pilot

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- Is the survey and methodology practical and usable?
- Can it be applied to other fibers/materials?
- How do the indicators line up to reporting of Climate+?
- Is our current process sufficient to collect this data?
- Can this be the framework used for Sustainable Cotton Challenge 2025 reporting?

### Pilot Coverage

10 indicators piloted + 3 N/A

204 farms (India) + 55 farms (Brazil) + 10 farms (Peru)



## Key Areas of Development

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- Development/improvement of survey and methodology
- Alignment of methodologies with wider stakeholder groups
- Regionalization and localisation resources
- Learning, value and incentive to farmers
- Increasing adoption and scaling with programs/initiatives
- M&E line up to global reporting of outcome/impact





## Alignment Opportunities with Textile Exchange

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Framework for measuring and reporting outcome/impact:

- Consolidated reporting for Sustainable Cotton Challenge 2025
- Climate+ progress measure
  - **Outcome/impact: GHG + soil health, water and biodiversity**
  - **Considerations: Animal welfare, social**
  - **Global reporting vs program reporting**
- Textile Exchange unified standard development – Fiber Crops Module
- Preferred Fiber and Material Matrix







## Next Step

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Textile Exchange is interested in supporting the next steps for the Delta Framework, further developing methodology and alignment with the international community on impacts measurement, in collaboration with ISEAL and like-minded Standards Owners.

### Call to Action

Resourcing • Awareness • Participation







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Questions & Answers

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Cotton +  
Climate Action

Thank you

