



BENCHMARKING SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS IN WINE

The SWR Global Reference Framework for Sustainability in Wine



Abstract

What does sustainability in wine mean, and how well do current standards allow us to evaluate performance and progress?

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Introduction

This report sets out current best practice, as at summer 2023, on what sustainability in wine looks like: what issues exist, and what tasks need to be undertaken to address these.

The research for this report began as a review of the existing sustainability standards in wine, of which there are many. The sheer quantity of these standards causes confusion since there is no straightforward way of seeing how they compare with one another. SWR's work initially sought to identify the ways in which these existing standards are the same, and the ways in which they differ. The aim when this project began was to facilitate an inter-comparability between existing standards.

However, as that research progressed it became apparent that a bigger issue needed to be addressed than 'simply' to provide a means of inter-comparability of existing wine sustainability standards. That bigger issue was to answer the question "what do we mean by sustainability in wine?" Only to compare wine sustainability standards would be to assume that those standards contain all the knowledge and insight that is needed to define what sustainability in wine involves. This is not necessarily the case.

SWR's research therefore broadened to explore what the wine sector might learn from sustainability initiatives in other agricultural and consumer supply chains. Wine has come relatively late to the business of sustainability. By contrast, other sectors like palm oil, cocoa and consumer manufacturing have been developing their approaches to sustainability for more than two decades. There are experience and lessons that the wine industry can usefully draw on in developing its own approach to sustainability.

Moreover, it is also clear that our current understanding of wines sustainability is only partial. There is much about sustainability in wine which we do not yet fully understand, and where much more work is needed. Wine cannot be sustainable unless all relevant issues have been properly addressed from vine to consumer.

We know a great deal about what sustainability looks like in the vineyard or winery as this is where the bulk of the effort has been made to date. However, we know much less about sustainability issues further along the wine supply chain. This report goes as far as possible in filling some of these gaps, for example by drawing on SWR's work on bottle weight, which has provided an important contribution to our understanding of the sustainability issues related to wine packaging. However, this is only a starting point and much more remains to be done, for example in understanding the relative merits of alternative packaging formats. This report also flags up where we know issues exist, for example in relation to logistics and transport, but where detailed guidance and good practice is yet to be developed.

Our understanding of sustainability in wine is therefore evolving. Sustainability is not a destination, but a journey, and our knowledge about what issues need to be addressed and the approaches needed to do that will expand over time. An example of this is the development of environmental practices in the vineyard as good agronomy is evolving towards an increasing focus on regenerative practices.

SWR wishes to be a central repository of information, insight and understanding of what sustainability in wine involves, and how to do it. As our understanding of the issues expands, and our knowledge about how best to address them so the knowledge of sustainable wine will evolve. This document will therefore be reviewed annually, to reflect these changes.

PART 1: DATA AND ANALYSIS

Research process

This document, and the development of the Global Reference Framework has been based on extensive research by SWR in 2022-23. This research has included :

- Desk based reviews of more than 30 of the existing sustainability standards in wine. This has included examination of the sustainability approaches of global wine organisations, FIVS and OIV
- Reviews of sustainability approaches used by other analogous sectors. In selecting relevant other standards to explore, we have focused on those applied to other agricultural supply chains, and to consumer-focused
- More than 100 interviews with representatives of organisations at all stages of the wine supply chain, and in others. This includes growers, brands, standards holders, government representatives, retailers and others.

This research has divided into a number of phases. The first of these focused on reviews of existing wine sustainability standards, and interviews with the organisations behind these. This enabled SWR to explore the complexity of this web of standards, and demonstrated that these differ in many more ways than simply the range of issues that they cover. The findings of this phase of work was presented to the SWR membership in October 2022.

The second phase of work then focused on approaches to sustainability used in other sectors. Again the approach was to begin with a desk-based review of each standard, followed by interviews with the organisation behind it. The results of this phase of work was presented to members in May 2023.

The final effort has drawn all of the lessons from within and without the wine sector to create a clear statement of what sustainability in wine can currently be held to encompass. This is set out in this current paper. The final section of this report sets out where SWR will go next. The GRF is not intended to be a standard, but its creation will, for the first time, allow the benchmarking of the plethora of standards around the world against a clear statement of what sustainability encompasses. It will also be necessary to update the GRF on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects our growing understanding of sustainability in wine, for example around packaging and logistics.

Developing a Global Reference Framework for sustainability in wine

Unpicking complexity

This document developed out of a process to benchmark the existing sustainability standards in wine. As that process developed, it became apparent that an effective benchmark required a prior and deeper piece of analysis: to define the current best state of knowledge about what sustainability in wine actually looks like. However, this topic is routinely referred to as 'complex'. SWR's work therefore had to begin by separating out the layers of complexity and carefully analysing each one in turn.

Sustainability: journey or end-point?

As is the case in many other sectors, wine producers want to be able to say categorically that "my product is sustainable." This suggests that sustainability is a destination. Yet the reality is that sustainability is a journey: what we understand by 'sustainability' has changed considerably over time, and will continue to do so.

This is demonstrated by the considerable changes that have occurred since the first occasion when 'sustainability' was formally described. In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission¹ defined the term as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Whilst this phrase provides an elegant one-liner on the topic, the reality is that the set of issues which now fits within our understanding of sustainable development has changed considerably over the intervening 35 years. For example, in 1987, the environmental focus was on issues like deforestation. The interplay between environmental and societal sustainability was much less well understood than is the case today, and the term 'regenerative agriculture' remained decades in the future.

In practice what this means is that it is not possible to say that "this wine is sustainable"; but rather "this wine is sustainable in those areas which we currently understand." This is reflected in the way in which many of the existing standards operate, in undertaken regular reviews of what they encompass, and of what is seen as best practice. However, what few existing standards reflect is that the scope of sustainability in wine needs to expand beyond the current focus, which is mostly at vineyard and winery level, to encompass more of the value chain.

This reflects the view taken by OIV, which in the preamble to its Guide for the Implementation of Principles of Sustainable Vitiviniculture, states that "there is no exhaustive list of actions that an organisation must undertake to be sustainable. On the contrary, once an initial plan has been put in place, the process is constantly improved by researching best practices and introducing them into the organisation's activities if appropriate."²

What do 'standards' do?

A further reason why debates about wine sustainability becomes so complex is the fact that the use of the term 'standards' leads to the conflation of two separate, but related issues. The term

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development. *Our Common Future*. United Nations, New York 1987 [Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development \(un.org\)](#) (accessed 03/08/23)

² OIV. *Guide for the Implementation of Principles of Sustainable Vitiviniculture*. [OIV guide for the implementation of principles of sustainable vitiviniculture | OIV](#) (accessed 21/08/23)

‘standard’ is in many people’s minds synonymous with ‘certification’. In reality, the term ‘standard’ in fact relates to two agendas:

A guide to operational management

The first agenda, and perhaps the most important, is to providing guidance and support to those running vineyards and wineries about what tasks ‘sustainability’ requires of them. Sustainability is complex and will require these businesses to address a wide range of issues, from viticultural practices to carbon management to labour standards. Work on wine standards therefore needs to provide a clear inventory of what this range of issues is, so that wine businesses around the world have a shared understanding of how to move towards sustainable business practices. This fits with SWR’s core mission, over time, to provide a comprehensive analysis of what sustainability in wine looks like.

A process for external verification

The terms ‘sustainability standard’ is most usually understood as a certification which allows, in this case vineyards and wineries to be able to demonstrate performance on sustainability to external audiences. Increasing demands from investors, customers and regulators means that the second agenda which the SWR GRF needs to address is for transparent, comparable certification standards. Part of the reason for this is to provide clarity to those at the market end – retailers and end consumers – who want to increase the proportion of ‘sustainable’ goods that they buy. At present, the sheer range of wine sustainability standards is confusing, since buyers do not really know how valid claims are of a product being ‘sustainable’, or to understand how different standards cover the same ground or diverge.

The role of the Global Reference Framework

All of the above has led SWR to realise the need for a Global Reference Framework (GRF) on sustainability in wine. This will, to refer to the paragraphs immediately above, provide a clear guide to those in the sector on what constitutes best practice in sustainability. The role of the existing wine sustainability standards remains to provide a process for external verification.

This is set out later in this document and builds on sustainability best practice in the wine industry and learns from the experience in others sectors. The GRF will not itself be a standard to which wine businesses can be accredited, but rather it will:

- Draw together all existing work, and become a central repository of information and insight on wine sustainability
- Identify best practice in each issue area, and so provide encouragement to the rest of the industry
- Address the risks of greenwashing by identifying the level of activity which a wine business needs to take in each area which is consistent with a genuine commitment to sustainability in the long term.
- Allow existing standards organisations to identify where their requirements may fall short in reflecting the entirety of the sustainability agenda and change their requirements accordingly.
- Identify emerging gaps within the sustainability agenda (for example at present in the area of logistics) so that both the issues can be understood, and best practice developed.

- Provide the basis for cross-comparing between standards, for the benefit of buyers and consumers. A structured benchmarking process will be undertaken by SWR in 2023-24.

Addressing the needs of key stakeholders

In undertaking this benchmarking process, SWR needs to be informed by the interests and needs of different groups of its members and other stakeholders within and outside the wine sector:

- **Standards owners:** This group feels itself already overly-benchmarked. Standards setters want to be allowed to get on with their job with minimal interference from others, but also want their standard to be accepted across the supply chain as rigorous and credible.
- **Wine businesses:** The primary requirement of standards from the perspective of vineyards and wineries is twofold. First, they want clear guidance about how to address issues of sustainability. Secondly, they need to know how this will help their access to market.
- **Other wine industry actors:** As is apparent from the review of wine sustainability standards currently in place, almost all of the focus to date has been on practice at vineyard and winery level. There is a need for others in the sector gradually to understand the implications for them of sustainability, which the GRF will be able to address over time.
- **Retailers:** These organisations want a yardstick to be able to compare apparently un-comparable wine sustainability standards. And they want to be able to do this in order to communicate clearly about these issues with their buying teams and customer base.
- **Regulators:** Many, if not all of the issues incorporated in the GRF are increasingly matters under greater scrutiny by regulatory frameworks in different jurisdictions. Developments such as the increasing focus on identifying and limiting Scope 3 emissions, and the EU's upcoming supply chain due diligence regulations are examples of this. Greater clarity about what individual standards mean, and how they compare to an objective assessment of 'sustainability in wine' will be important to the whole sector in addressing this greater scrutiny.
- **Media and campaigners:** There is a clear focus amongst audiences such as civil society groups and the media on what gets termed 'greenwashing' – the making of claims about sustainability which are false or misleading. Benchmarking of existing standards against an objectively derived global sustainability framework (the GRF) will make it much easier for those in the wine sector to communicate clearly about what they are doing in sustainability, and to refute claims of greenwashing.

Why not a global standard?

Early in its work, SWR did explore the idea of creating a single, global standard for sustainability in wine. The aim of this would have been to provide a single, universally-applicable standard, so avoiding the perceived confusion created by the plethora of standards which currently exist.

However, it became clear that such a global standard was neither achievable nor desirable. Firstly, many of the existing standards are well-established, have considerable loyalty from the wine businesses with which they work, and in some cases are well known by consumers and others. A new, international standard would struggle to gain traction in these circumstances.

However, secondly, and more importantly, most of the standards which exist have developed in quite specific geographic areas. Some are national, some regional, and some focused on a relatively small area. However, in each case, the standard has been evolved to respond specifically to the particular issues which exist in that location. Wines themselves are defined by their terroir; it makes sense that wine standards should also be defined in the same way.

Drawing on the model of the International Standards Organisation

SWR is in no way seeking to compare itself to the ISO, however it is clear that the model and approach that this institution uses has lessons for how SWR can approach its work on wine sustainability standards. As ISO observes, many of the standards which eventually are promulgated internationally actually begin as national-level standards, designed to respond to a range of factors which might include a request from the government to use a standard as a technical regulation to support consumer protection, or it might be a request from an industry group to address interoperability problems or from a consumer group to describe the risks associated with adventurous activities.

ISO describes itself as “a bridging” organization. It can develop solutions that meet both the requirements of business and the broader needs of society, including stakeholder groups like consumers and other users.” This appears to be a model which could usefully inform SWR in the development of the GRF, and the relationship of that to existing standards bodies.

Building the Global Reference Framework for Sustainability in Wine

The development of the GRF has been based on research into three areas:

- **Existing knowledge and experience in the wine sector.** Although much of the sector has relatively newly-come to the sustainability agenda, some areas and organisations have been working in this space for many years.
- **Lessons learned in other sectors.** Companies in other industries have also been working to understand what sustainability means for them and how to achieve it. These experiences and lessons learned can inform the approach taken by the wine industry.
- **Identify what is missing.** Sustainability needs to address the whole supply chain, from vine to consumer. Most work to date has focussed on practices in vineyards and wineries and so there is a need to explore the gaps and how they might be filled.

Existing knowledge in the wine sector

Significant work has been undertaken in the wine sector itself to advance our understanding of the issues relevant to sustainability. This has been undertaken by multilateral organisations, and by individual wine standards operating in different locations.

The International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV)

The international organisation for the grape and wine sector is the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV). This is an intergovernmental body, set up in 2001 which deals with technical and scientific aspects of viticulture and winemaking. Its work also encompasses table grapes and raisin production. Its membership is of 49 members states, and it replaced the earlier International Wine Office established in 1927. The aim of the organisation is to provide international codification on issues such as labelling, definitions of grapes, and key oenological practices. It also provides technical input topics of concern to member states.

OIV first published guidance on sustainability in 2004, and in 2016 introduced a *Guide for the implementation of principles of sustainable vitiviniculture*.³ In effect, therefore, there exists a ‘mother document’ backed by the governments of 49 wine producing countries setting out key issues in wine sustainability. This Guide is based on five key principles, each of which contains a number of key ‘areas for action’, for each of which ‘proposed actions’ are provided.

Principle	Areas for action
1. Sustainable approach integrates environmental, social and economic aspects	● Overview and analysis of existing regulations
	● Integration of sustainable production approaches within the governance structure of the organisation

³ OIV. *Oiv guide for the implementation of principles of sustainable vitiviniculture*. 2016. [Oiv guide for the implementation of principles of sustainable vitiviniculture | OIV](#) (accessed 24/04/23)

2. Sustainable vitiviniculture respects the environment	• Selection of the vineyard and winery site
	• Soil management
	• Preserving biodiversity (inc soil biodiversity)
	• Preserving the landscape
	• Input management
	• Output management
	• Limiting noise and air pollution
	• Adaptation to climate change and mitigation of climate change
3. Sustainable vitiviniculture is sensitive to social and cultural aspects	• Working conditions/ labour practices
	• Integration with the local socio-economic and cultural environment
	• Health and safety of consumers
4. Sustainable vitiviniculture seeks to maintain economic viability	• Resilience (ability of the organisation to support disruptive pressures)
	• Efficiency
5. Sustainable initiatives require planning and assessment	• Planning, assessment / self-assessment, monitoring and development of knowledge
	• Responsible and transparent communication

The Federation Internationale desVins et Spiritueux (FIVS)

Another international wine organisation, the Federation Internationale des Vins et Spiritueux (FIVS) has also produced guidance on sustainability within the wine sector. FIVS is a global industry organisation whose members include national wine and spirits trade bodies, government entities and producers. A key plank of its work in sustainability is on the market end of the industry, focusing on responsible marketing and communication on the part of the industry, and moderation in consumption by consumers. In relation to the production of wine, FIVS has produced its Global Wine Producers Environmental Sustainability Principles (GWPESP), which “provide a framework to promote a coordinated, efficient and results-driven approach for the international wine industry’s environmental sustainability efforts.”

1. Site selection (for new vineyards/ wineries)
2. Variety selection (for new vineyards)

3. Soil condition
4. Water use efficiency
5. Wastewater
6. Carbon accounting
7. Transportation and fossil fuels
8. Biodiversity
9. Solid waste
10. Energy use
11. Air quality
12. Neighbouring land area
13. Agrochemical use
14. Human resource management

FIVS does not provide as deep a level of advice to companies about the detail of what needs to be done in each case. Nevertheless, there is clearly a significant overlap with OIV in the broad topics to be tackled.

National/ regional wine standards

There exist a significant number of national, regional and local sustainability standards. These have been developed in a number of ways. Some have emerged from like-minded groups of wine growers in a given location deciding to develop common structures and practices in relation to sustainability. Others have been developed by national wine representative bodies, and others have emerged in relation to criticisms of the sector on sustainability issues.

SWR conducted a review of 30 of the largest existing standards in late 2022, and the results of that are set out in a presentation available on the SWR website. Analysis of the different approaches taken by standards bodies, and the ways they operate is also set out elsewhere in this report. However, focusing specifically on the areas of sustainability contained in these standards, key factors across them are as follows:

- **The vineyard/ winery environment:** Most standards cover issues of good farm environmental practices, for example water use, energy consumption, use of chemical inputs and pest control.
- **GHGs and carbon:** A small number of standards go further on the environmental journey and include requirements around issues such as carbon sequestration and regenerative agriculture.
- **Commerciality:** Sustainability is intended to rest on three pillars, “people, planet, profit.” A number of standards reflect this by having as requirements for certification good practice on issues such as business planning, succession planning and good financial management.
- **Human and social:** Most standards contain requirements regarding good human resource management. Typically, this includes issues such as processes for recruitment, use of appropriate PPE, and provision of continuing education. Many also cover issues to do with being a good neighbour.
- **Outliers:** There is a range of other issues required in each case by only a small number of standards. These include factors such as winery design, packaging choices, use of renewable energy, modern slavery and living wage.

Intertek benchmark for Systembolaget and the Nordic Alcohol Monopolies.

As part of its “Most Sustainable Beverages” category, Systembolaget commissioned independent consultants Intertek to undertake an annual review and comparative study of a significant number of

the various existing sustainability standards in wine. In the study, Intertek looks at a variety of environmental issues related to cultivation and production, such as biodiversity, soil health, chemical use, water management, waste management, energy and climate. At present, this study has identified 28 standards which reach the required benchmark to qualify for this categorisation, including Equalitas (Italy), Napa Green and LIVE (California), and Wines of Alentejo (Portugal). Systembolaget engages with standards bodies to attempt to effect change, and the benchmarking is also used by other of the Nordic Alcohol Monopolies (NAMs). It is this benchmarking exercise which provided a key base for this wider process under SWR. The issues addressed are as follows:

Governance	Social	Environment (vineyard)	Environment (winery)
• Auditor requirements • Quality oversight of 3rd party • Scheme revision and engagement • Board members • Report validation	• Freedom of association • No discrimination • Fair remuneration • Working hours • HSE • Child labour • Protection for young workers • No precarious employment • Bonded labour • Ethical business behaviour	• Soil health • Crop/ pest management • Fertilizer use • Biodiversity • Energy use and climate impact • Resources and waste management • Water use and treatment	• Energy use and climate impact • Water use and treatment • Use of resources and waste handling • Emissions (land, air, water) • Packaging material

Learning from other agricultural value chains

Wine has come relatively late to the question of sustainability in its supply chain. However, for many other agricultural commodities, these are issues which have been current, in some cases for more than two decades. It is important, therefore, to consider the issues contained in sustainability standards in other sectors, to see what lessons the wine industry can learn.

ISO 26000

ISO – the International Standards Institute – is an international standards development organisation composed of representatives from the standards organisations of its members states. Established in 1947, it has published over 24,500 standards covering a huge range of issues. Instead, it helps clarify what social responsibility is, helps businesses and organizations to “translate principles into effective actions and shares best practices relating to social responsibility, globally. It is aimed at all types of organizations regardless of their activity, size, or location.”⁴

As can be seen from the schematic below, this standard covers much of the same ground as other standards both in the wine sector and from elsewhere. Two points however are important to stress in taking lessons from this standard into the work in developing the GRF in wine:

⁴ ISO. *ISO 26000 ISO - ISO 26000 — Social responsibility* (accessed 210823)

- This standard separates out labour practices and human rights as two different areas of activity. The former encompasses day-to-day staff management, whilst the latter focuses on what an organisation needs to do to address wider societal human rights challenges.
- It also stresses the interdependence of the issues cited. What this demonstrates is that whilst sustainability issues to be categorised and managed as separate works streams it is always necessary to remember that they are interlinked. Hence an holistic approach is also needed. Crucially this needs to inform how individual wine businesses work with each other. Many sustainability issues are not company-specific, but affect a wider landscape. Examples of this would include watershed management, and human rights challenges.



Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI)

SAI Platform brings together over 170 member companies and organisations in sustainable agriculture worldwide.⁵ These members are companies from across the food and drink industry, including farmer cooperatives, manufacturers, processors, retailers and traders. SAI seeks to identify collective approaches to the development of sustainable supply chains in a range of commodities, focussing in particular on beef, dairy and cereal crops. For example, SAI runs the European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability, and the Sustainable Dairy Partnership. It is also working on geographically-specific projects on orange production in Florida, and peanut farming in Argentina⁶.

SAI Platform therefore has significant experience drawn from a range of agricultural sectors, and this insight can be leveraged to support the development of sustainability in the wine sector. The organisation has developed a *Farm Sustainability Assessment* (FSA) tool, which is designed to “enable food and drink businesses to assess, improve, and validate on-farm sustainability in their supply chains.”⁷ This consists of a relatively simple set of questions, aimed at farms, exploring the following range of issues:

1. Farm management and community

⁵ SAI Platform. *Sustainable agriculture for a better world*. [SAI Platform — Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform](#) (accessed 21/04/23)

⁶ SAI Platform. *Our work*. [Our Work — SAI Platform](#) (accessed 21/04/23)

⁷ SAI Platform. Join the industry wide movement of companies growing a better planet. [Farm Sustainability Assessment — SAI Platform](#) (accessed 21/04/23)

2. Plant material selection and propagation
3. Soil management
4. Nutrient management
5. Crop protection
6. Waste management
7. Water management
8. Biodiversity
9. Air quality and emissions
10. Labour conditions

There is clearly a good deal of overlap between the issue categories in this tool, and those contained in the OIV standard. Necessarily, the issues in the FSA are more broadly framed than in the OIV code, as the questions are designed to be applicable equally to a wide range of agricultural supply chains. What is noteworthy however, is the much greater focus in the FSA on labour conditions. 37 of the 180 or so questions are focused on this area.

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

Palm oil has long been a controversial commodity, which has strong association with deforestation and environmental damage, and with low incomes for smallholder farmers. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil was established in 2004 with the objective of promoting the growth and use of sustainable palm oil products through global standards and multistakeholder governance. In 2018, the organisation issued its *Principles and Criteria for the Production of Sustainable Palm Oil*. This built on previous guidance initially introduced in 2007, and stated that “sustainable palm oil production comprises legal, economically viable, environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial management and operations.” This set out seven key principles, set out under three ‘impact goals’, which are as follows:

Impact goals	Principles
Prosperity: competitive, resilient and sustainable sector	1. Behave ethically and transparently
	2. Operate legally and respect rights
	3. Optimise productivity, efficiency, positive impacts and resilience
People: sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction	4. Respect community and human rights and deliver benefits
	5. Support smallholder inclusion
	6. Respect workers’ rights and conditions.
Planet: conserved, protected and enhanced ecosystems that provide for the next generation	7. Protect, conserve and enhance ecosystems and the environment.

The areas of focus in this set of principles reflects the particular set of issues that the palm oil industry needs to respond to. However, once again there are comparisons with the OIV standard, and with the content of many other wine standards. In particular, a focus on the need for economic durability. However, as with the SAI's FSA tool, described above, it is interesting to note here also a strong focus on the 'people' aspects of sustainability.

Consumer Goods Forum (CGF)

The challenge that SWR is seeking to address in the wine sector – the need to be able to navigate through a plethora of sustainability standards that exist – is one that occurs also in other sectors. In its work, the SWR can therefore draw on the experience of other organisations which have attempted to address this challenge.

One that has done so in similar supply chains is the Consumer Goods Forum. CGF is a trade body bringing together around 400 companies in the consumer goods sector, including retailers, manufacturers, service providers and others. The organisation's mission is "to drive positive change and help address key challenges impacting the industry, including environmental and social sustainability, health, food safety and product data accuracy."⁸

As CGF puts it, when it comes to sustainability, there are "hundreds of schemes on the market to choose from, and dozens more emerging each year, it can be challenging for organisations to know which scheme to trust. The decision becomes more challenging given that not all auditing schemes cover social sustainability measures the same way, resulting in distrust in audits and misalignment in the industry."⁹

To support companies in their supply chain due diligence, in 2017, the CGF launched the Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative (SSCI) "to recognise third-party auditing schemes and programmes that cover key sustainability requirements and apply relevant governance and verification practices."

Central to the SSCI is the quality of the management and audit practices of different standards. In terms of functional issues, at present the Initiative focusses on social compliance issues. However, the intention is to expand the scope in due course to cover also environmental factors. Presently, therefore, SSCI's core benchmark requirements cover the following issues:

Topic	Criteria
Scheme management: governance	● Scheme governance
	● Scope and objectives
	● Integrity programme
	● Logo use and claims
	● Standards setting and maintenance.

⁸ Consumer Goods Forum. *Our mission: better lives through better business*. [Our Mission : Better Lives Through Better Business - The Consumer Goods Forum](#) (accessed 24/04/23)

⁹ Consumer Goods Forum. *Building trust in sustainability standards worldwide*. [2020-SSCI-One-Pager-Final-1.pdf \(theconsumergoodsforum.com\)](#) (accessed 24/04/23)

Scheme management: operational management	● Accreditation
	● Relationship with audit firms
	● Auditor competence
	● Audit protocol
	● Audit reporting
	● Follow up action
	● Data management
Social	● Compliance with national legislation
	● No forced, bonded or prison labour
	● No child labour
	● Freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.
	● No discrimination, harassment or abuse
	● Health and safety
	● Building and fire safety
	● Wages, benefits and terms of employment
	● Working hours
	● Grievance mechanisms.

To achieve SSCI Recognition, programmes need to undergo benchmarking according to the SSCI methodology. This process starts with an application to the SSCI team and includes a self-assessment, a desktop review by an independent SSCI expert. This is followed by an office visit from the SSCI alongside a public consultation, and a final industry validation by the SSCI Steering Committee. If all criteria are met, the scheme is recognised by the SSCI.

As with a number of the other non-wine standards reviewed here, many of the issues covered are repeated, for example in this case the importance of governance and audit to ensure and verify performance. However, it is also important to observe that the SSCI clearly regards compliance with national regulation in relation to human rights as an insufficient performance requirement on its

own. This standard draws out a number of specific ‘human’ issues on which organisations need to demonstrate performance, whether or not that might be included in national legislation.

Amfori BSCI Code of Conduct

Amfori is a business association with around 2,400 members which include retailers, importers brands and others from around 40 countries. Members are drawn from a range of sectors, and the organisation’s stated goal is to work with “companies across the globe to operate successful and responsible businesses, by helping them improve the Environmental, Social and Governance performance of their value chains.”¹⁰

As long ago as 2009, the organisation set out a ‘code of conduct’ designed to “reflect the beliefs of Amfori BSCI Participants and the expectations they have towards their business partners.” This Code has been updated on several occasions since then. It is heavily focused on human rights issues, and explicitly state that it derives from international conventions such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Children’s Rights and Business Principles, and the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights.

As with many of the other standards and approaches reviewed in this document, Amfori BSCI stress the importance of continual improvement within their approach and the audit process seeks to reflect this ambition. Since the Code is designed to apply to a range of different organisational types, there are three types of audit available: on-site audits for larger producers; multi-tier audits aimed at food producers wanting to assess the social performance of a significant business partner and a sample of its next-tier business partners; and small producer audit.¹¹ Engagement also requires participants to sign a ‘Terms of Implementation’ document which commits companies “to take, within their sphere of influence, all reasonable and appropriate measures to promote their implementation in their supply chain.”

As noted, the Amfori BSCI standard focuses heavily on the human rights agenda. It’s principles are as follows¹²:

- **The rights of Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining:** There are three components:
 - Respect the right of workers to form unions in a free and democratic way
 - Not discriminate against workers because of trade union membership
 - Respect workers’ right to bargain collectively.
- **No discrimination:** There shall be no discrimination against, exclusion of, or preference for persons on the basis of a range of characteristics, including race, gender, political affiliation and sexual orientation.
- **Fair pay:** Companies must y respect the right of the workers to receive fair remuneration that is sufficient to provide them with a decent living for themselves and their families, as well as the legally-granted social benefits. Other detailed stipulations are made
- **Decent working hours:** Workers cannot work more than 48 regular hours per week. Exceptions stipulated in the relevant ILO conventions are permitted.
- **Occupational health and safety:** Workers have the right to work in a safe environment, and have relevant protective equipment provided to them. Vulnerable individuals, such as new workers or expectant mothers should receive special attention.

¹⁰ Amfori. *About Amfori* [amfori](https://amfori.org) (accessed 12/10/23)

¹¹ Amfori *Amfori BSCI System Manual* [Part II the amfori BSCI monitoring system.pdf](#) (accessed 13/10/23)

¹² Amfori. *Amfori BSCI Code of Conduct* [BSCI Code of Conduct \(amfori.org\)](https://amfori.org/BSCI-Code-of-Conduct) (accessed 13/10/23)

- **No child labour:** Companies must not employ directly or indirectly, children below the minimum age of completion of compulsory schooling as defined by law, which shall not be less than 15 years,. Again exceptions recognised by the ILO are permitted.
- **Special protection for young workers:** such protections include prohibition of work which might be prejudicial to a young person's health and development. They should also be permitted to engage in education and vocational orientation.
- **No precarious employment:** Subject to some caveats, companies must ensure that:
 - Their employment relationships do not cause insecurity and social or economic vulnerability for their workers
 - Work is performed on the basis of a recognised and documented employment relationship
- **No bonded labour:** Companies will not engage in any form of servitude, forced, bonded, indentured, trafficked or non-voluntary labour.
- **Protection of the environment:** Companies must take necessary measures to protect the environment, and establish relevant policies and procedures to achieve this.
- **Ethical business behaviour:** Companies are not involved in any act of corruption, extortion or embezzlement, nor in any form of bribery.

PART 2: THE SWR GLOBAL REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN WINE

Introduction to the GRF

By building on the research and analysis set out in the previous chapter, SWR now sets out its Global Reference Framework for Sustainability in Wine.

What it is: what it is not

Statement of best practice

Drawing on all the research done, the GRF sets out current best practice in wine sustainability across all of its different dimensions. In some areas, specifically in practice in the vineyard and winery, our understanding of best practice is well-developed. In other areas, for example in packaging and logistics, some elements of best practice are in place, but more work is needed over time to flesh this out in more detail. Where detail exists, the GRF incorporates this, and in other areas, some of the specific gaps are identified.

Reference not certification

This Framework is not intended to be a standard itself, against which individual wine businesses can seek to be audited or certified. Rather, the GRF is a statement, based on best practice from within the wine industry and beyond, of those factors which need to be addressed in order to pursue sustainability effectively. This Framework therefore sets out the key issues which a wine business needs to be dealing with if it is to be tackling sustainability effectively.

Global reference: local relevance

The GRF, however, does not provide detailed guidance on each of these issues since this can only be done at a more local level. A key reason that the GRF is not intended to be a global standard is that the specific challenges of sustainability vary considerably from region to region and country to country. The concept of terroir is crucial in how we regard wines themselves. It is important that a similar recognition is made that the detail of sustainability will also differ between locations.

Tackling greenwashing

Notwithstanding the recognition that addressing sustainability takes time, it is important that companies are addressing it effectively, not just greenwashing, which Forbes magazine defines as a situation “where companies make false or misleading statements about their environmental credentials, whether unintentionally or as a deliberate marketing strategy.”¹³ The GRF states clearly what is currently seen as best practice across all dimensions of wine sustainability, but at the same time we recognise that few if any organisations will achieve this level of performance across their whole operation. Nevertheless, having made clear what best practice looks like, there is a reference point for sensible discussions about what de minimis level of performance is considered the minimum necessary to be credible in demonstrating commitment to sustainability.

¹³ Groves J. *What is Greenwashing?* Forbes Advisor. [What Is Greenwashing? – Forbes Advisor UK](#) (accessed 08/08/23)

What it incorporates

THE GRF is a statement of current best practice on sustainability in wine. It consists of the following elements

- Governance
Sustainability needs to form part of the core strategic and management processes of a company if it is to be effective. Regular audit and reporting is also needed to verify and modify performance over time.
- Environmental performance in the vineyard
- Environmental performance in the winery
- Human and social issues
- Packaging
- Logistics and distribution.

Governance

Informed and effective governance is central to good performance in relation to sustainability. This section sets out the key processes and structures a company needs to have in place if sustainability is to be managed as part of a company's central processes, not as an afterthought.

Prioritisation and planning

Sustainability encompasses a wide range of activities, and so not all can be achieved at the same time. Prioritizing what needs to be done, and then planning an ambitious but achievable path is a core starting point to good sustainability practice. Key issues:

- Materiality analysis
 - Sustainability encompasses a wide range of issues. All of these are important, but it is not feasible to address all of these at the same time. It is also the case that some issues – water management – may be more urgent in some locations than others.
- Review of regulatory and legal requirements
 - Many aspects of sustainability are also a matter of legal requirement. A winery should be aware of the legal frameworks under which it operates, both in its home country, and in those markets where its products are sold.
- Sustainability strategy
 - A wine business needs to have in place a detailed sustainability strategy setting out the key issues which need to be addressed, and the actions to be taken over time.
 - The strategy needs to be developed in light of the company's impacts on the environment and of different stakeholder groups, which need to be assessed in a systematic fashion.
 - This strategy needs to include detailed plans so that it can be seen to be a document focused on effecting changes in practice.
 - The strategy also needs to be reviewed regularly, so that it can take account of changes and developments in what sustainability encompasses.
 - Sustainability needs to be managed as a part of a business's core operational practices. A sustainability plan therefore needs to be integrated into the wider strategic and planning processes through which a company operates.
- Economic sustainability
 - Economic durability of a business is one of the three key pillars of sustainability. Decisions around investment in and actions to address the different aspects of sustainability therefore need to be balanced with other financial demands on a business.
 - That said, there needs to be a presumption that sustainability is a vital agenda, and if key investments are routinely not made, this indicates a business which is fundamentally not serious about tackling sustainability.

Management

Sustainability then needs to be incorporated as a core part of both strategic and day-to-day management processes within a business. Key issues:

- Clear accountability
 - A business needs to have a named individual responsible for sustainability at board level. This person needs to:

- Ensure that sustainability is discussed regularly at senior management level
- Allocate actions required by the company's sustainability commitments to appropriate staff, and ensure that those actions are taken
- Keep the sustainability under regular review
- Champion sustainability within the business
- Integration into routine practice
 - Actions to address sustainability issues need to be integrated into the day-to-day activities and workplan of teams and individuals in the business.
 - Job specifications and team plans therefore need to incorporate sustainability issues as core elements, not an add-on.
 - The achievement of sustainability-related goals needs to be an intrinsic part of bonus mechanisms, where these are in place, for key staff.
- Continuous improvement
 - There is no exhaustive list of actions that an organisation must undertake to be sustainable. On the contrary, once an initial plan has been put in place, the process is constantly improved by researching best practices and introducing them into the organisation's activities as appropriate.
- Procurement processes
 - Procurement for all goods and services should incorporate sustainability considerations.
 - Over time, therefore, a business should review all of the items it buys and identify the sustainability considerations for each.
 - These considerations need to be given appropriate weight in making procurement decisions.

Review and communication

Sustainability performance needs to be reviewed regularly so that new challenges can be identified, and approaches varied in light of experience. How a company is developing on its sustainability journey also needs to be communicated in a transparent fashion. Key issues:

- Internal review
 - As part of the process of continuous improvement, internal systems need to be in place to regularly review performance against sustainability goals and targets.
 - If targets have not been met, the reasons for this need to be explored and appropriate lessons learned to improve future practice.
- External audit and verification
 - Wine businesses should submit themselves to external audit and verification of their sustainability performance.
 - Results of audits should, subject to considerations of commercial confidentiality, be made public, both to a company's staff and to other key stakeholders.
 - The results of external audits should be considered by a company's management team, and the key lessons incorporated into future practice.
- Communication
 - Where a company is communicating to different stakeholder groups about its sustainability-related activities, it should be clear and transparent.

- This applies to any form of communication, be that in the form of press releases, external comments by senior staff, or wording and other content of written literature, including the bottle label.
- Greenwashing of any sort is to be strenuously avoided. This may include:
 - Any attempt to 'spin' poor performance
 - Use in communication of terms which are not properly quantified or qualified.
 - Making broad claims without proper evidence.

Environmental management in the vineyard

The management of environmental factors in the vineyard is one of the most visible aspects of sustainability. Moreover, it is an agenda of issues which is gradually expanding, as the importance of regenerative viticultural and agronomic practices is increasingly recognised.

New vineyards

Where new vineyards are sited, the vines they contain and how they are managed all have potentially huge environmental impacts.

- Site selection
 - When new vineyards are planned, the selection of sites considers key sustainability factors such as:
 - Impact on water use, run-offs and water courses.
 - Soil fertility and other factors
 - Risk of erosion
- Grape cultivar selection
 - The grape varieties are selected taking into account the specific factors relating to the environmental sustainability of the vineyard and its environs.
- Vineyard design
 - A new vineyard is designed so as to minimise potential adverse environmental impacts, for example in relation to:
 - Row orientation
 - Row and vine spacing
 - Root system

Vineyard management

As governance of sustainability as part of a company's core processes is vital at a strategic level, so good management of sustainability is vital within all aspects of vineyard management. Key factors to address are:

- Management plan
 - Deriving from the business's overall sustainability plan addressed in part A, a specific management plan needs to be in place to address the sustainability issues as they apply to vineyard operations
- Vineyard map
 - A map should be developed of the vineyard to identify specific challenges or opportunities in relation to sustainability
- Vineyard monitoring
 - Many sustainability issues, for example in relation to pests, can be more readily addressed if they are spotted in good time. Therefore, a regular physical evaluation of the vineyard should be undertaken.

Soil management

The importance of soil health has always been recognised in the wine industry. As climate change drives the need to incorporate regenerative agriculture techniques, managing a vineyard's soil has even greater importance.

- Soil survey
 - A vineyard conducts a survey of the soils at its site so that it properly understands their key physical and other parameters, including factors such as drainage and water holding, chemical properties and fertility.
- Soil management
 - The vineyard minimises the risk of erosion, loss of soil biodiversity and loss of nutrients in the soil and enhances, if required, soil's organic matter content
 - The use of tractors and other heavy equipment is managed so as to minimise compaction of the soil over time.
 - In order to maintain soil carbon, tillage of the soil is reduced as far as is possible
 - The impact on soils and landscapes is taken into account and proactively managed during restructuring of plots and earth movements

Biodiversity

The core of a vineyard can potentially be a monoculture. Actions need to be taken to understand and encourage biodiversity on the wine business' site as a whole.

- Biodiversity evaluation
 - A study is undertaken to evaluate the biodiversity, including soil biodiversity, across the entire vineyard site.
 - This study is repeated on a regular basis so that biodiversity can be monitored over time.
 - Specific actions are devised and implemented over time to improve biodiversity in the vineyard. Monitoring of these actions is incorporated into the regular biodiversity planning process.
- Biodiversity management
 - The vineyard is managed in such a way as to preserve and, where possible, to expand biodiversity in the vineyard. This will have implications, for example, in the use and selection of chemical inputs, an issue that will be expanded on elsewhere.
 - Appropriate cover crops are used to increase biodiversity within the vineyard itself. Uses of such crops will have other impacts, which are addressed elsewhere.
 - Efforts are made in the rest of the estate to create a more bio-diverse environment, for example in planting of trees, shrubs and other appropriate plants.

Energy usage

Efficiency in energy usage, and a gradual move to energy derived from sustainable sources are vital tools in tackling climate change. They may also provide cost savings over time as well as provide stability in times of energy insecurity.

- Minimisation of energy use
 - A review should be undertaken of energy usage in the vineyard over the course of a years, and opportunities identified to reduce use of energy, for example in relation to external lighting, and use of machinery.

- When equipment is replaced, energy efficiency should be a key element in the selection of new alternatives.
- Sources of energy
 - Over time, a vineyard should move to the use of energies created from renewable sources. This might include:
 - Sourcing grid energy from renewable sources
 - Investing in wind or solar power within the vineyard itself
 - Use of electric tractors and other vehicles

Water use and management

Climate change is leading to changes in patterns of precipitation. The effect of this needs to be managed both within the vineyard, and in relation to the wider landscape in which that vineyard exists.

- Water management
 - An analysis is done of water usage in the vineyard.
 - A plan is in place to reduce water use over time. This will have clear benchmarks for performance and be regularly monitored and reviewed.
 - Water is used in the vineyard as efficiently as possible, for example by shifts from spray to drip irrigation.
- Watershed awareness and management
 - A vineyard should make itself aware of the impact it has on local and regional watersheds and manage its activities so as to avoid adverse impacts.
 - Where relevant, the vineyard should work with other organisations in the watershed as part of a wider watershed management planning process.

Inputs management

Chemical and other inputs to a vineyard are one of the most controversial aspects of viticultural practice. Making clear, informed choices about how to proceed, and effective management of chemical use are key factors for sustainability.

- Awareness of regulations
 - A vineyard should regularly review the regulatory requirements for the inputs chemicals which are legally permitted both in their local area, and in the countries into which the wines are sold.
- Chemical inputs planning
 - A vineyard should have a plan in place to reduce its use of fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides over time.
 - This should derive from the overall vineyard sustainability plan referred to above.
- Pesticide use
 - The presumption should be that vineyards use integrated pest management (IPM) to control pests in the vineyard.
 - Where IPM is not used, pesticide use should be minimised as far as possible.
- Storage, use and disposal
 - All chemicals should be stored strictly under the conditions stipulated by the manufacturer.

- The store in which they are kept should be locked
- All chemicals should be used strictly under the conditions stipulated by the manufacturer. Including:
 - Dosage
 - Application technique
 - Spray drift control
- All chemical containers should be disposed of strictly under the conditions stipulated by the manufacturer and local hazardous waste authorities.
- Maintenance of equipment
 - All equipment used to apply chemicals of whatever type should be kept well maintained as per the maker's recommendations.
- Emergency contingency
 - A hazardous chemical emergency plan should be in place.
 - This plan should deal with all potential emergencies associated with the chemicals in use.
 - The plan should be communicated to all relevant staff, and trained for.

Climate change adaptation, carbon reduction and regenerative agriculture

Some of the issues set out here have been also addressed elsewhere. However, as the climate continues to change, it is important that a wine business has a proactive policy and approach to climate adaptation.

- Carbon reduction planning
 - A vineyard should assess its current carbon footprint and develop a carbon reduction plan to reduce that footprint over time.
 - Ideally, this plan should be certified and monitored by a third party to monitor implementation over time.
- Use of regenerative agricultural techniques
 - A vineyard should evaluate the impact of different approaches to regenerative agriculture and adopt those most relevant to them. For example:
 - Use of cover crops
 - Reduction in tilling
 - Agro-forestry

Waste management

Waste products should, wherever possible, be used as part of the inputs to a vineyard.

- Landscape waste
 - Prunings from vines etc are composted and used for mulching
- Other waste
 - Other waste created by vineyard operations are recycled

Environmental management in the winery

Although management of a vineyard may appear to have greater implications for environmental sustainability, the structure, processes, and practices in wineries also need attention. Many routine winery operations have sustainability implications, for example in relation to water use and pollution. Equally, the opportunities are significant for a winery to contribute to sustainability. Examples include use of shrubs and other plants to encourage biodiversity and beneficial insects; and the use of rainwater harvesting to reduce the need for ground water.

New wineries

When a new winery is built, the impact it has on the local environmental – both natural and human – should be key considerations in decisions made.

- Site selection
 - When new vineyards are planned, the selection of sites considers key sustainability factors such as:
 - Impact on water use, run-offs and water courses.
 - Visual impact in the landscape
- Winery design
 - The winery is designed with sustainability in mind, for example:
 - In the choice of materials used in its construction.
 - In incorporating features such as:
 - solar panels and insulation to minimise energy use.
 - 'living rooves' to encourage biodiversity and carbon capture, and to reduce water runoff.

Winery management

Strategic and day-to-day management of the winery needs to incorporate sustainability.

- Management plan
 - Deriving from the business's overall sustainability plan addressed in part A, a specific management plan needs to be in place to address the sustainability issues as they apply to winery operations.

Biodiversity

- Biodiversity evaluation and management
 - A study is undertaken to evaluate how management of the winery might encourage biodiversity.
 - The steps identified are incorporated into the overall sustainability management plan of the winery.

Energy usage

Energy use needs to be minimised through use both of simple behaviour changes and using new technologies. Over time, energy needs to be sourced increasingly from renewable sources.

- Minimisation of energy use

- A review should be undertaken of energy usage in the vineyard, and opportunities identified to reduce use of energy, for example in relation to external lighting, and use of machinery.
- When equipment is replaced, energy efficiency should be a key element in the selection of new alternatives.
- Use of relevant technologies, for example motion-sensitive lighting should be installed to reduce energy use.
- Sources of energy
 - Over time, a winery should move to the use of energies created from renewable sources. This might include:
 - Sourcing grid energy from renewable sources
 - Investing in wind or solar power on-site
 - Use of electric vehicles

Water use and management

Water is key to many operations in a vineyard. Where water comes from, and how it is used and reused are important to good sustainability practice.

- Water management
 - An analysis is done of water usage in the winery.
 - A plan is in place to reduce water use over time. This will have clear benchmarks for performance and be regularly monitored and reviewed.
 - Protocols for key winery activities such as barrel washing should be re-worked so as to reduce water use/ increase use of harvested water.
- Rainwater harvesting
 - A vineyard should install a system for rainwater harvesting to collect water for use in routine winery operations.
- Watershed awareness and management
 - A winery should make itself aware of the impact it has on local and regional watersheds and manage its activities so as to avoid adverse impacts.
 - Where relevant, the winery should work with other organisations in the watershed as part of a wider watershed management planning process.

Climate change adaptation, carbon reduction and regenerative agriculture

Even though the scope of impact on these issues is less than for a vineyard, ensuring that a winery addresses carbon reduction as far as possible is nevertheless of great importance.

- Carbon reduction planning
 - A winery should assess its current carbon footprint and develop a carbon reduction plan to reduce that footprint over time.
 - Ideally, this plan should be certified and monitored by a third party to monitor implementation over time.

Waste management

Where waste products can be reused or recycled, these options should be considered. Otherwise, waste should be dealt with in accordance with legal requirements and to avoid contamination.

- Solid waste

- All solid waste is disposed of in accordance with best prevailing sustainable method.
- Liquid waste
 - All liquid waste is disposed of in accordance with best prevailing sustainable method, and to avoid contamination of ground water or other water sources.
- Hazardous waste
 - All hazardous waste is disposed of as stipulated by the manufacturer, and in line with best sustainability practice.

Social and human issues

Wine businesses have long recognised the importance of good human resources management, and of providing a safe and secure working environment. However, regulatory changes in many jurisdictions is demonstrating the need to go further in identifying and managing wider human rights challenges. Relationships with local communities are also of key importance.

Procedures for direct hiring

How an organisation identifies and hires new staff members.

- Clear job specifications
 - Each job should have a clear specification, including a description of duties, reporting lines, shift rota/ working pattern etc.
- Open hiring process
 - All jobs should be advertised as widely as possible.
- Equal opportunities hiring
 - In making hiring decisions, factors such as gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity or other similar factors will be disregarded.
- ID check
 - All new employees' IDs should be checked to ensure that they are of legal age to work, and to identify potential illegal/ trafficked workers.

Procedures for indirect hiring

Evidence suggests that indirect hiring, for example through employment agencies, can carry the largest risk of issues such as modern slavery.

- Use of employment agencies
 - Where they are used, they should be carefully vetted to ensure their compliance on key labour rights issues including:
 - Modern slavery
 - People trafficking
 - Forced, bonded and child labour.
 - Agencies should be subject to periodic inspections of their processes and procedures.

Employee conditions

All employees should be able to work in a safe, welcoming and non-discriminatory environment.

- Induction
 - All workers shall be given a proper induction process so that they understand the nature of the company as a whole and about their job role within that.
 - This induction needs to be sufficient to enable the individual to understand properly their role in the organisation, and the processes and systems of that organisation which will impact on that role.
 - The induction process shall include briefings on the company's sustainability strategy and policies, and clear guidance given to each individual about their responsibilities in relation to these.

- Clear disciplinary processes
 - The processes in place for taking disciplinary action shall be made clear to all employees at the time of their hiring.
 - A proper process for raising and escalation of disciplinary issues shall be in place and be transparent and free from discrimination of favouritism.
- Provision of PPE and safety training
 - All appropriate and necessary personal protective equipment shall be provided to employees undertaking tasks requiring such protection.
 - Such equipment shall be kept in good working order and maintained in accordance with manufacturers' stated requirements.
 - All workers using PPE shall be properly trained in its use. Where necessary or required, this training will be repeated to ensure good practice in use of PPE over time.
 - Required training will also be provided to workers in the use of any equipment that they may use.
- Safe/ open working environment
 - All working spaces are maintained so as to provide a safe working environment for all staff.
 - Where risks exist, for example in relation to equipment, proper warnings and safety labelling is in place.
 - There is provision made of appropriate and sufficient first aid equipment and staff trained in first aid.
 - Policies shall be in place to operate a fair and tolerant working environment, and managers shall have responsibility to ensure that these policies are adhered to.
- Training and professional development
 - Training will be provided to staff so that they can improve their work-related skills in order to support them in gaining promotion within the organisation.
 - Clear paths for professional development will be discussed with employees so that they can develop skills and capabilities over time.
- Internal communication
 - Regular team meetings shall be held so that all staff are aware of and understand issues and developments relevant to them and their role.
 - Processes of clear and transparent internal communication shall be in place, for example an intranet, staff newsletter, noticeboard or similar.
- Accommodation
 - Where accommodation is provided to staff, be they full time or part time, that accommodation:
 - shall be well-maintained and of good quality.
 - charged at a reasonable rate given the worker's rate of pay.
 - within easily accessible distance of the employee's place of work.
- Employee satisfaction
 - The business has procedures in place to monitor and maintain employee satisfaction.

- A helpline or other confidential process is in place for workers to raise issues of concern about welfare/ discrimination or other issue.
- Freedom of association and collective bargaining
 - Workers shall have the right to freedom of association, including union membership.
 - Workers shall have the right to free collective bargaining in negotiations over wages and other working conditions.
- Working hours
 - Workers should not normally work more than 48 hours per week.
 - Overtime is permitted but should be paid at a premium rate.

Payments and benefits

Wages paid should reflect the work done and be paid transparently to named individuals.

- Wage rates
 - A wine business should benchmark its rates of pay and benefits to other businesses in the area.
 - A business should pay at least the prevailing minimum wage prevailing in its area at the time. If there are legally-mandated minimum increases, the wine business needs to reflect this in its rates of pay.
 - Ideally, a business should work with relevant groups to calculate a 'living wage' for the area where it operates and pay this rate as a minimum to all its staff.
 - Under no conditions can workers be paid exclusively on a piece-rate.
 - Overtime should be paid at premium rates.
- Payments and deductions
 - Wages should be paid by bank transfer direct to each employee's bank account.
 - Not subject to deductions other than those legally permitted.
 - Where deductions are made, these are clearly indicated and described.

Community relationships

Wine businesses are frequently key elements of a local social, built, and agricultural environment. Maintaining good relationships and giving back are important.

- Regular communication with local community
 - The business needs to maintain good relationships with the local community. To that end, regular meetings will take place between the wine business and relevant local groupings such as local authorities, community groups or residents' associations.
- Operations at the site will be managed in such a way as to minimise disruption for local people. This will include managing factors such as:
 - Noise is minimised as far as possible, especially at weekends and at night.
 - Minimising traffic movements and other operations at night.
 - Ensuring that the winery, vineyard, its buildings and other infrastructure do not detract from the local landscape.
 - Traffic movements are planned in such a way as to minimise adverse impacts on local communities.
- Where disruption may from time-to-time affect local communities:
 - If this can be anticipated, for example building work, as much advance warning of disruption is given as possible.
 - If the disruption was unanticipated, and explanation is made to the local community as soon as possible.

- Contribute to the local community:
 - The wine business should actively seek means to contribute proactively to the local community, for example through work with local institutions, clubs, societies, charities etc.

Packaging

Developments such as the EU's Packaging and Waste Directive and the need to address Scope 3 carbon emissions has put a spotlight on the amount and nature of packaging used in many sectors. There is an urgent and financially-significant reason to reduce the amount of packaging used. Given the current heavy weight of the packaging it uses, this is a matter of particular focus for the wine industry.

Bottle weight

SWR's recent report on wine bottle weight demonstrates that the bottles in which it is typically packaged accounts for between a third and a half of the carbon footprint of wine. This needs to be reduced.

- Lighter weight bottles should be used. For still wine in 750ml bottles, the weight of these bottles should not exceed 420g.
- Where possible, make use of recycled materials for packaging materials.
- Encourage use of recycling by consumers and by partners in the supply chain.

Alternative formats

A wide range of alternative formats for wine packaging are available, including bag-in-box, cans and PET bottles. More work is needed to understand the merits and challenges of each. Nevertheless, leading sustainability practitioners should:

- Explore the use of alternative formats for wine packaging.

Logistics and the onward supply chain

The logistics supply chain taking wine from grower to consumer has significant carbon impacts. At present, these have not been properly quantified, and this is work that needs to be undertaken. However, even at present, it is possible to make some clear statements about the choices which businesses in the wine sector face to improve the sustainability of this onward supply chain.

Means of transport

Selection of transport provider, and the means of transport used are critical decisions in addressing sustainability in the onward supply chain.

- Airfreight
 - Wherever possible, airfreight should not be used for the transportation of wine.
- Shipping
 - Wherever possible, bulk shipping should be used to transport wine over long distances.
 - In selecting a shipping line, weight should be given in that choice to companies which employ energy-saving technologies such as:
 - Slow steaming
 - Use of sails
 - Battery and electric power
- Terrestrial transport
 - Where available, preference should be given to train freight rather than road freight for terrestrial travel.
 - Where available, local terrestrial transportation should make use of electric vehicles.
 - Where conventional trucks are used, drivers should be trained in techniques to reduce carbon emissions.

PART 3: DEVELOPING A BENCHMARKING OF EXISTING SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS IN WINE

Lessons informing the benchmarking process

During 2022-23, SWR reviewed all of the existing sustainability standards in wine as part of the process of developing the Global Reference Framework. SWR's next task will be to conduct a detailed benchmarking of each of these standards against the GRF.

The role of the benchmarking process

This will provide the industry and others with the opportunity to cross-compare standards against each other and against global best practice. In undertaking this benchmarking process, SWR needs to be informed by the interests and needs of different groups of its members and other stakeholders within and outside the wine sector:

- **Standards owners:** This group feels itself already overly-benchmarked. Standards setters want to be allowed to get on with their job with minimal interference from others, but also want their standard to be accepted across the supply chain as rigorous and credible.
- **Wine businesses:** The primary requirement of standards from the perspective of vineyards and wineries is twofold. First, they want clear guidance about how to address issues of sustainability. Secondly, they need to know how this will help their access to market.
- **Other wine industry actors:** As is apparent from the review of wine sustainability standards currently in place, almost all of the focus to date has been on practice at vineyard and winery level. There is a need for others in the sector gradually to understand the implications for them of sustainability, which the GRF will be able to address over time.
- **Retailers:** These organisations want a yardstick to be able to compare apparently un-comparable wine sustainability standards. And they want to be able to do this to be able to communicate clearly about these issues with their buying teams and customer base.
- **Regulators:** Many, if not all of the issues incorporated in the GRF are increasingly matters under greater scrutiny by regulatory frameworks in different jurisdictions. Developments such as the increasing focus on identifying and limiting Scope 3 emissions, and the EU's upcoming supply chain due diligence regulations are examples of this. Greater clarity about what individual standards mean, and how they compare to an objective assessment of 'sustainability in wine' will be important to the whole sector in addressing this greater scrutiny.
- **Media and campaigners:** There is a clear focus amongst audiences such as civil society groups and the media on what gets termed 'greenwashing' – the making of claims about sustainability which are false or misleading. Benchmarking of existing standards against an objectively-derived global sustainability framework (the GRF) will make it much easier for those in the wine sector to communicate clearly about what they are doing in sustainability, and to refute claims of greenwashing

Factors for benchmarking to take into account

The review of existing standards already undertaken has identified a number of key factors which a benchmarking process will need to consider.

Accommodating standards' different approaches into the benchmarking

Existing sustainability standards in wine do not differ only in relation to the sustainability issues which they encompass. Were the proposed benchmarking able just to overlay each existing standard onto the GRF in order to identify any gaps, then that process would be relatively straight-forward.

In reality, this is not the case since the approach and 'philosophy' taken by different standards varies considerably. The differences between them, therefore, lie not just in the issues that are covered, but in how best each standard thinks good sustainability practice can be achieved over time:

- Some set extremely high standards for certification, regarding a failure to do so as risking the credibility of their standard or endorsing 'greenwash'.
- Others see their role as being to get as many wine businesses involved, often with the aim of enabling sustainability to be seen as part of the brand identity of wines from a particular area.

By its very definition, sustainability is a collective not an individual endeavour: an individual business cannot be sustainable if those around it are not. Over time, therefore all wine businesses need to engage across all areas of the discipline. However, which is the best way to travel to that eventual destination? Is it better to set a low bar and get all included, or to aim from the beginning at a level of excellence. Both approaches have equal merit so long as, over time a broader, low-bar approach sees that bar rising; and those wanting excellence ensure that the number of businesses achieving this expands. In developing its benchmarking therefore, SWR needs to accept that both of these starting points are valid, but find a means to ensure that both evolve over time.

There is also considerable variability in the extent and frequency of audits required by different standards. A typical approach is that a wine business will undertake a self-assessment, before being formally audited for accession to a standard. Wine businesses will then be audited externally every two or three years thereafter, with off-site audits or self-assessment undertaken in the intervening years.

In practice however, the question of 'how much audit is needed' is an open one. In practice, many standards expects that an audit will last "between two and eight hours". Is this enough time, in practice, to do a thorough and credible job? By contrast, the South African WIETA standard anticipated an audit will last several days. Conversely, it can also be argued that a light 'audit burden' is desirable as a means of including smaller producers, for whom both the cost and requirement of management time would be too onerous if an audit were too detailed. Again, at this point, SWR has to accept that both approaches have merit. However, a key element in SWR's work moving forward will need to explore how an in-depth and robust audit framework can be achieved which, at the same time does not overload the managerial and financial capacity.

Tackling greenwashing

The GRF is a statement of current best practice in wine sustainability. It is likely that few, if any, wine businesses will be operating to this level of practice across their entire operations. As the governance section of the GRF states, a company' approach to sustainability needs to work on the basis of continual improvement. From the perspective of existing standards, this means bringing into the fold companies at different stages of development in relation to sustainability on the basis that all will improve over time, but from different starting points.

However, the threat of greenwashing means that a standards organisation needs to set a minimum level of performance below which it is considered that a wine business seeking certification is not serious about sustainability. At present, although standards organisations take different approaches

to the journey companies take to certification, the prevailing model is to provide a series of steps describing levels of performance in relation to different aspects of sustainability. Certification is permitted when a company reaches a specified level of performance across a range of activities. In benchmarking these standards, SWR will have to ensure that the minimum level of performance required by a standards organisation is consistent with a genuine commitment to sustainability. Only then can we genuinely provide a tool to avoid greenwashing.

Small-scale businesses

As demonstrated by the audit challenge set out above, a key challenge to have emerged from the research for this process has been the challenge of making sustainability achievable for small firms as well as for large ones. It is notable, for example, that in the case of a number of the existing wine standards, they cover a significant proportion of the hectareage in their region, but only a relatively small proportion of the number of wine businesses. Larger firms have the resource to have dedicated staff working on sustainability issues. Small firms, by comparison find their management team having to add these issues to an already business schedule. “Our business is run by me, my wife and my mother. Yes, sustainability is important, but we only really get to it on a Thursday afternoon,” was the comment of one wine maker interviewed.

This is not a challenge faced only by the wine industry. In many other sectors too, including apparel and other commodity supply chains, the degree to which requirements on sustainability practice become un-doable, be that in terms of cash or management capacity, is a significant problem. Research to date on this project has identified some potential ways to address this. One major wine region, for example, is managing sustainability issues at an appellation level with, in effect, support given to smaller companies by the larger ones. Over time, SWR needs to work with the sector to explore this and other potential approaches to addressing the capacity constraints of smaller producers and companies.

Differences between geographies

Even if the broad brushstrokes of sustainability will be the same everywhere in the world, the specifics and priorities will vary location from location., for example pest management will need to be focused on the prevailing pests in situ. Priorities will be different. In arid locations, for example, there will be more of an imperative to reduce water usage than by comparison with places where water is relatively abundant. Or indeed, in some places, water management may mean putting in place approaches to do with too much water, for example through flooding or sudden downpours.

Need also to respond to the legal frameworks in place at a national or local level. For example, a number of the US standards refer to need to provide medical insurance for their workers. This would not be needed in, for example, many European locations where quality healthcare is provided free at the point of use by the state.

Any standard that wishes to have global applicability, therefore, has to beware of being too prescriptive in the requirement it sets since there needs to be sufficient flexibility for grape growers and wine makers to respond to the specific climactic and other circumstances they face.

Materiality analysis is therefore a key tool for all those addressing sustainability. Being able to prioritise what needs to be done first is key. Where will the biggest benefits come, and how can the greatest risks be managed first.

This also plays into the economic agenda. Some changes may actually be cost-positive. For example, in SWR’s work on chemistry at vineyard level, a number of companies have found that reductions, for

example in the use of fertilisers, herbicides and so on which have been taken for sustainability reasons also contribute to significant cost reductions.

Is legal compliance a sufficient level of performance?

In the case of a number of the existing sustainability standards, vineyards and wineries seeking certification are deemed to have met requirements by demonstrating compliance to local legal requirements. Interviews with a number of standards organisations have demonstrated that this is a matter which many feel strongly about. They argue, for example, that there is no need for them to cover issues such as modern slavery as they are already addressed by national law. The question from the perspective of the SWR GRS is whether this argument will be accepted or not. Two factors need to be taken into consideration on this point.

Firstly, much of what is contained in wine sustainability standards are also matters governed by legal frameworks in many origins. This includes issues such as selection and use of chemical inputs, water runoff, and disposal of hazardous substances. Yet despite the fact that these matters are governed by law, standards still specify requirements which need to be met if a wine business is to receive certification. In many cases, there is an expectation that wine businesses need both to proactively demonstrate compliance with the law, and that in many cases what the law requires will lag behind what is perceived to be necessary practice for proper sustainability. It is illogical therefore that in the case of some issues (principally those relating to issues of labour rights and practices), conformance with local law is a sufficient benchmark, whilst in the case of others, demonstrated adherence to local law, or better, is needed.

Secondly, as has been demonstrated in many cases, the fact that something is covered by law does not mean that abuses do not still occur. In the recent past instances of abuses have been identified specifically in the wine industry in different parts of the world. In 2021, Sweden's Systembolaget commissioned a study by Oxfam into labour issues in the wine industry in Italy. This identified a number of serious challenges, including "slavery-like conditions among migrant workers in Piedmont", and the use in various parts of the country of "*caporali*, or gangmasters [who] reportedly ask workers for thousands of Euros to facilitate contracts with employers. [This can] "absorb 40% to 50% of a worker's daily pay."¹⁴ In early 2023, a report from the Aquitaine Regional Chamber of Commerce found that as many as 70% of winegrowers in the region "gained an income below the minimum wage."¹⁵

Furthermore, challenges in relation to labour rights issues have also emerged in agricultural businesses in regions where vineyards also operate. In early 2022, the UK's Anti-Slavery Commissioner wrote to the UK Government raising serious concerns about labour exploitation risks amongst seasonal labourers. A survey of them had found that 15% said that their accommodation was not safe or hygienic, and 22% alleged ill treatment by farm managers, including racism, discrimination or mistreatment on grounds of nationality.¹⁶ Similar abuses have also be alleged in the USA, where the National Human Trafficking Hotline found that "victims of labor trafficking have been found among the nation's migrant and seasonal farmworkers, including men, women, families,

¹⁴ Gore T et al. *The Workers Behind Sweden's Italian Wine*. Oxfam, Oxford 2021

¹⁵ Tenison V. *More than half of Bordeaux winemakers 'earning less than minimum wage*. JaneAnson.com Jan 2023

¹⁶ Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. IASC raises concerns over labour exploitation risk for migrant agricultural workers. 25/01/22 [Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner - IASC raises concerns over labour exploitation risk for migrant agricultural workers \(antislaverycommissioner.co.uk\)](https://antislaverycommissioner.co.uk) (accessed 21/04/23)

or children as young as 5 or 6 years old...Victims of this form of trafficking include U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents, undocumented immigrants, and foreign nationals with temporary H-2A work visas...Unscrupulous crew leaders exploit these conditions of vulnerability, adding debt, violence, and threats to hold farmworkers in conditions of servitude.”¹⁷

Currently, a number of retailers categorise origin countries as being of greater or less risk, particularly in relation to human rights challenges. However, as is clear from the above, such abuses can occur even in what might be seen as low risk countries. Moreover, because countries like South Africa are perceived to be more risky, greater effort is being made by local organisations to root out potential rights abuses and address them proactively. The irony therefore is that supposedly more risky countries are actually further ahead in managing these issues than their apparently less risky Western European and North American counterparts.

Given the above, ‘meeting local legal standards’ is not sufficient to ensure that sustainability in relation to labour rights is being properly managed. Vineyards and wineries need to be proactive in understanding what abuses of these rights might be prevalent where they operate and take the necessary steps to manage issues that might emerge.

Moving forward

Over the coming year, SWR will undertake the process to benchmark existing sustainability standards in wine against the GRF. The process to do this will be as follows:

Developing a scoring matrix

A scoring matrix will be developed to allow standards to be benchmarked. This will need to take into account a range of factors, including:

- Quality of governance required.
- Range of sustainability issues covered by the standard, and the level of achievement in each area required for certification.
- Reliability of audit process.

The matrix will need to be designed in such a way as to accommodate standards that have been developed in very different ways. Some have set a very high bar for admittance, which necessarily limits the amount of wine businesses which successfully obtain certification to these standards. Other standards, by contrast have set a relatively lower bar for sustainability performance, but as a result have, as certified members, a very significant proportion of the wine businesses in the geography they cover.

SWR’s scoping process therefore needs to balance these factors of excellence and inclusivity. However it also needs to be designed, but also ensure that, over time, the benchmark encourages a process where standards require a high level of performance across the industry as a whole.

Benchmarking existing standards

It is extremely important therefore that this process of benchmarking is undertaken in a collaborative and sensitive fashion. Standards organisations need voluntarily to buy-into what SWR is trying to achieve.

¹⁷ National Human Trafficking Hotline. *Agriculture* [Agriculture | National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) (accessed 21/04/23)

In applying the scoring framework to each standard, it is vital, therefore, that this is done in conversation and collaboration with that standard's management team. In the case of each of the standards, the benchmarking process will consist of the following steps:

Initial internal benchmarking

Using the scorecard, SWR will develop an initial assessment of the standard being studied. This will include an analysis of the different aspects of the standard: where it is strong, and where there are weaknesses in comparison to the Reference Framework

Discussion and negotiation with standards organisations

This initial analysis will then be discussed in detail with the management team of the standard being studied. Where weaknesses exist, the aim will be to identify remedial actions that the standard organisation can take to bring it in line with the Reference Framework.

Agreeing the benchmarking

Based on the above, we will agree a 'Reference Framework Benchmark Score' with the standard holder, along with the steps which will be taken over time to fill in gaps that have been identified. This agreed score and remedial plan will be used in the annual benchmarking report.

Working with retailers

As with the issue of bottle weight, the position of retailers will be a vital factor in driving improvements in wine sustainability standards over time. If standards organisations know that achievement of a certain benchmarking score over time will be a matter of market access, this will provide a significant incentive for change.

SWR has already successfully convened a retailer working group (on bottle weight), and we intend to use this group as the basis also for action on sustainability standards. We will seek to develop an agreement (along the lines of the Bottle Weight Accord) which will see retailers requiring wines they buy to be certified only to standards which have achieved an agreed minimum score of the benchmarking process.

As noted above, the aim will be to start with a minimum required score which includes almost all standards organisations as this will encourage standards organisations to cooperate. As with the requirements of the Bottle Weight Accord, however, that minimum score will increase year-on-year, to help drive performance on the ground.

This process will also permit much greater transparency to retailers' buying teams and to consumers, since wines certified to standards which meet at least the minimum benchmarking score can be considered 'sustainable wine'. It can also be made clear that sustainability is a process over time.

Reporting

Whilst there is a significant number of standards in operation, somewhere between 20 and 30 are the most significant. When these have been scored as described above, SWR will publish a benchmark report containing findings, scores and changes agreed with each of the standards covered.

Reviewing the Reference Framework

The Reference Framework is designed to be the statement of the current 'best available' knowledge on what sustainability in wine requires. Necessarily this will need to be regularly reviewed and updated. Indeed, SWR's own work over the coming months will help push forward our knowledge on wine sustainability.

The Reference Framework published in 2023 will therefore be reviewed again in Spring 2024, to incorporate into it new knowledge and insights.



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About SWR

The Sustainable Wine Roundtable (SWR) is a global platform for collaboration to advance sustainability across the wine industry. The only independent multi stakeholder roundtable with over a hundred members to include the whole wine value chain. The SWR catalyses and drives collective action and knowledge sharing. Working together, the SWR is developing practical tools which include a Global Sustainability Reference Framework. With academic bodies, NGO's and key stakeholders in all links of the wine value chain, the SWR is uniquely placed to support the wine industry's drive to greater environmental, social and economic sustainability.

SWR is engaged in work to deliver real progress on sustainability in the wine sector. As well as developing further work in wine packaging, the SWR is also working on vineyard inputs, workers' welfare and transport and distribution. Alongside these initiatives, the SWR also expects to be in a position to announce the Global Reference Framework to support wine sustainability programmes this November.

If any wine business or organisation associated with wine are interested in learning more about the SWR or getting actively involved, they should contact Tom Owtram, General Manager - tom@swroundtable.org