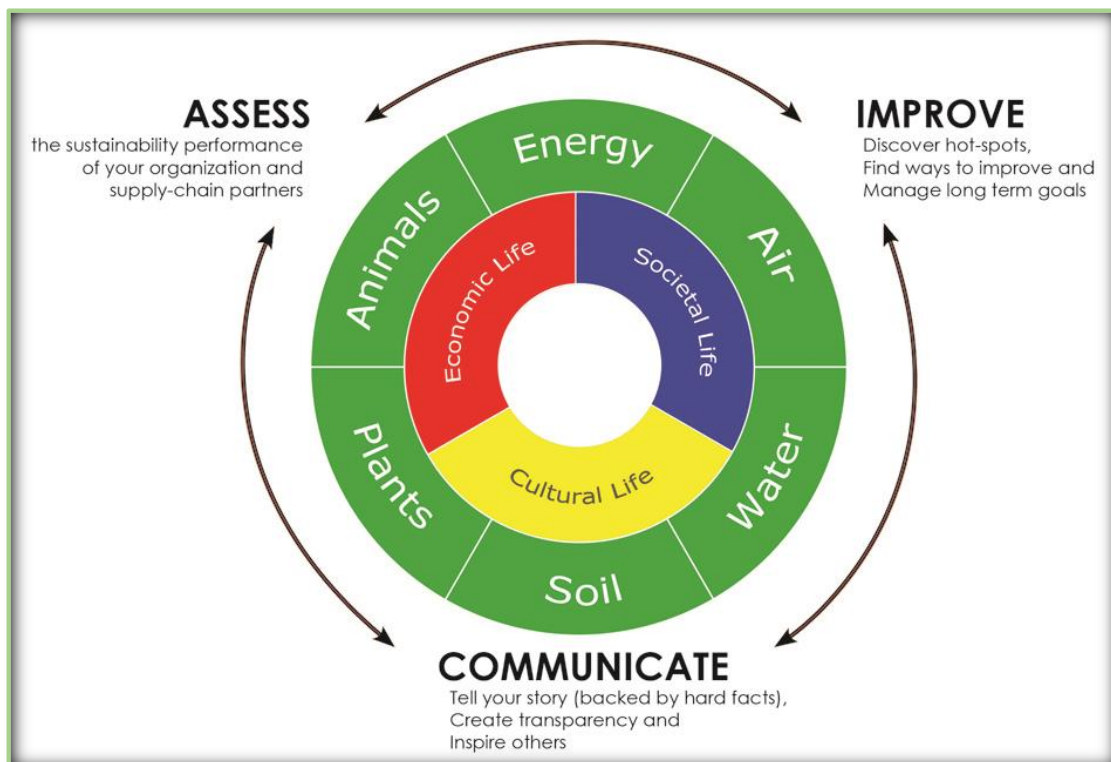


The “Sustainability Flower” Framework

of the International Association of Ecology and Trade (IAP)



Last update in February 2015



International Association of Ecology and Trade (IAP), amongst others:



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The Soil & More Foundation has been appointed by the IAP (International Association of Partnership of Ecology and Trade) to develop and manage the framework of the Sustainability Flower for the group of organizations involved in IAP as well as for any other organization that wants to align its activities to the principles of the Sustainability Flower.



Content

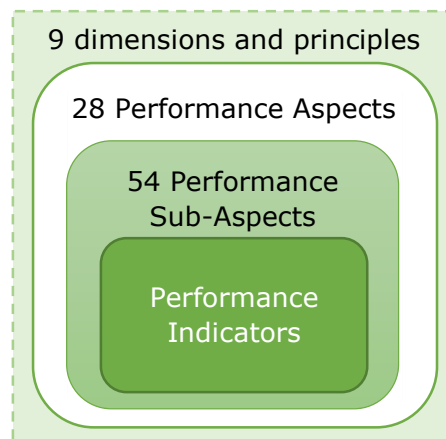
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1 Introduction to the Sustainability Flower

The overall idea of the Sustainability Flower is to create a common understanding of which aspects are crucial for sustainable development in the agricultural supply chain. It offers a framework for assessing, improving and communicating sustainable development performance of an organization based on nine dimensions (soil, plants, animals, energy, air, water and societal life, cultural life, as well as economic life).

It has been defined in January 2009 by a network of international organizations from the organic / biodynamic movement cooperating and exchanging experience under the umbrella of the „International Association of Partnership in Ecology and Trade” (IAP, see below).



The dimensions of the Sustainability Flower are structured in Performance and partly Sub-Performance-Aspects (see also page 3). For each of these aspects Performance Indicators have been defined that are applicable on varying detail levels (from hot spot to detailed analysis) and are aligned with internationally recognized standards and guidelines (GRI G4, SAFA (UN FAO), SOAAN (Ifoam), Economy for the Common Good). More details can be found at page 5 “Indicator framework” and the annex.

The implementation of the principles and indicators into management and communication is the responsibility of the implementing organizations. As a pragmatic and scalable approach the Sustainability Flower tool and an evaluation guideline has been developed and adapted for various scenarios by the Soil & More Foundation. The evaluation of the dimensions is emphasized by a traffic light rating system. The implementing organizations are free to use their own design for communication purposes or use the generic (more technical) one as provided by the Soil & More Foundation (see front page).

In the last years, a lot of developments in the definition of “Sustainability” and its measurement have evolved from discussions in the different stakeholder groups of the global agriculture sector. Though the initiatives have very different backgrounds and goals the common understanding of what is sustainable in agriculture draws ever nearer. Still, the Sustainability Flower is unique in adding the cultural dimension and putting an emphasis on soil. It is the conviction of the IAP that without adding the human being as the driving force of development into the setting of a farm and soil as the basis of all agricultural activities the future of agriculture looks bleak.

1.1 About IAP

Under the umbrella of the “International Association of Partnership in Ecology and Trade” (IAP) a group of pioneering organizations from the organic food sector regularly exchanges on experiences, lessons learnt and emerging challenges. The organizations are all part of the agricultural value chain representing different supply-chain levels as well as different crops and regions worldwide. Next to the discussions of the organizations’ founders/leaders inspiration comes from invited scientists, visionaries and other pioneers. The first meeting was in the 1990s at SEKEM, Egypt that’s why the group calls itself also the “Desert Club”. Part of it are amongst others Alnatura, Ambootia, Blaencamel Farm, Dr. Schaeette, EOSTA, Ifoam, Juchowo, Lebensbaum, SEKEM, Soil & More Int. and Sustainable Food Trust.



1.2 About the Soil & More Foundation

The Soil & More Foundation’s objective is to carry out research and development projects related to soil in general as the key driver of sustainable agriculture but specifically regarding soil fertility, soil carbon and organic matter management, water holding capacity, disease resistance/suppression through microbial activity, biomass management and composting, soil and soil carbon based incentive schemes for growers and in general raising awareness of the economics of sustainable soil and compost management based agriculture. These research and development projects are realized using the Foundations own resources and in co-operation with other research institutes and experts.

In addition, since June 2012 the Soil & More Foundation have been given the ownership of the “Sustainability Flower”. The responsibilities assigned to the Soil & More Foundation in relation to the ownership of the Sustainability Flower are to further develop the sustainability assessment concept in regards to the assessment criteria and guidelines, tools and methodologies, communication frameworks as well as legalities such as membership structures and general administration.

2 Policy and Code of Ethics

The platform of the Sustainability Flower was developed based on the common understanding that sustainability cannot be dealt with from a single issue perspective but rather is built on a comprehensive set of sustainability indicators balancing and challenging each and every performance and leading to a meaningful all encompassing sustainability footprint.

In order to secure this common goal and to prevent an abuse of sustainability as a fast track towards a single issue based green or fair claim, the one leading principle for the usage of the Sustainability Flower is full transparency. By deciding for the usage of the Sustainability Flower or one of its related products, one commits to transparently report on all dimensions of the Sustainability Flower, as only by looking at all levels, a true learning and improvement process can be initiated and realized.

As a user of the Sustainability Flower one commits to only report true, comprehensive and accurate numbers and figures and any miss-use or abuse will lead to an immediate termination of the rights to use or refer to the Sustainability Flower.



3 Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development

For all dimensions a guiding principle has been developed by the IAP members. They outline the overarching relevance of the dimension.

SOIL

Soil is a living organism. The solid, and limited, surface of the earth is the habitat of countless organisms and offers halt for the roots of the plants. Soil is the fundamental basis for food production. The global surface can only produce enough food for all human beings in the future if we preserve its fertility, avoid erosion and enable an adequate water storage capacity.

PLANTS

Plants constitute the dress of the earth. In many parts of the planet they reflect the seasons. More than 500.000 species are enrooted in the earth, building their substance through sunlight, carbon dioxide and water. Generating the necessary oxygen, forests can be regarded as the lungs of the earth. Through their fruits, plants provide nourishment and serve as medical remedies as well as a multifunctional raw material at the same time. They can be preserved in their diversity and further developed in their effectiveness through diligent care.

ANIMALS

Animals populate and enliven the earth with multiple millions of species. They live in almost all regions of the earth and play a crucial role in the balance and maintenance of all ecosystems. They are capable of different patterns of behavior and even show emotional life on their higher stages of development. Like human beings, they are sensitive to pain. Treating animals in a species-appropriate way means to respectfully deal with life itself.

AIR

The air of our atmosphere is vital for all aerobic creatures. Only in an environment with clean air, man and animals can live in a healthy way. Global warming drastically illustrates the importance of

balanced conditions and temperatures of the atmosphere. To conserve these is the best way to avoid natural disasters related to climatic conditions.

ENERGY

The sun light grants the human being its physical and spiritual strength. Sunlight and hydropower are natural sources of energy, infinite at least from a human perspective. Physically, energy can be neither generated nor consumed. But the human way of energy usage contributes substantially to climate change. Through reducing the energy usage and increasing the low-carbon power generation from renewable energies at the same time, the emission of dangerous greenhouse gases can be reduced significantly.

WATER

Water constitutes the basis of all life. The hydrological cycle of the organism of planet earth is similar to the human blood circulation system: Water evaporates, falls back down as rain und runs from fresh water rivers into the salty oceans. Without the influence of human beings, the water clears and cleans itself along that way. 71 percent of the surface of the earth is covered by water, mainly salt-water. However, potable water is a scarce resource and must neither be wasted nor polluted any further.

ECONOMIC LIFE

Modern societies worldwide are characterized mainly by the division of labor in economic activity. Through cooperation, values are created and exchanged as products and services. In this exchange, it is essential that those creating these values are rewarded for their effort by an income enabling them, within their social environment, to achieve such results also in the future. Therefore, the creation of a worldwide cooperative network of value creation, accumulating values for fair interchange



relations, is fundamental for sustainable development of the economy.

SOCIETAL LIFE

The position of the individual in the society shapes our social relationships, while at the same time the laws of a society determine individual opportunities. In a fair and just society, the individual human being is recognized in his human rights, is equal in front of the law and granted equal opportunities of participation. A fair cooperation of human beings worldwide, today and for future generations, can be regarded as the main prerequisite for peaceful development.

CULTURAL LIFE

Man creates the world from his ideas. All learning, researching, inventing and all kind of artistic activity is ideally free and not influenced by considerations of material benefits. Only through holistic thinking and acting a materialistic knowledge society can be transformed into a cultural society guided by meaningful values. Therefore, free education and spiritual development of all human beings on earth must be of highest priority.



4 Indicator framework

The framework of the Sustainability Flower (see page III) is backed by a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators. For each performance aspect or sub-performance aspect indicators have been composed for hot spot assessment and more detailed analysis. They can be used for producers, processors and traders in agricultural supply chains.

In order to make use of synergies with other indicator systems the match has been made with the indicator sets of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI G4 for non-financial reporting), the SAFA framework (Guideline for Sustainability Assessments in Food and Agriculture systems from the United Nations FAO) and the SOAAN initiative (Sustainability in Organic Agriculture Action Network of Ifoam, the umbrella organization of organic certifications schemes worldwide. SOAAN had been initiated amongst others because of the IAP and the Sustainability Flower). Inspirations from the Economy for the Common Good and ISO 26.000 (Guideline on social responsibility of organizations) have been incorporated, too.

The indicators are either integrated into the implementing organizations' own management system or are delivered with the Sustainability Flower tool (see below).

5 Application scenarios

Company

On a company level the Sustainability Flower can be used to develop a corporate sustainability strategy, as further, sector-specific or company-specific topics and goals can be of importance which are not reflected in the flower. According to such a strategy a sustainability report can be produced according to the flower as well as other internal and external management or communication documents such as a Code of Ethics, a Code of Conduct, Corporate Governance Code, any “in-shop” communication, brochure communication etc.

Products / Brand

The Sustainability Flower can be placed on a product to break down the corporate level sustainability communication. The flower could be a guiding tool for a trace-and-tell system, which allows the consumer to trace back information about the product he is going to buy to its origin.

6 Assessment Tool

Since June 2012 various tools have been developed for the implementation of the Sustainability Flower. The starting point is always the Standard Sustainability Flower Assessment tool which offers a basic set of questions and an evaluation that is translated into traffic lights. Along its varying detail level (see indicators) it had been adapted for:

→ **Supplier assessment (for processors and traders/brands)**

One concern of companies regarding their sustainable development is their supply chain. On the one hand the products should come from safe sources and on the other hand these sources should be available also in future. More and more companies decide, therefore, to build up partnerships with their suppliers instead of dealing with anonymous commodities. The Sustainability Flower supports the process to understand the sustainability performance of suppliers, to give advice on improvement potential and also communicate the “story of the suppliers” to the end-consumer. Usually, the assessments are done on a hot-spot level.



→ **Self-assessment (for producers, processors and traders/brands)**

Organization need to understand their current performance in all the different dimensions of the Sustainability Flower to be able to improve and communicate transparently. This starts with understanding what are the priorities in their situation and the organizations’ borders of influence. A self-assessment can be a hot spot analysis or go more into the details and serve therewith as basis for a sustainability report in line with the Global Reporting Initiative Guidelines.

→ **Sustainability risk / impact assessment (for banks/investors)**

Banks and investors that aim to have a positive impact through their funds have to look into more dimensions then the financial risks. Especially, in the agricultural sector it is important to promote those organizations that perform well on all sustainability dimensions and are willing to develop further. Also here the assessments usually done are on hot-spot level.

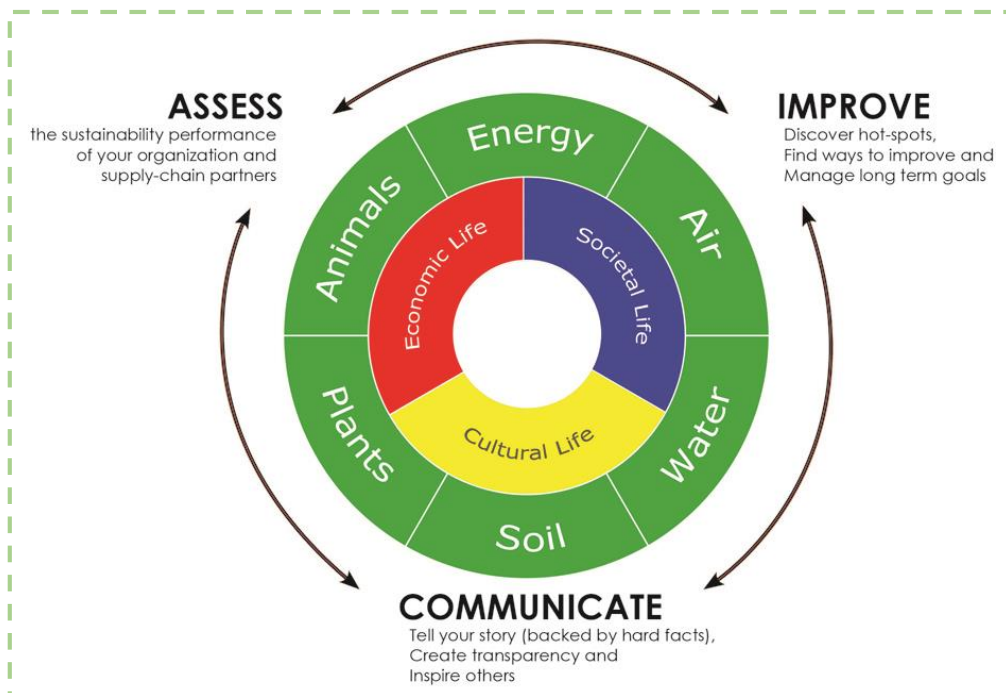
Purpose of hot spot analysis

The tool version using mainly the hot spot indicators is used for two purposes:

- 1) It serves as an initial step for a more comprehensive reporting and management framework. The goal is to learn more about the structure and the data that will be disclosed.
- 2) It serves as regular assessment and improvement initiator of the main aspects of the dimensions. The goal is to observe overall changes.

In both cases the results can give insights into hot spots on which the organization should focus to improve the overall performance either of themselves or their suppliers. Furthermore, it identifies best practice activities that can be shared with peers/other suppliers.

The gathered information is used next to leverage improvement/strategy processes for public sustainable development reporting, for internal reporting or for direct reporting to investors or consumers.





6.1 Assessment process

Orientation

The organization who wants to conduct the Sustainability Flower Assessment has to define which entity/entities lay within the scope of the assessment and for which time frame the assessment should be done. The entity can be for example the own organization or a supplier. In general, the Sustainability Flower can be applied for agricultural and food producers, processors and traders. In some cases it is feasible to define in a materiality analysis the focus of the assessment (while keeping at least a minimum amount of indicators per dimension). According to the definition of the assessment a questionnaire is issued and integrated into SharePoint. The questionnaire encompasses quantitative and qualitative questions as well as enough space for comments.

Identification of Data Sources

Most of the data needed for the Sustainability Flower Assessment is available right at hand (e.g. type of crop residue management). In some cases access to book keeping is required (e.g. water use). Some creativity will make it easier to gather the data within the assessed entity (e.g. used electricity and energy mix can usually be taken from the energy bill). In larger organizations it might be necessary to find out which person can provide data from their department.

Data Gathering

The duration of data gathering for the questionnaire depends on three criteria. First the size of the organization, second the prompt availability of data and third the type of result report. The information can be directly entered into the online questionnaire and changed until it is officially finished for feeding it into the evaluation tool (see next page for technical realization).

Evaluation

The evaluation tool synchronizes automatically all data from SharePoint and presents it in the predefined report style for evaluation. An assigned person evaluates the performance of the entity, writes a summary per dimension and sets targets.

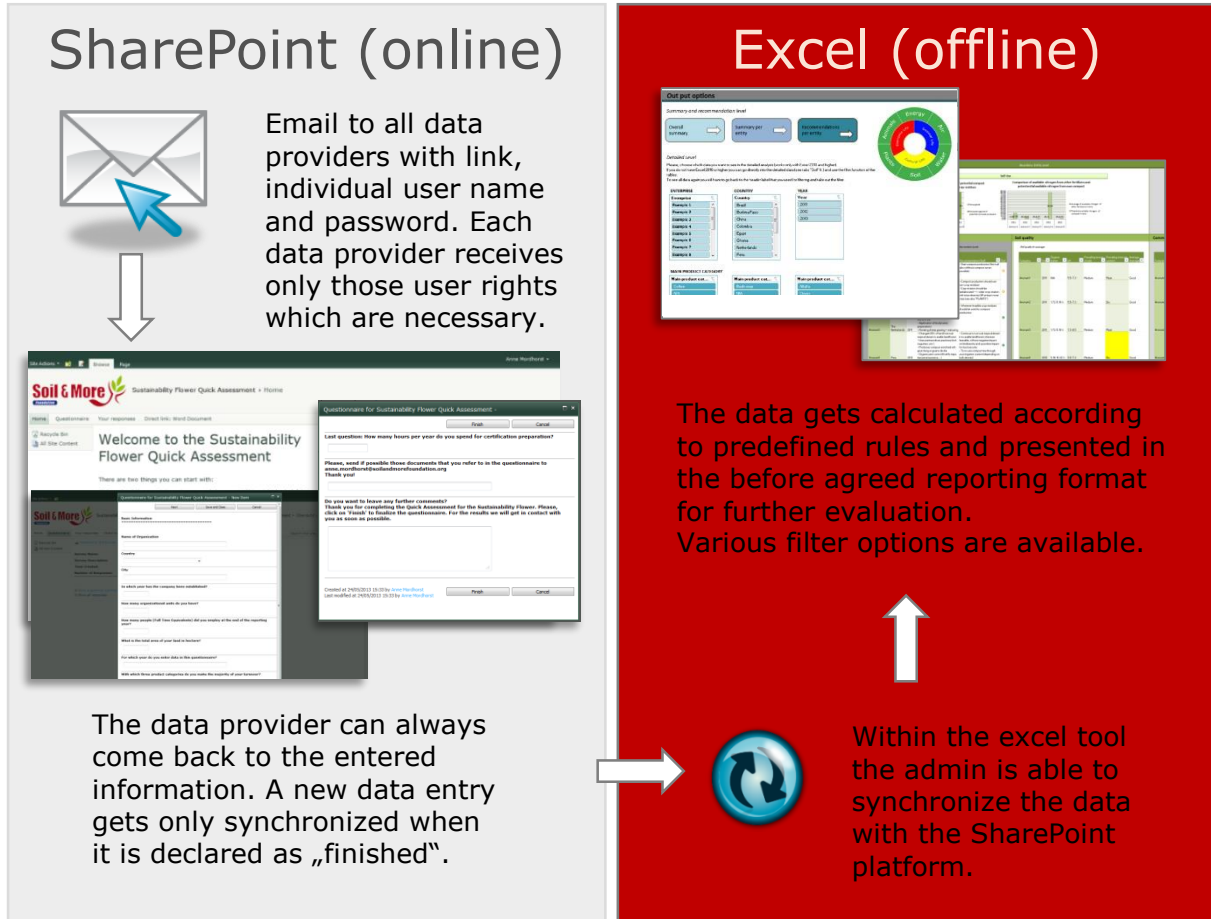
All quantitative data is wherever applicable processed according to international acknowledged standards such as GHG protocol, PAS2050, etc. To model estimated carbon sequestration potentials the Cool Farm Tool has been used.



6.2 Technical infrastructure

The assessment works with a combination of SharePoint and Excel. The data can be gathered independently online in SharePoint and processed after synchronization offline in Excel. Both platforms are customizable for the needs of the implementing organization.

Sharepoint can also be used to provide the blank questionnaire as printable document and any further background information.



Soil & More SharePoint: Hosted by Smarter Business Group on a secure SQL server in Nurnberg, Germany

The excel tool is located at the server of the customer and of Soil & More



6.3 The evaluation tool

The evaluation of the gathered data happens in the Sustainability Flower tool which is based on Excel. Using Excel leaves the option open to integrate information from other sources and to adapt the tool to specific uses. In the following pages some example screen shots explain the basic views and functionalities of the tool.

Output options

This view offers filters for the data that is presented throughout the other tabs. At the same time you can check here for which entities / countries / years / products or product categories there is available data in the tool.

Out put options

Summary and recommendation level

Overall summary

→

Summary per entity

→

Recommendations per entity

→

Detailed Level

Please, choose which data you want to see in the detailed analysis (works only with Excel 2010 and higher). If you do not have Excel 2010 or higher you can go directly into the detailed data (see tabs "Soil" ff.) and use the filter function of the tables. To see all data again you will have to go back to the header label that you used for filtering and take out the filter.

ENTERPRISE

Enterprise

- Example 1
- Example 2
- Example 3
- Example 4
- Example 5
- Example 6
- Example 7
- Example 8

COUNTRY

Country

- Brazil
- Burkina Faso
- China
- Colombia
- Egypt
- Ghana
- Netherlands
- Peru

YEAR

Year

- 2011
- 2012
- 2013

MAIN PRODUCT CATEGORY

Main product cat...

- Coffee
- N/A

Main product cat...

Main product cat...

- Bush crop
- N/A

Main product cat...

Main product cat...

- All all a
- Clover

Overall Summary:

Shows a list of all entities assessed and its traffic light evaluation per dimension. Furthermore, a total count of evaluations helps to understand the main hot spots of all entities assessed.

Overall summary

Boundary: Entity Level

- No action towards more sustainable practice
- On a good way but still significant improvement potential
- Good practice in place while developing continuously

Total count of evaluations
Here you see how often a certain evaluation had been given per dimension.

	Soil	Plants	Animals	Energy	Air	Water	Economic Life	Societal Life	Cultural Life
● =	3	6	4	2	2	5	5	5	8
● =	7	4	5	5	5	1	4	5	2
● =	0	0	1	3	3	4	1	0	0

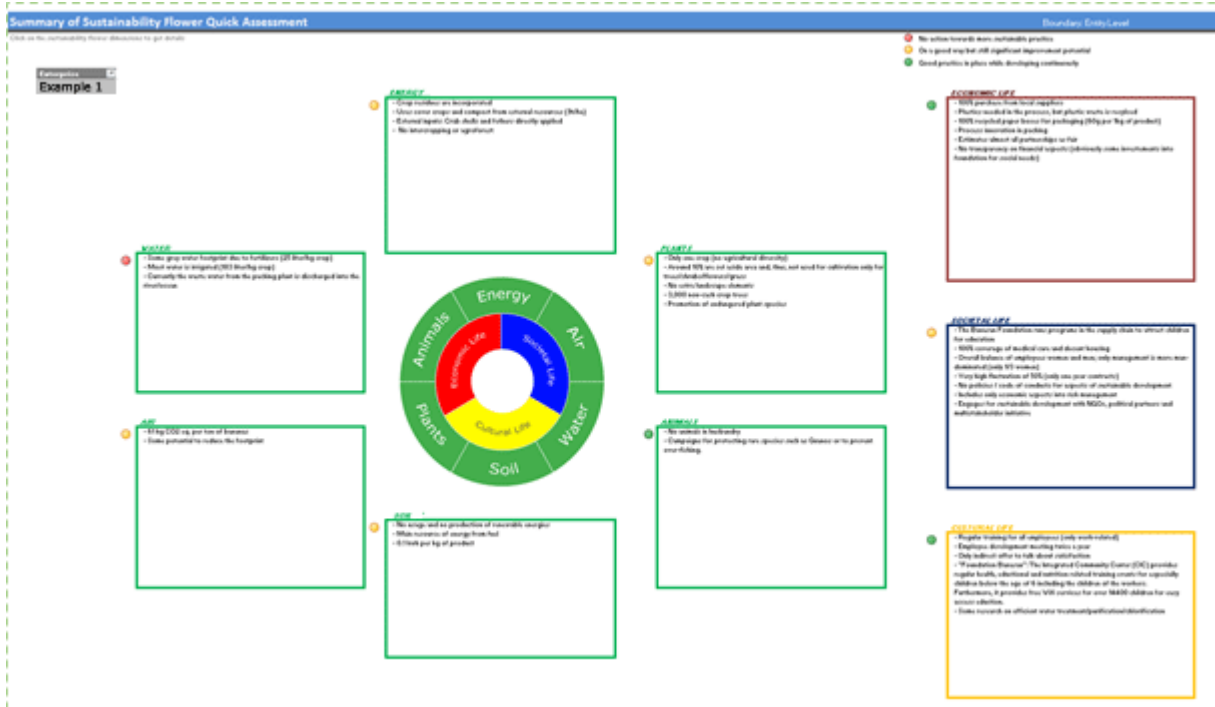
Overview per company
Here you see which evaluation had been given per entity

Enterprise	Year	Soil	Plants	Animals	Energy	Air	Water	Economic Life	Societal Life	Cultural Life
Example 1	2012	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Example 2	2011	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Example 3	2011	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Example 4	2012	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Example 5	2012	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Example 6	2011	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Example 7	2013	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Example 8	2012	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●



Summary Per Entity / Recommendation Per Entity

Shows all nine dimensions of the Sustainability Flower per single entity incl. evaluation as traffic light and a summary of findings (written by evaluating person). The entity to display can be chosen by a drop down menu in the upper left corner. A similar overview lists recommendations per dimension and entity.



Profile and Sustainability Flower by Dimension



The tab "profile" summarizes some general information about the assessed entities like location, size, main crops/products, production capacity and overall comments. All colored "dimension" tabs provide the detail data that is used for the evaluation and visualization wherever possible. This is the basis for defining quantitative and qualitative targets.





7 Next steps

The ongoing discussions in the food sector and beyond lead to ever new standards and requirements that complete more and more the different aspects of sustainable development of food production. While the Soil & More Foundation advocates the harmonization of standards these developments are important to finally come to effective and positive changes in business practices of food producers, processors and traders.

The Sustainability Flower is a “living” framework. The Soil & More Foundation tracks and actively takes part in the above mentioned discussions. Findings also from experiences of implementing the Sustainability Flower are taken into consideration when continuously improving the Performance Indicators and tools.

One of the next steps will be to issue a data gathering mobile application for smart phones.

8 Sources

Economy for the Common Good, Guidelines for Creating a Common Good Balance Sheet and Report (<https://www.ecogood.org/en>)

Global Reporting Initiative (2011) Sustainability Reporting Guidelines GRI G4 (<http://www.globalreporting.org>)

ISO 26000:2010 (2010) Guidance on social responsibility (http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail?csnumber=42546)

SOAAN (2012) Best Practice Guideline for Agriculture and Value Chains (<http://www.ifoam.bio/en/sustainable-organic-agriculture-action-network-soaan>)

UN FAO (2012) SAFA guidelines (<http://www.fao.org/nr/sustainability>)



9 Annex

Sustainability Flower, GRI and SAFA

Performance Aspects	Sub-Performance Aspects	Link to GRI G4	Link to SAFA
SOIL			
Soil quality			E3.1, E3.2, E4
Soil use		EN24	C3.1, E1.1, E3.1, E3.2, E4.1, E4.2, E5.1, E5.3
PLANTS			
Crops			E4.1, E4.2, E4.3, G1.1
Wild Plants		EN11, EN12, EN14	E4.1, E4.2, E4.3, G1.1, G1.2, G5.2
ANIMALS			
Animal Husbandry			E4.2, E4.3, E5.1, E6.1, E6.2, G1.1, G1.2
Natural Habitat		EN13, EN14	E4.2, 4.3
ENERGY			
Energy use		EN3-6, EN34	E2.5, E1.1, G1.1, G1.2
Energy Sources		EN3	E5.2
AIR			
Emissions		EN15-21, EN30	E1.1, E1.2, E5.2, E5.3, G1.1, G1.2
WATER			
Water use		EN10, EN21	E2.1, E2.2
Water sources		EN8-9, EN23, EN25	E2.1, E2.2, E4.1
ECONOMIC LIFE			
Product portfolio	Standard compliance	PR6	C3.3
	Healthy and safe food	PR1-2	C3.1, C3.2, G4.1
	Environmental product footprint		C3.3
	Social impact of products		S1.1, S4.3, S5.2
Responsibility to customer and consumer	Satisfaction	PR5	C3.2, C3.3
	Availability	8	C2.1, C2.3
	Marketing practice	PR3	C3.3, G2.3, G4.1, S1.2
	Data Protection	PR8	G3.2
Innovation	Market research		C1.1
	Innovation costs	PR1	C1.1
	Innovation success		C1.1
Organizational processes	Management system		C1.4, C3.3, G5.1
	Dependency on finite resources and efficiency	EC1, EN1-2	C1.4, E5.1
	Waste	EN23, EN25	E5.3
Partnerships			C2.2, C3.3, S1.3, S2.1
Economic Value Distribution	Suppliers	EC9	C2.2, C4.2, E5.1, S2.1
	Internal	7, 9, 13, EC1, EN31	C1.3, C1.4, C2.1, C2.4
	Providers of funds	EC1	C1.3, C1.4, C2.1, C2.4
	Government	EC1, EC4	C1.4, C4.1
	Employees	54, EC1, EC5, LA2	C1.1, S1.1
	Market	8	C1.2, C1.4, C2.3, S2.1
	Community	EC1, EC7	C1.2, C4.1, G4.4



SOCIETAL LIFE			
Core Labor Standards	Human rights training	HR2	S1.2, S3
	Freedom of Association and Collective bargaining	11, HR4	S2.2, S3.4
	Prevention of forced, compulsory and child labor	HR5-6	G4.2, S2.2, S3.2, S3.3, S4.1
	Non-discrimination		S4.1, S4.2
Diversity and equality	Workforce composition	9, 10, EC6	C4.1
	Minority analysis	LA12	S4.1, S4.3
	Gender equity	LA3, LA12-13	S4.2
Health	Health and safety training		S1.2, S5.1
	State of health	LA6-7	S5.1
	Health promotion	LA8	S1.1, S4.3, S5.1, S5.2
	Food security		S6.2
	Ergonomic workplace		S5.1
Employee loyalty and motivation	Employee fluctuation	10, LA1	
	Contracts	10, LA4	S1.1, S3.1
	Working time		S3.1
	Insurgencies		S3.1
	Non-monetary benefits		
Audit and Grievance Processes	within organisation	HR3, HR9	G1.2, G2.1, G3.2, G4.2
	within supply chain	12, 13, EN32-34, LA14-16, HR10-12, SO9-11	C2.2, C3.3, G1.2, G2.1, G4.2, S2.2
Governance and Compliance	Participation and Transparency	34, 36, 42, 56, 58	G1.1, G2.2, G2.3
	Risk management	2, SO1, EC2, EC8, HR1	G1.2, G2.3, G5.2
	Stakeholder involvement	24-27	G1.1, G2.2, G2.3, G3.1, G3.3
	Legal compliance	SO3-5, SO7-8, PR4, PR7, PR9	G1.1, G3.2, G4.1, G4.2
Advocacy for Sustainable Development	Public policy and contributions	15, SO6	G4.3, G5.1
	Initiatives for standard improvement	16	G4.3, G5.1
CULTURAL LIFE			
Training and education	Need analysis	SO1	C1.1, C1.2, S1.2
	Consumer Education	LA9-10	G3.1
	Employee training		S1.2
	Supplier training		G2.1, S1.2, S1.3
	Other educational projects	SO1	C1.2, S1.2
Self-fulfillment and vitality	Mental and social vitality	LA11	G3.1, S1.2
	Satisfaction		G3.2
	Other social projects		C1.2
Cultural rights		HR8	C1.2, G1.1, S6.1
Research and development			C1.1