

Abstract

BIA-Sustainability: Development of A Business Impact Assessment of Food Companies [†]

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Abstract: Unsustainable food systems are responsible for unhealthy diets and significant environmental degradation globally. The environmental impact of food companies extends along the food supply chain. The International Network for Food and Obesity/Non-communicable Diseases Research, Monitoring and Action Support (INFORMAS) is a global research network that aims to monitor, benchmark and support public and private sector actions to reduce obesity and non-communicable diseases. The Business Impact Assessment on Obesity and Population Nutrition (BIA-Obesity) tool for monitoring the nutrition commitments of food manufacturers, retailers and quick-service restaurants has been successfully used in various countries. This research aims to develop a companion tool to monitor the commitments of food companies to sustainability and verify the relevance and feasibility of the proposed indicators with experts. An inventory of existing indicators was created to guide the creation of domains and indicators. The eleven proposed domains were: packaging, energy use, emissions, water and discharge, biodiversity, climate change adaptation, food loss and waste, environmental compliance, relationships with other organisations, corporate sustainability strategy and reducing ruminant-based products. The Global Reporting Initiative is the most widely used sustainability reporting framework, so selected indicators were modified, and additional indicators and a scoring system were added. Feedback was provided from six academic experts in New Zealand and Australia, sustainability managers from three major food companies in New Zealand and from the INFORMAS Food Sustainability Advisory team (international sustainability experts). In each feedback step, the indicators were modified to improve the specificity of commitments, clarify definitions, add or remove indicators and to modify the scoring of indicators. Feedback highlighted the complexity for food companies in setting commitments, how to incorporate the supply chain into the indicators, how to focus on priority areas of environmental impact for an individual company, and challenges in developing indicators for biodiversity. The resulting 35 indicators will be piloted in selected countries.

Keywords: sustainability; food companies; indicators



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