

## ERBS, SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN BEEF SUSTAINABILITY



Among humanity's main focuses is **sustainability**, and the European beef sector is actively striving to be at the forefront of **positive change** and **environmental stewardship**. The multi-stakeholder organisation **ERBS, the European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability**, can be a solution to addressing the multiple serious environmental, social and economic challenges the **European beef sector** is facing. ERBS was created in 2018 to unite the beef sector towards

driving positive, measurable and credible impact. ERBS is focused on **European beef sustainability** from farm to fork, and it envisions a world where all aspects of the **beef value chain** are environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable.

**Sustainable beef farming** needed to be addressed in a pre-competitive space. ERBS members have been working together to **share knowledge, create solutions** and promote sustainable beef farming systems that ensure the best quality of life for cattle. This improves the **farm landscape's health**, helps **tackle climate and wildlife crises** and **bolsters livelihoods while producing healthy, nutritious foods**. The ERBS unites and coordinates sustainability programmes around a common agenda to deliver measurable and positive impact within the beef value chain, aligned to the principles of the **Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB)** and other major international bodies. All the members are committed and aligned on a shared vision and mission, reporting on the same targets and delivering **a positive impact on animal welfare**, animal medicine, the environment and farm management.

### ***Making positive progress in beef sustainability***

Actors across the value chain in the ERBS are committed and actively working on making positive progress in **beef sustainability**. The Roundtable aligns everyone towards **measurable progress** to the **same aligned targets**. The **diversity of European production** systems is recognised, and freedom is provided to deliver progress in a way that suits the local context. One of the main commitments is **solving priority agriculture challenges with measurable impact**. From helping farms stay viable to supporting on high-level international initiatives through the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB), the members' work is focused on the local context, but also feeds up into a positive global narrative. Together, in an environment of **pre-competitive collaboration**, they arrive at pragmatic solutions to common challenges. "The challenges we are tackling at a European level are often the same as at a global

level, we are an active part of the GRSB, and our targets have a line of sight up to the global goals” – says **Rozanne Davis** from the ERBS

Key organisations work together as part of a Platform. **Platforms in-country** are groups of cross-sector European stakeholders from across the beef value chain who are connected formally, working together towards more **sustainable beef production** using the outcome targets set by ERBS on the ground with farmers. They are coordinated at the country level and can be existing organisations, programmes or schemes, or new groups from across industry, academia, government and society. **Six of the largest beef-producing European countries (France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom) already have an ERBS Platform**, all working towards the same goal, taking locally relevant approaches with 125 activities/projects driving measurable and credible progress on beef sustainability in Europe. The ERBS recognises Platforms committed to working towards the eight outcome targets, and ERBS recognition is measured across six stages ([go here for more info](#)).

Platforms apply to ERBS for recognition, implement their activity plans, and report annually against their progress. **45% of Platform/Target combinations now show progress backed by data.** Rozanne Davis highlights, “From the 2023 progress reporting, **there are examples of data-backed progress in every outcome area (animal medicine, animal welfare, environment and farm management).**” Platforms have taken the leadership in driving progress and adaptability of activities to the local context, from **training to research to influencing**, enabling and encouraging dialogue across value chains and influencing national/certification schemes.

**More than 250,000 European farmers are involved in Platforms activities**, and their mission is that all aspects of the beef value chain are recognised for delivering measurable positive impacts and improvement towards key sustainability priorities. The aim is to work collaboratively with other organisations committed to **continuously improving European beef production’s sustainability.** Farmers and allied industry organisations visibly demonstrate **sustainable farming practices** in their country on a European stage.”

### ***Shaping a joint vision for the beef industry’s future***

ERBS helps suppliers implement aligned sustainability practices, **highlighting the advances in sustainability in European supply chains to the customers.** This also helps to give **greater visibility to the meat industry’s benefits** and shape a joint vision for the beef industry’s future. Connecting and constructively collaborating with partners in the beef industry on aligned sustainable practices will help advance the sustainability of beef production and actively contribute to **the progress being made across Europe.** ERBS recognises and reinforces national and local programmes, as Europe has diverse production systems and climates. That is why the ERBS welcomes and supports stakeholders in developing their approach **in a locally relevant way.** The aim goes **beyond compliance** to work towards measurable outcomes.

To achieve this, ERBS consulted and agreed on **four action areas** focusing on **eight outcome targets** to align all Platforms within European countries. “We are currently consulting with ERBS stakeholders on a revised set of targets. This follows a **rigorous review process** that includes **landscape research** (the latest on science, policy, and

marketplace developments) and **materiality assessment**. The new targets will be published soon”, says Rozanne Davis.

In the environmental field, an **intensity reduction of 15% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025** is a target to recognise the positive role of beef production in mitigating climate change through reduction strategies and sequestration. In the **animal medicines** area, the total usage of antibiotics below 10 mg/kg by 2023 and **reductions of 50% in the use of the highest-priority Critically Important Antibiotics (HP-CIAs) by 2023** are outcome targets. In **animal health and welfare**, the target mortality rates are below 1.5%, and for systems with mortality rates above this target, **a year-on-year reduction of 20%** should be achieved. All animals should have access to loose housing by 2030 and be given pain relief for all surgical procedures and castration, dehorning and disbudding. In **farm management**, a **reduction in serious accidents on farms** and a reduction in fatalities with an overall target of zero is an action area.

### ***The SAI Platform***

The ERBS is hosted by the **Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform**, bringing together **over 180 member companies and organisations** leading sustainable agriculture worldwide for over 20 years. SAI Platform delivers value to members through pre-competitive collaboration, knowledge sharing, and developing programmes and tools to help members see the **bigger picture** and make changes on the ground. **The six countries involved in the ERBS represent 70% of European beef production**, involving retailers, beef producers, allied industries and processors. All together, they are **pioneering change at an industrial level**. ERBS’s key achievements to date make it proud of what was realised so far and very ambitious for the future.

**“European value chains are absolutely committed to high animal welfare standards and driving continuous improvement”, Rozanne Davis adds.** “For the members of the **European Roundtable for Beef sustainability**, animal health and welfare is a fundamental component of the overall sustainability of beef production – providing cattle with an environment where they can thrive has **a positive impact on productivity and output**, which in turn supports **economic viability**; and also has a **positive environmental impact** through the link with enabling **lower GHG emissions.**”

