

Brussels, 1st July 2026
Reference: UECBV-RA-33446

Workshop on the On-Farm-Sustainability Compass

Main outcomes

Date: 01/07/2026, 09:00-16:00.

Venue: Online.

Agenda: [HERE](#)

Context

On the 1st of July 2026, the European Commission hosted the Workshop on the On-Farm-Sustainability Compass, following a workshop organised on 4 March 2026, offering an opportunity to continue discussions with participants. The OFSC (not to be confused with the Agri Sustainability Compass) is a **planned EU voluntary benchmarking framework/tool to help farmers assess and improve sustainability performance at farm level, across environmental, economic and social dimensions.**

1. Welcome by the European Commission

DG AGRI welcomed all participants. No changes on the agenda were proposed.

2. On-farm Sustainability Compass: State of Play

The Commission recalled that the Compass should work at farm level, follow a whole-farm approach and cover the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability without becoming fragmented by sector from the outset. Its role should be to provide a common baseline, language and understanding, while avoiding duplication of existing obligations. To reduce burden, the Compass should use data already reported under EU and national legislation where possible, identify overlaps between reporting requirements and support common protocols for farm-level data sharing. Participants also stressed that farmers must consent to data use and remain in control of their data, as trust, interoperability and reuse of existing information will be essential. The Commission indicated that significant progress on the Compass should be delivered by next year.

3. Bench4Farms - Mapping the space of sustainable agriculture schemes: Presentation of the final report

Representatives of the European Investment Bank presented the Bench4Farms project, with the results introduced by Johannes Sauer, Head of the Chair of Agricultural Production and Resource Economics at the Technical University of Munich. The project mapped sustainability schemes in Europe and beyond to support a clearer framework for assessing farm sustainability and for mobilising public and private investment. Its methodology combined scientific databases, internet and OECD sources, scheme stakeholders and national experts

from twelve EU countries. Data were collected through an online survey between mid-November 2025 and mid-March 2026, covering scheme objectives, stakeholder involvement, indicators, methodology, use, funding and governance.

The mapping showed that sustainability schemes are broad in scope but highly fragmented. They cover many geographies and agricultural sub-sectors, with strongest stakeholder involvement from farmers, advisers and research bodies, while supply-chain actors are only moderately involved and civil society and local authorities less present. For livestock schemes, animal welfare indicators commonly cover health, housing, mortality, antibiotic use, water access and outdoor access. The main conclusion was that diversity can be useful, but it also reduces comparability. No single scheme can cover agriculture as a whole, and results based on different KPIs, sectors or contexts should therefore be interpreted with caution.

4. Joint Research Centre's Technical-Scientific Support

Representatives from the Joint Research Centre presented a technical review of farm sustainability frameworks and tools to support a more harmonised reference framework for the Compass. The review compared how existing approaches define sustainability dimensions, impact areas and indicators, use data, and translate results into scores or benchmarks.

The JRC concluded that no existing model can be adopted directly. The Compass should instead combine a clear three-pillar structure, a practical farm-level diagnostic function and transparent scoring. Aggregation should also be handled carefully, as reference values, normalisation, weighting and roll-up methods shape the final message and can hide trade-offs if strong performance in one area fully offsets weakness in another.

5. Joint Research Centre's Technical-Scientific Support

The proposed thematic structure is based on a nested architecture organized around the three sustainability dimensions. The environmental dimension covers the farm's interaction with natural resources and the environment; the economic dimension covers viability, resilience and continuity; and the social dimension covers well-being linked to the farm, workers and the wider community. The structure remains preliminary and was presented as a basis for discussion, not as a final or prescriptive framework.

Within this structure, seventeen impact areas were proposed. The environmental areas cover air and climate, biodiversity and genetic resources, energy, input and waste management, soil quality, sustainable land use and water management. The economic areas cover agricultural production, economic resilience, farm viability and efficiency, innovation and digital transformation, and value-chain integration. The social areas cover agricultural training, generational renewal, labor and working conditions, local development and circular economy, and social responsibility and welfare.

6. Follow-up discussion on the thematic structure

The JRC proposed a nested thematic structure built around the environmental, economic and social dimensions. The aim is to organise sustainability indicators in a way that makes farm performance easier to interpret, rather than treating the Compass as a loose collection of data points. The structure remains a working basis for discussion, not a fixed model, and includes

seventeen impact areas, such as soil quality, farm viability, innovation, value-chain integration and generational renewal.

The main conclusion was that this structure could improve comparability and provide a common language for selecting indicators, provided it remains simple and practical for farm-level use. Participants were invited to test whether the proposed impact areas are relevant across sectors, whether anything overlaps or is missing, and whether the framework can support benchmarking without hiding trade-offs between dimensions.

7. General discussion: Next steps in the development of the On-farm Sustainability Compass

Riikka Karjalainen from CEJA (European Council of Young Farmers) presented young farmers' views on agricultural data. She stressed that farmers do not reject data collection in itself, as it can support decision-making, profitability and input management: the concern is that data requests often create administrative burden without clear value in return, especially when farmers are unsure who will use the data, for what purpose, and under whose control. The Compass should follow a “collect once, use multiple times” logic, give farmers clear control over their data, and distinguish between indicators that are practical to collect and those that are sensitive, costly or methodologically uncertain. The main conclusion was that the Compass will only work if it provides visible farm-level value and embeds transparency, data sovereignty and trust from the outset.

General comments were made by stakeholders on the practical and technical advances made in the workshop in comparison to the latest edition back on March; the need to put further emphasis on the economic dimension of the Compass; differentiating more between the different impact areas (with the categories of “income” and “waste management”, for instance) or an idea for a proposal to use data agreed by EU statistics and regulations to avoid administrative burden on farmers and data collection duplication.

8. Closing

The Commission presented next steps for the data layer of the Compass. The main issue is that farm data remain scattered across systems, so the objective is to reduce reporting burden by improving interoperability and reusing information through common standards. The EU Agrifood Business Wallet was presented as a practical building block, with preparatory work already under way with DIGIT and CNECT. It should help manage digital documents such as certificates and support use cases including organic certification, carbon credits and a future soil or farm passport.

The key conclusion was that the Compass will need more than indicators: it also needs a trusted data infrastructure. This means agreeing protocols for farm-level data exchange, consent management, data certification and links with existing initiatives such as CEADS.eu and national data spaces. **The next steps are stakeholder exchanges from September onwards, a co-creation workshop in early spring 2027 and data-layer guidelines by summer 2027. In parallel, the Compass timetable foresees a draft common reference framework at the end of 2026 and a draft Memorandum of Understanding in early 2027.**