



GCAW

Global Coalition for Animal Welfare

Knowledge Share



Implementing Animal Welfare Commitments: GCAW Member Experiences

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IMPLEMENTING ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITMENTS: GCAW MEMBER EXPERIENCES

INTRODUCTION

Company commitments are powerful drivers for change. In transitioning livestock production systems to higher welfare models, their impact is proving pivotal in raising the necessary stakeholder awareness and focus for action.

To give just two examples, nearly 600 companies have committed to meet the welfare requirements of the Better Chicken Commitment, and almost 2,500 companies have announced cage-free egg commitments.

Meeting these commitments requires an adaptive approach: there is no single solution that will work for all companies. Each must take into consideration a wide range of start points, management systems and processes, as well as measurement and reporting strategies specific to their individual business models.

There are many challenges that can impede progress on animal welfare commitments. These include challenges linked to access to supply, such as fluctuating or limited supply in certain regions, segregation of supply, regulatory conditions, traceability and access to assurance schemes, and limited purchasing influence. Other challenges may be linked to internal factors, such as poorly defined governance, poor integration of animal welfare into internal management systems and processes, competing priorities or limited knowledge of the issues.

The more globalised the supply chain, the more complexities there are to consider and greater effort is required to gain alignment across multiple geographies and put in place the required data collection and reporting systems. Working pre-competitively with other supply chain stakeholders, for example, by way of multi-stakeholder industry collaborations, can be a route to help resolve system-wide issues. Here, membership platforms such as Global Coalition for Animal Welfare (GCAW) can be beneficial in enabling collaborative working to resolve common challenges and accelerate progress.

In this paper, members of the Global Coalition for Animal Welfare, some of the world's largest food companies, share their experiences of implementing animal welfare commitments. We anticipate that the challenges they have faced will resonate with companies across the wider food industry: our hope is that others will benefit from the experiences and learnings shared.

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The idea for this resource arose from GCAW's Broiler Chicken Welfare Working Group, and the Secretariat is grateful to those members that contributed to its creation through sharing their experiences for the case studies included:



THE ROLE OF GCAW

GCAW sees animal welfare as a key part of a sustainable food system and is committed to supporting its member companies, as well as the wider food industry, to identify and address barriers to improving animal welfare standards at scale and for the long term.

GCAW members are at different stages of developing and executing implementation plans for animal welfare commitments. Some are engaging with suppliers to understand what progress has been made and where further efforts are needed. Some have country-specific strategies and are reporting on progress in this context. Some are focusing efforts on whole company integration and increasing cross-team collaboration. Through the regular exchange of their experiences, GCAW members are able to continuously evolve and learn how, as individual companies, and as an industry, they can improve their approaches to sustainable supply chain management and drive positive results for animal welfare.

ROADMAPS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

The terms 'roadmap' and 'implementation plan' are sometimes used interchangeably, however this paper defines these as follows.

- **A roadmap** is a high-level overview showing how a company needs to move from its baseline to the end goal of fulfilling a commitment. An effective roadmap will establish a baseline and set out incremental targets (or milestones) with defined timelines for delivery of each. Where animal welfare commitments need to incorporate multiple welfare criteria, segmenting the roadmap may be necessary.
- **An implementation plan** is a detailed project plan demonstrating how a commitment will be integrated into a company's business processes and systems. It should, for example, consider which stakeholders are critical to its success and how to engage with these, resources needed, and where the internal and external dependencies lie.

Both are necessary tools for successful outcomes.

They should complement one another and be developed at the same time as making a commitment, so that companies:

- Have a clear plan for transition.
- Have identified risks or unintended consequences (and have mitigation in place).
- Can set out how workstreams are to be prioritised.
- Can monitor, and be accountable for, progress.



A BEST PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

In compiling this knowledge share, we noted common challenges and similarities in approaches which have been successful in overcoming barriers to progress. Collectively, these lend themselves to the formation of a framework which may be adopted by other food companies as an effective approach to improving animal welfare in their supply chains. Although the details will vary depending on the commitment being addressed and specifics of the company in question, the general approach outlined below represents best practice that can serve as a basis for addressing animal welfare topics.



A BEST PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

1. Develop A Common Understanding

Aim: To align animal welfare commitments with company direction.

- Define the key drivers for making a commitment: what is most important at this time and what do you project will be in the future? You may wish to consider stakeholder pressures (customers, peers, NGOs, investors, wider industry, organisational need (e.g. for efficiency), commercial growth (e.g. market penetration, segmentation or differentiation)).
- Secure buy-in for the commitment from all relevant internal stakeholders to create alignment and shared ownership for delivery.
- Review your company's previous experience of meeting published commitments and general approach to implementation. What can be learned from these? Has any reputational damage arisen from abandoning or failing to meet previous targets? What other consequences have there been and how might these have been avoided?
- Understand how a welfare commitment may impact other sustainability commitments and any risks arising from this.

Case Study: Tyson Foods

We just had our second animal welfare awareness week and are continuing our focus on the rollout of the Five Domains model. Our approach to animal welfare is very much based on this framework, to which we also tie our indicators. We use the Five Domains-model as a platform to create a culture of animal welfare, and we feel like we can drive more action through that model compared to the Five Freedoms. We also approach meeting our goals through a focus on accountability, and messaging around this that is communicated to all our employees. This all creates clear expectations as well as ownership for the issue of animal welfare across the business and serves as a basis for our own approach to animal welfare and the goals we set.

2. Define The Baseline

Aim: To understand the scale of work required to meet animal welfare commitments.

- Identify all raw materials and products relevant to the commitment across your business. Also identify any specific product lines or product specifications that need to be considered separately, noting why.
- For each raw material and product, collate a list of suppliers, their locations and volumes.
- Map the relationship with each supplier – do you deal with them directly or indirectly? Focus efforts on Tier 1 suppliers where you have greatest influence but work to acquire detailed understanding of your extended supply chain too.
- Audit the animal welfare standards adopted by each supplier. What are their policies? Have they set targets? Do they use any certification schemes?
- Make use of existing industry knowledge and corporate benchmarks to provide high-level indications of how supplying companies perform on sustainability and animal welfare indicators.

Case Study: Sodexo

We want our animal welfare strategy to be implemented wherever we operate and our commitments to be compatible with the local market constraints and supplier capabilities. However, although the same objectives apply to all geographies in which we operate, local supply managers are responsible for the implementation and thus are key actors to our success alongside other stakeholders. The maturity of an issue such as animal welfare varies depending on the region, but early steps are always to understand our baseline and current performance, e.g. through our animal welfare charter which includes our requirements that is sent to all our relevant suppliers, signed and sent back to us.

3. Define The Timeline

Aim: To set milestones that will build momentum and drive progress towards target delivery.

- Map these milestones into a detailed, time-specific implementation plan. Many companies set a deadline first and work back from that with incremental action steps; others outline the process first to calculate a realistic deadline for delivery.
- Get feedback from decision-makers, functional leaders, and other stakeholders across the business. Also consider involving external stakeholders to secure buy-in and create joint ownership of the issue.
- Share your commitment with key stakeholders, together with your timeline and approach to implementation, to solidify the goal and accountability for delivery, and to provide clarity to all parties.

Case Study: Starbucks

One challenge is that there can be resistance towards setting targets that are not instantly implementable. For example, our success in going fully cage-free for egg sourcing in the US was a gradual process that took about ten years to achieve. We need to be able to work towards lower milestones and scale up to 100% with intention, especially in markets where the infrastructure isn't yet developed to support commitment requirements. Once you have alignment and a realistic path forward, the necessary infrastructure can be built gradually. For dairy cows, specifically, we have been able to drive progress faster as there was a clear mandate to create a Sustainable Dairy Program to resolve challenges related to the environment, specifically around carbon and water reductions in our supply chain. For Starbucks, it was important to take a holistic approach including animal care alongside environmental stewardship and other business-critical aspects. This in turn meant greater internal leverage for focusing on animal welfare and implied a platform to push from.

4. Identify Potential Solutions

Aim: To explore all opportunities to make progress, internally and externally.

- Compare your commitment targets with current internal practices, systems and processes to identify the programmes of work required for delivery. Focus effort where risks and impacts are greatest.
- Assess product range implications, considering a re-structure of your offering, reformulation or new product development if necessary.
- Analyse the resourcing required for a successful outcome and allocate roles and responsibilities, including for capturing and collating data. Discuss and plan with all relevant teams to uncover synergies and distribute costs - integration across the business is a critical success factor.
- Explore other solutions that could facilitate the process (for example, carcass balance, waste reduction and strategic partnerships).
- Capture any emerging risks during implementation and define appropriate mitigation strategies.

Case Study: Aramark

We continue our focus on internal engagement and on developing resources for our procurement team related to responsible sourcing topics. As an example we work collaboratively with other functions to create channels through which we can explain our animal welfare commitments and provide updates to senior management, purchasers, and other internal stakeholders on a more regular basis. We also seek to continuously improve our communication process to our field teams to better operationalize and advance these efforts. As an example, we regularly review and improve our catalogue tagging so that local purchasing managers can more easily select approved specification products that meet our sustainable sourcing commitments where applicable. Such operational changes have been important steps towards our progress and help the whole organization to work in the same direction.

Case Study: Sodexo

We work with a network of category managers as well as food menu experts in order to define the optimal product specifications, while combining sourcing capabilities and compliance with our requirements - for example working with suppliers to better balance the proportion of breast meat and other cuts. Another example of a measure taken is rationalizing the catalogue and reducing options so that we can go to the supplier with more defined and specific volumes. It is really about defining the best strategy for each region that we are working in, and mitigating cost and sustainability.



5. Engage Supply Chain

Aim: To co-create transition plans with suppliers.

- Define how a welfare commitment will be integrated into supply management decisions. Will you be setting goals to support long-term/high performing suppliers in meeting new criteria, or will you be looking to re-contract?
- Involve suppliers in dialogue early on and give them as much notice as possible of any change of requirements. Work with them to create a transition plan for compliance in a defined and reasonable timeframe.
- Provide support to suppliers where possible. Gain an understanding of what suppliers need in order to be able to implement the required changes. Assess suppliers' understanding of what they need to do to comply with your requirements and determine whether they have identified any obstacles or conflicts to delivery of these. Might a supplier be able to segregate higher welfare supply if necessary?
- Formulate supplier requirements and incorporate these expectations into contracts and supporting documents when possible. It is good practice to offer extended contracts and guaranteed orders to support suppliers in transitioning to new requirements. Consider offering financial or other incentives to accelerate progress.
- Consider pilot projects, training, and technical support to optimise process change and improve reporting. A recurring supplier questionnaire can be useful in early identification of risks to implementation.
- Share experiences and successes across your supply chain.

Case Study: Aramark

When engaging with suppliers we have found that it is important to have a consultative approach and meet the suppliers where they are on their sustainability journey. By sharing best practices and understanding where we can support them in their process, we found out that several of our suppliers were already meeting a certain requirement. These joint efforts have helped to improve our own reporting and data collection processes. Overall, we are engaging with our direct supplier partners (processor/manufacturer), frequently and in several ways, e.g. sending out e-mails with information regarding our commitments, follow up calls, external conferences, embedding these topics in business reviews, RFP's and through the spend data collection process.

Case Study: Tyson Foods

In order to meet our goals for animal welfare, we focus a lot on training and on having the right procedures in place. Workers receive updated training on animal welfare at least annually, and we make sure to recognize individuals that demonstrate accountability and create 'champions' for animal welfare in this way. In terms of getting everyone aligned on the same goals, e.g. related to improving the defined metrics, we focus a lot on communication. For example, updated data which demonstrates where we're currently at as a business, is communicated weekly to leaders. Such informed send-outs, as well as regular review-meetings, help leaders to keep track of where the business is at and where opportunities for improvement lie. Creating this kind of visibility and regular dialogue with our business unit leaders has been key in making improvements.

6. Measure and Communicate

Aim: To monitor performance and drive progress.

- Agree which metrics will be used to track progress and how often these should be recorded and collated. The choice of metric will normally be determined by your company's existing management systems and processes, but might involve volumes of product (produced, procured or sold), purchasing spend, or revenue.
- Align the scope of monitoring with the scope of the commitment – by geography (e.g. country, region or globally), and by timeline (e.g. annualised metrics).
- Make sure appropriate data collection and monitoring systems are in place internally and at supplier operations. Where possible, integrate this process into existing management systems to facilitate ongoing and consistent application. Validate information provided in self-assessments via third party audits.
- Establish benchmarks and incentives for consistently strong performance. Encourage improvements through regular communications with non-compliant suppliers.
- Communicate progress internally and externally to acknowledge your company's efforts, demonstrate transparency, celebrate success and build engagement and momentum. Involve your communications and marketing team in this work to keep messaging clear, effective and positive, focusing on benefits to animals, producers and customers/consumers.

Case Study: Compass Group

Due to the decentralised nature of our business, animal welfare execution is driven at a country level. Our central team is focussed on understanding global, regional and local issues and opportunities, and to ensure our local teams are continually kept up to date. We want to ensure that our procurement teams are empowered to set their own welfare standards and have the right conversation with their suppliers to deliver our commitments. We centrally capture data and track progress on all our commitments. This data is also regularly verified by a third party and communicated externally periodically.

Case Study: Aramark

Our approach to animal welfare-commitment communication is to lead with transparency and a collaborative approach. We believe in the importance of publishing a policy and intent, to mention the challenges we face, our partnership work and provide updates on our progress. For broiler chicken, for example, we have created a preliminary timeline and reporting structure based on information available. Although some stakeholders have requested additional details, the general feedback has been positive, both from NGOs and from market peers that have said they will learn from what we've done. We see public reporting as important as the planning and data gathering process. Through our public platforms we can send a clear message of our progress, and most importantly reinforce our commitment to our supplier partners. We also have an opportunity to describe what we have learned and share best practices through our public reporting. We will continue to update our public figures regularly and continuously add additional information as it becomes available throughout the year.

7. Continually Re-appraise

Aim: To ensure ongoing alignment of animal welfare commitments with business direction.

- Your roadmap should remain static unless there are material changes to the business.
- Your implementation plan on the other hand will need to be continually reviewed and updated to align with changing internal and external circumstances. Business priorities can change, which can in turn have a direct impact on the feasibility and successful outcome of a commitment. Sometimes timelines need to be adjusted or a target abandoned.
- Each decision needs to be carefully recorded and a communications plan developed with clear messaging on what the implications of each decision are.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Realistic Timeframes

Be realistic when setting timelines because substantial time and investment is often needed to improve welfare conditions for farm animals. Some elements of a commitment may demand more time than others and therefore need to be addressed sooner to meet an overarching target. Involving suppliers during the process of defining timelines is advised, particularly where significant changes to production are needed. Naturally, what is achievable is determined by the size, nature and structure of the supply chain, and the preparedness of a company, in terms of existing resources and processes.

Be proactive. Responding to external events or stakeholder pressures tends to result in companies retrospectively developing an implementation plan and setting timelines at speed. This gives them far less control over outcomes and introduces risk.

Case Study: Compass Group

The pace of change naturally varies a lot between countries and each country has its own set of challenges to overcome. Therefore, we engage with each of our country teams to understand their specific issues and what timelines are feasible. Where needed we also facilitate conversations with relevant industry stakeholders, for example, in 2023 we facilitated a discussion between the chicken grower association and a prominent animal welfare NGO in one of our countries. Participants were able to share their views, discuss progress and demands, and to understand where a middle ground can be found to accelerate progress. A common issue that we find is that producers are not able to segregate supply, so they are faced with the decision to change their whole production. We have also been working with a consultancy firm in Asia to engage with suppliers and create tangible roadmaps to meeting our commitments there.

Case Study: Maple Leaf Foods

Our general approach to setting targets is to first build the business case for whatever improvement we want to make related to animal welfare, so that it can pass our governance process and be approved by senior management. Targets where we have direct control are easier to implement versus those which require implementing new practices with independent farmers, for example. Providing incentives to farmers is one way we can potentially speed up implementation. In contrast, in some cases related to national standard practice on farms, we need to influence the legislation and Codes of Practice standards which imply longer processes.

Effective Governance and Organisation

Set animal welfare plans in the context of other business risks and opportunities. It is common for plans to raise animal welfare standards to conflict with other procurement criteria, such as price, volume, delivery time and standard product properties. However, animal welfare is no different to other sustainability matters, in that progress is likely to imply business priorities having to be adjusted. It cannot, therefore, be managed in isolation. A senior issue owner who will understand these conflicts, take responsibility for possible trade-offs, and resolve them by bringing together relevant decision-makers is vital.

Navigate potential tensions by embedding animal welfare into other sustainability-led supply chain initiatives to benefit from cross-team expertise and synergies across the business. A central committee or equivalent, comprising representatives from functions across the organisation should ideally have ownership of animal welfare commitments. In this scenario, conflicts can be identified and resolved by this committee, rather than by an individual manager who may be struggling to get buy-in.

One approach that has been proven effective is to establish a multi-team working group early on which can develop a holistic approach to specific goals. Such a group may include representatives from purchasing/commercial, technical and quality, sustainability and marketing teams.

Case Study: Starbucks

In the past, our animal welfare commitments were made without the necessary cross-functional alignment, which hindered implementation. In 2021 we built a broad cross-functional working team and leadership steering committee to support a newly organized internal animal welfare framework and standard operating process in order to ensure alignment and effective implementation. We are also exploring how we can take this beyond the internal US-market and expand our approach outwards as a more unified global business. Efforts are being made and need to be made consistently in terms of shared definitions and building a common language around animal welfare globally across the business.

Case Study: Unilever

An important factor for the progress that we have been able to make has been to have clear sign-off from senior leadership, and for the potential cost of any welfare commitments to be indicated and included from the beginning so that it doesn't come as a surprise to anyone at a later stage. Another key factor for us is to work tightly together with the procurement team to understand the products that are sourced, identify what is possible and the best strategies to move forward. We have also focused on the central organisation building closer relationships with regional procurement managers to stimulate engagement on animal welfare. A challenge, however, is that implementation of commitments requires leadership on all levels, and for some roles it is common for people to only stay in the business for a couple of years. This is a risk in terms of the long-term strategy and follow-through of plans.

Partnership Working

Where your company has limited capacity to support a supplier in transitioning to higher welfare production, perhaps due to small procurement volumes, consider joint purchasing arrangements with other companies to provide the required volumes. All changes to production systems are costly so taking joint decisions and sharing costs across the supply chain can help navigate this challenge.

Forming partnerships with suppliers, even small ones, and the agreement of longer-term contracts can support the achievement of long-term commitments. Several GCAW members have carried out pilot projects with producers, e.g. to trial specific system features, improve data tracking and assess new reporting tools.

Case Study: Ikea

In general, our approach to improving animal welfare is that we want our commitments to be ambitious but feasible. Giving animal welfare the same status as other initiatives is an important next step. In the past we have focused more on the suppliers that perform really well, whereas going forward we want to implement a stepwise approach where animal welfare requirements are categorised into e.g. some that are an absolute requirement for everyone and some that need to be addressed over time and through an action plan.

We want to work together with our suppliers, encourage them and drive continuous improvements through developmental goals and KPIs. Although we find more challenges with implementation of commitments in regions such as Asia, we have managed to achieve progress there through close collaboration with our direct suppliers. In general, it is part of our company culture to build long-term relationships with our suppliers, and to offer support which also builds mutual trust.

Case Study: Unilever

Unilever uses a lot of animal products as ingredients, and for these it is generally more challenging reaching 100% fulfilment of commitments. In some cases, to make it work, we need to find and work together with partners. Sometimes our processor can help to facilitate the needed synergies, and sometimes we actively locate an additional customer to e.g. help us with full-carcass-utilization, which lowers the cost of sourcing higher welfare products. For example, we have experienced an issue when high welfare egg yolk is used but the egg white isn't, as this leads to unnecessary cost and downgrading.

Working with Standardised Metrics

Responding to the widespread challenge of defining the optimum animal welfare metrics, there are several initiatives looking at standardisation and this should be welcomed. When there is greater consensus around what 'good welfare' looks like and how to measure this, clear expectations of suppliers can be set out for the short and long term.

Suppliers will have their own data management systems so any new metric requirements need to be agreed in collaboration. This will ensure that you receive the data you need to monitor progress and satisfy increasing third party reporting requirements.

In some cases, you will need to create a specific formula to convert a key performance indicator into a standardised metric to facilitate comparability. An example of this is reporting on cage-free eggs where kilograms can be converted into whole units of eggs.

A growing number of food companies are using welfare outcome measures to drive continuous improvement in their supply chains. Welfare outcome measures are valuable as they focus on the animals themselves, in contrast to input measures which focus on requirements for the production system. Thereby, they enable comparison of welfare across different types of production systems and also allow flexibility for suppliers to explore different solutions to achieve welfare improvements.

For more on this, see: [GCAW Recommendation On The Use Of Welfare Outcome Measures For Broiler Chickens](#).

Case Study: Maple Leaf Foods

We have a specialized team that carry out regular internal audits to monitor performance. These farm animal health and welfare technicians go out to farms to collect data in-person, as we have found that own-submission doesn't work. This streamlines the process and works as quality control for our reporting. We have also developed more practical ways of gathering data, such as creating a dataset based on farm dimensions, where we then use the slaughter weights to estimate stocking density retrospectively. The focus for our reporting is on year over year outcomes and every year we re-evaluate the metrics to potentially include more outcomes or adjust reporting as

Independent Verification

Although animal welfare verification isn't readily available in all parts of the world, availability is increasing as many companies choose to work with assurance schemes or certification bodies. While cost remains a barrier, particularly for small scale producers, there are many advantages to adopting this approach.

Assurance schemes are designed to ensure supply chain compliance and provide traceability. They can help with meeting commitments by providing access to networks of verified suppliers that meet specific standards. And, as certain assurance labels are well-known to consumers, they have become a means to connect with consumers to raise awareness of the added value associated with higher animal welfare.

Case Study: Sodexo

Sodexo is currently leveraging a public tool that compares different certifications, in order to raise awareness internally on higher welfare, to set the baseline per country and ease interpretation for buyers when they work on what the different standards mean, e.g. for an issue such as stocking density. The outcomes help us understand where we are compliant and to calculate percentages for reporting purposes. When no recognized certifications are available or in use, we need to work with each supplier individually to understand and discuss the different attributes of their farming and production practices.

Case Study: Ikea

One of our key focus areas has been chicken welfare, where a successful “backwards”-approach to meeting our standard has been to first identify and secure the desired supply and then develop our global offer based on this, and with a greatly reduced number of chicken products. This meant that we made sure that all parts of the chicken had a place and purpose which in turn meant that the cost was lowered. We opted to work with a limited number of suppliers that we knew could produce to (at the time) at least 15 of our 20 improvement points for chicken. For the other 5 there was a set timeline for gradual implementation. One way that we were able to choose these suppliers was to identify existing certifications that matched our own standard and use that as a basis.

Efficiency Through Technology

Technology related to automatic monitoring and data management can greatly facilitate the implementation of welfare commitments throughout supply chains.

Precision livestock farming, which includes the use of machine learning and biosensors helps capture data while apps and other software have been developed to enhance and streamline reporting of this data. These are helping to enhance transparency and are proving to be useful tools for continuous improvement. Further innovations related to traceability are also needed, as higher welfare production often needs to be segregated through the supply chain, which can add significant cost.

Case Study: Tyson Foods

We are currently looking at new technology and e.g. how AI-technology can help to improve data collection and processing. There are opportunities to better assess welfare and individual animals at slaughterhouses, but also on farm. We are currently carrying out a study together with a few technology developers, with initial results to be published shortly. We then work together with different teams across the business, such as IT, in order to analyse the data and to better understand nuances, which helps us to identify opportunities for improvement.