

A Handbook for Australian Almond Growers using the Leading Harvest Farmland Management Program 2025





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This handbook was developed to help almond growers understand and achieve conformance with the requirements of the Leading Harvest Farmland Management Program 2025, including specific Performance Measures and Indicators. This includes Australian almond growing operations where trees are planted in orchard environments and exposed to weather.

The Leading Harvest Program 2025 is a third-party audited certification program that provides assurance for the sustainability of farmland management.¹ It allows almond growers to make credible claims to markets about their management through third-party assurance. The Leading Harvest Program 2025 is outcome-based, using non-numeric Indicators that describe required management outcomes. This provides almond growers with the flexibility to apply the unique set of activities suited to their operation and achieve sustainable outcomes identified by the Indicators. This flexibility is possible because the program uses a credible verification system of independent third-party auditing. This document includes specific general technical guidance for almond growing that is not included in the general guidance document for the Leading Harvest Farmland Management Program 2025 program².

What is conformance evidence?

Conformance evidence is evidence of activities that demonstrate how your operations have met Indicator requirements. This may include documents, statements, measurements, other verifiable information, and/or observations of actions, practices, technology, and conditions. You choose the conformance evidence that you want to present to the audit team. You may need to explain how the conformance evidence is sufficient for meeting the Indicator requirements. Thus, you can choose how to demonstrate how your farm achieves conformance without resorting to a program checklist. The audit team verifies the conformance evidence and makes a determination as to whether it sufficiently meets the requirements described by the Indicator.

What am I required to do?

Can I use participation in other programs as conformance evidence?

Yes, you may use participation in other programs as conformance evidence for Indicators. This may include required reports and completed forms needed for legal compliance (e.g., FreshCare, Global G.A.P., approvals) and for active participation in voluntary programs and certifications (e.g., research projects, local programs, supply chain surveys, industry programs). Evidence may include descriptions of programs, paperwork indicating program enrolment and related activities, reviews or audits, trainings, and program checklists.

Participation in FreshCare Environmental, and other food safety programs may have limited overlap in conformance requirements with Leading Harvest Management Program 2025 in areas of employee safety, crop protectant use and management, and select other topics. GLOBAL G.A.P.³ has considerably more overlap in conformance requirements than other food safety programs for the management of water resources, soil health, crop protectant use, biodiversity, employee safety, labor considerations, and select other topics. While GLOBAL G.A.P. shares overlap with the Leading Harvest Farmland Management Standard and can be used as conformance evidence, the two programs are ultimately different in purpose and scope: GLOBAL G.A.P. is a prescriptive, product-oriented farm-level assurance scheme focused on market access, whereas Leading Harvest is an outcome-based, whole-farm sustainability standard that aggregates assurance across entire farming systems for processors, commodity groups, asset managers and investors. All food safety systems have a management control system and framework that could be expanded to address topics other than food safety.

1 Whitman, A. (producer). 2020. A Primer for Understanding the Leading Harvest Farmland Management Standard. Produced by Manomet, Inc, Manomet MA on behalf of Leading Harvest, Arlington, VA. Leading Harvest. 2025. Leading Harvest Farmland Management Program 2025. Leading Harvest, Arlington, VA.

2 Hansen, S. 2025. Guidance information for applying the Leading Harvest Australia Farmland Management Standard Est. 2025. Latest Revision by Leading Harvest. Previously adapted by Pinion Advisory from original Manomet, Inc. document on behalf of Leading Harvest Australia

3 2019 *Integrated Farm Assurance, All Farm Base | Crops Base | Fruit and Vegetables*, English Version 5.2. Global G.A.P.

Be knowledgeable about agricultural BMPs

You will be well prepared for Objectives 2 through 6 and parts of other Objectives if you are familiar with agricultural BMPs and understand when and why they should or should not be applied to your operations. You should know when your operational practices may differ from agricultural BMPs and be able to explain why.

This document includes a *Resources* section for many Indicators with relevant references. The references are informative only in so far as they are descriptive and may help the reader understand the concepts and range of actions that may help achieve conformance with the Leading Harvest Standard 2025.

The [Almond Hort360](#) program is a key reference for Almond Industry BMPs.

Indicator Information

Each Indicator account includes the Indicator, provides a short *Guidance* section to provide context, lists *Examples of Conformance Evidence* to help users determine how to achieve conformance, and may have a list of resources to provide additional useful information. The *Examples of Conformance Evidence* are broken into two categories of *Suitable* and *Other Evidence* necessary to conform to the Leading Harvest Program 2025:

- **Strong Evidence** is actions or documents that are often used by growers and are suitable for achieving conformance to the Leading Harvest Program 2025. Although *Strong Evidence* is mostly likely to succeed at demonstrating grower conformance, growers may need more than one example of *Strong Evidence* or *Other Evidence* to achieve conformance.
- **Other Evidence** is evidence that can be used to help further demonstrate conformance. If you are already taking actions or applying practices listed under *Other Evidence*, these actions or practices can be used to further make the case that you are in conformance with a specific Indicator. *Other Evidence* is listed in case you already apply these activities or have documents that describe these activities and help you get credit for the good work that you are already doing.



OBJECTIVE 1

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT



INDICATOR 1.1.1**Farmland Stewardship Commitment: A written commitment statement and list of goals that describes the sustainable agricultural stewardship of farmland.**

Guidance: A grower-defined sustainability commitment statement and stewardship goals help ensure strategy and operations are consistent and aligned with farm sustainability. They communicate farm business purpose and direction to employees, customers, vendors, and other stakeholders. All employees should understand and be able to work within your Farmland Stewardship Commitment statement. A commitment statement can be verbalised by asking: What commitments or deep priorities to agricultural sustainability drive your farm business? Is it profitability? Food safety? Farm productivity? Environmental stewardship? Being a leader above other growers? Having the best team of people? Preparing the next generation to exceed this generation's farming accomplishments?

Commitment Statements: Answering the question of one's deep sustainability priorities is essential for everyday farming. By clearly saying what matters the most, those things that mobilise, energise, and guide decision-making, it becomes easier to keep one's commitments to quality growth, employees and contract labour, and environmental stewardship. Since farm management often involves more than one person, a commitment statement can help communicate your stewardship commitment to employees, other business stakeholders, and the local community.

Examples of commitment statements:

X Farm is a producer of almonds for processing. We are committed to becoming one of the top growers in our area and to making sure that productivity and stewardship translates into prosperity and growth for everyone involved with our farm and a healthy environment.

At X farms, we are committed to long-term stewardship and profitability that maintains the productivity of our farmland, safe products, conserves nature, and contributes to the well-being of our employees and local community.

At X Farms, we are committed to meeting the highest standards for agricultural stewardship. We combine leading growing and management techniques with outstanding food safety and environmental stewardship to maximise productivity and profitability.

Stewardship Goals: Stewardship goals are statements that indicate general goals for a farm for the next 5 to 10 years. The number of goals is determined by what you think is necessary to communicate your commitment and values. They should be realistic and apply to your operation and property. There may be one goal or more to address the triple bottom lines: financial, social, and environmental. Stewardship goals can address these and other topics: profitability, long-term financial sustainability, food safety, productivity, safety, teamwork, lifestyle and quality of life, conservation (e.g., soils, water, wildlife), and resource use.

Examples of stewardship goals:

- ✓ Achieve long-term profitability with a purpose by balancing income and the family life of our employees
- ✓ Ensuring our products are safe and nutritious
- ✓ Maintaining and enhancing the long-term soil health and productivity of our orchard
- ✓ Farming efficiently while conserving the soil, air, water, and wildlife resources
- ✓ Optimally managing land, soil, and water resources to achieve farm productivity
- ✓ Being a good steward and neighbour where we work
- ✓ Applying a practice of continual improvement to enhance orchard productivity, stewardship of land and people, employee safety, and natural resource conservation.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A written commitment statement and list of stewardship goals
- ✓ Ability to describe how statements and goals are used to guide farm stewardship
- ✓ Participation in agricultural certification programs (e.g., GLOBALG.A.P., Freshcare) partially or wholly consistent with commitment statement and stewardship goals

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Employee training includes a review of the commitment statement and stewardship goals
- ✓ A description of actions or strategies used to achieve stewardship goals.

INDICATOR 1.1.2

Farmland Stewardship: Demonstration of the management of major synergies and tradeoffs between the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable agricultural stewardship of farmland while ensuring long-term profitability and sustainability.

Guidance: Long-term profitability and sustainability of your farm require balancing the major synergies and tradeoffs between the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Enrolled growers should be able to explain how they manage for long-term sustainability, including how they address relevant economic factors (e.g., markets, regulations, costs, technology), environmental factors (e.g., changes in pests, plantings, changes in environmental regulations, climate change), and social factors (e.g., succession, workforce changes or social licence and community expectations impacting farming), including the synergies and tradeoffs.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of how synergies and tradeoffs of economic, social, and environmental dimensions are managed
- ✓ Farm planning documents that are used to manage synergies and tradeoffs (e.g., business plans, loan documents, cost-share agreements, farm insurance, budgets)

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Employee sustainability training related to Indicator 1.1.2
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicator 1.2.1 (Critical External Factors)

Resources:

- National Farmers' Federation. 2024. Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework: Demonstrating the economic, environmental and social sustainability of Australian agriculture. Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Canberra, ACT
- Kimura, S. and J. Anton. 2011. "Risk Management in Agriculture in Australia" OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers, No 39, OECD Publishing, Paris
- Brown, B. 2011. "Sustainable Optimisation of Australian Almond Production". Almond Board of Australia Inc. Berri, SA
- Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited. 2023. Australian-Grown Horticulture Sustainability Framework. Hort Innovation. Sydney, NSW

INDICATOR 1.1.3

Farmland Conservation: Demonstration that measures are in place and implemented to minimise conversion of *prime farmland*.

Guidance: Avoiding the loss of *prime farmland* (is also known as *Prime Agricultural Land in Australia*) helps support regional agricultural sustainability. *Prime farmland* is considered by the National Farmers Federation to be a non-static resource that "is influenced by both soil quality and proximity to water resources, access to infrastructure, and future technology and innovation". You should be able to explain your long-term farmland investment strategy and how your strategy keeps your prime farmland in agricultural production. Conversion of *farmland* is acceptable when: it is not *prime farmland*; in areas where agriculture is insignificant or would not be impacted by *farmland* loss; or small areas are converted to support agriculture (e.g., building of equipment sheds and silos).

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of activities or actions used to avoid conversion of prime farmland
- ✓ Map that identifies areas of prime farmland on farm
- ✓ Awareness of farmland loss in your region
- ✓ Soil due diligence assessments
- ✓ A description of farmland conversion practices
- ✓ Knowledge of regional status of prime farmland, regional agriculture, and its conservation

Resources:

- Most state and territory websites where almonds are grown (SA, VIC, NSW and WA) have maps and/or information about prime farmland in some capacity.
- Additionally, farmland is zoned under state and local government planning zones, which outlines land development parameters and restrictions for land classed as farmland.
- Some states and territory or local regional organisations have developed crop suitability mapping which can be used to identify suitable farmland on your farm.

INDICATOR 1.2.1

Adapting to Critical External Factors: A process for periodically identifying critical external factors and adapting to their impacts to ensure the long-term profitability and sustainability of agricultural production of a farm or farm management unit.

Guidance: Pressures on almond farm sustainability can be managed by tracking and adjusting to *critical external factors*, including existing, new risks and opportunities. Critical external factors are “off-farm factors that are significantly relevant to the economic viability and sustainability of your operation, such as evolving markets, supply chain changes, regulatory changes, availability of water and other inputs, and social license.” This Indicator focuses only on short-term factors. Be prepared to discuss how you manage to account for critical factors. A description of how you identify and manage critical factors is the most important evidence for this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of your critical external factors (risks and opportunities) and how you identified them
- ✓ A description of how often you routinely review critical external factors and adapt to their impacts
- ✓ Farm documents showing adaptations to critical external factors (e.g., due diligence acquisition documents, loan agreements, CAPEX plans, marketing plans, and business plans)
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicator 1.1.2 (Farmland Stewardship)

Resources:

-
- Freitas et. al. 2023. Reviewing the Adverse Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Measures on Almond Trees (*Prunus dulcis*), Centre for the Research and Technology of Agro-Environmental and Biological Sciences, Vila Real, Portugal.
-
- Horticulture Innovation Australia. 2020. Industry-specific impact assessment program: Almond: Managing Almond Production in a Variable and Changing Climate. Horticulture Innovation Australia, Sydney, NSW.
-
- Plant Health Australia. 2019. Orchard Biosecurity Manual for the Almond Industry. Plant Health Australia, Deakin, ACT.



OBJECTIVE 2

SOIL HEALTH AND CONSERVATION



INDICATOR 2.1.1

Soil Quality: Application of agricultural best management practices (e.g., tillage systems, cover cropping, addition of soil amendments) to maintain or enhance soil fertility and physical and biological characteristics of soil.

Guidance: Soil health considers the chemical, biological, and physical characteristics of soil ecosystems. Maintaining or enhancing soil health includes maintaining or enhancing these characteristics and is the foundation of sustainable agriculture. It starts with the application of agricultural best management practices (agricultural BMPs) as needed to maintain or enhance soil health.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description and/or in-field demonstration of use of agricultural BMPs (e.g., measures to increase soil organic matter, the addition of soil amendments, cover cropping, and measures to mitigate risk of soil sodicity salinity, and soil acidification) for maintaining or enhancing soil fertility, soil nutrients, and soil biological characteristics
- ✓ Enrolment in state or regional soil management programs

Other Evidence:

- ✓ GLOBALG.A.P. certification (see *minor musts* under CB 3 Soil Management and Conservation)
- ✓ Annual planning documents and vendor invoices related to crop and soil nutrient activities
- ✓ Relevant degree or certifications of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or crop consultants

Resources:

- Faculty of SET - University of Adelaide. 2025. Almond cover crops for soil health and productivity. Australian Almonds. Loxton, SA.
- Brown, B. Merry, R. 2010. Fact Sheet 09: Almond Orchards and Soil Acidification. Almond Board of Australia. Berri, SA.
- Hort Innovation. 2025. Cover crops for soil health and productivity. Hort Innovation. Sydney, NSW
- Rosenzweig, B. undated. All about almonds: Super soils. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.

INDICATOR 2.1.2

Soil Health Monitoring: Monitoring of *soil health* characteristics, including nutrients from different sources necessary to maintain or enhance *appropriate* nutrient balance and *soil health*.

Guidance: Soil health monitoring occurs and ensures that soil health is routinely assessed and that growers can take action to ensure its maintenance if necessary. Monitoring soil health includes tracking nutrients from different sources necessary to maintain or enhance appropriate nutrient balance and soil health. Soil health considers the chemical, biological, and physical characteristics of soil ecosystems. Under Leading Harvest Standard 2025, growers may monitor any specific soil health attributes, as long as the grower considers the chemical, biological, and physical characteristics of soil ecosystems in attribute selection. If a grower does not monitor chemical, biological, and physical soil attributes, the grower should be able to explain why not.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of the soil health monitoring system
- ✓ Soil test data for nutrients and other chemical, physical, and/or biological soil characteristics, soil, water, nutrient and salinity level monitoring
- ✓ Records of nutrient inputs and losses, and annual crop nutrient requirements
- ✓ Crop consultant nutrient recommendations

Other Evidence:

- ✓ GLOBALG.A.P. certification documents (see *minor musts* under CB 3 Soil Management and Conservation)
- ✓ Relevant degree or certifications of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or crop consultants

Resources:

- Rosenzweig, B. 2012. Super Soils. Almond Board of Australia Inc. Berri, SA.
- Australian Board of Australia. 2025. Monitoring nutrients using soil water extractors. Australian Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
- Dwyer, R. 2023. Soil sampling to depth in horticulture. Nutrient Advantage. Werribee, VIC.
- Gouley CJP and Weaver DM. 2019. A guide for fit for purpose soil sampling. Fertiliser Australia. Canberra, ACT.

INDICATOR 2.1.3

Nutrient Management Program: Demonstrate the implementation of an up-to-date nutrient management program that efficiently uses nutrient inputs and nutrients in the soil and crops to create optimum conditions for crop production and nutrient utilization and avoids nutrient loss to water and air.

Guidance: A nutrient management program is an organised system or set of activities for maintaining chemical soil health and ensuring crop productivity. It helps ensure that a comprehensive view of nutrients inputs and nutrients in the soil and crops is applied. A description of your nutrient management program for growing crops and avoiding overuse of fertilisers is key conformance evidence for this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A nutrient management plan or fertiliser plan, and explanation of your nutrient management program Evidence that fertiliser requirements were calculated based on inputs (fertiliser, soil fertility) and outputs (yield removal, crop residue returns)
- ✓ Plant tissue data
- ✓ Soil test records
- ✓ Crop consultant nutrient recommendations
- ✓ GLOBALG.A.P. certification (see minor musts under CB 3 Soil Management and Conservation)
- ✓ Documentation of compliance with state or regional nutrient management requirements
- ✓ Relevant degree or certifications of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or crop consultants

Resources:

- Rosenzweig, B. undated. Crop Nutrition: It's not just NPK. Almond Board of Australia. Berri, SA.
- Almond Board of Australia. 2024. Soil, Leaf & Hull Analysis Webinar. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
- Fertiliser Industry Federation of Australia, Inc. 2001. Cracking the nutrient code: Guidelines for developing a Nutrient Management Code of Practice for your industry, region or farm. Fertiliser Industry Federation of Australia, Inc. Canberra, ACT.
- HortInnovation, 2017. Almond Production Spreadsheet. Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited. North Sydney, NSW.

INDICATOR 2.1.4

Crop Residues: Application of agricultural best management practices to use crop residues to maintain or improve soil health and long-term soil productivity where appropriate.

Guidance: Crop residues should be managed where appropriate to maintain or improve soil health. Crop residues are *materials from growing crops left on the soil surface or partially incorporated into the soil*. They may branches, nuts, and leaves. Residues can be mulched and returned to the orchard floor (refer to Whole Orchard Recycling) or composted and reused as fertiliser. They contribute to soil health and productivity by increasing soil organic matter and nutrients; controlling soil erosion; improving soil moisture retention, structure, and biodiversity; and improving water filtration. Crop residue retention may not be appropriate when it is expensive, supports pests, or reduces crop productivity. You should be prepared to discuss your practices for managing residues from crops, , and/or cover crops if these practices are appropriate to your operation.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ GLOBALG.A.P. certification (see minor musts under CB 3 Soil Management and Conservation)
- ✓ Able to demonstrate in-field crop residue practices or explain why these practices are not appropriate to your operation
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicator 6.2.2 (Resource Recovery of Agricultural Waste)

Resources:

- Cover crops for soil health and productivity. Hort Innovation. Sydney, NSW
- Petrie, P. Fleming, N. & Shanmugam, K. 2025. Pathway to carbon neutral – whole orchard recycling in almond orchards. Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW.

INDICATOR 2.2.1

Cropland Soil Management: Application of agricultural best management practices to minimize soil erosion and physical damage (e.g., compaction) of cropland and restore soil health where appropriate.

Guidance: The purpose of this Indicator is to minimise soil erosion and physical damage (e.g. compaction) to production land from almond production practices by using *agricultural best management practices*. These practices prevent topsoil loss from erosion and fertility loss from over usage or accumulation of adverse compounds.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field application of agricultural BMPs used to minimise soil erosion and damage to cropland and practices used to restore soil health, mitigate the risk of soil sodicity, salinity and soil acidification
- ✓ GLOBALG.A.P. certification (see minor musts under CB 3 Soil Management and Conservation)
- ✓ In-field visit to demonstrate lack of visible impacts
- ✓ Related crop consultant recommendations for orchard management and in-field structural practices, which control soil erosion
- ✓ Vendor invoices used for sub-soiling and other practices to alleviate soil compaction and damage
- ✓ Relevant degree or certifications of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or crop consultants
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for LH Indicators 2.1.1 (Soil Quality) and 2.1.4 (Crop Residues)

Resources:

- Brown, B. Merry, R. 2010. Fact Sheet 09: Almond Orchards and Soil Acidification. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
- Van Sprang, C. O'Halloran, J. & Grigg, S. 2020. Case study: Using PA technologies to manage salinity and sodicity. Hort Innovation. Sydney, NSW.
- Lovell, J. et. Al. 2006. Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture. Horticulture Australia Limited. Sydney, NSW.
- Kochanek, J. et al. 2014. Novel, Sustainable and Profitable Horticultural Management Systems: Soil Amendments, Waste Reuse and Carbon Sequestration. University of Queensland. St Lucia, QLD.
- AgVic, 2025. Types of subsurface drainage systems. Agriculture Victoria. East Melbourne, VIC.

INDICATOR 2.2.2

Degradation of Agricultural Lands: A process to avoid the widespread loss of agricultural lands to soil mismanagement (e.g., failure to prevent extensive soil erosion, acidification, salinization and accumulation of other adverse compounds).

Guidance: Systematic application of soil conservation principles across a farm operation(s) can prevent loss of agricultural lands from widespread soil degradation. This Indicator focuses on all *agricultural lands* across the farm while Indicator 2.2.1 focuses on cropland at the field level. A local catchment authority or local land service management plan may qualify as an adequate process.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Lack of evidence of visible impacts during in-field visits
- ✓ Local catchment authority or local land service management plan or system for all highly erodible land (HEL)
- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field routines and practices used to avoid soil mismanagement (e.g., soil erosion, acidification, salinisation and accumulation of other adverse compounds)

Other Evidence:

- ✓ GLOBALG.A.P. certification (see minor musts under CB 3 Soil Management and Conservation)
- ✓ Crop consultant recommendations for practices which mitigate soil mismanagement
- ✓ Soil erosion plans
- ✓ Soil test data for pH, salinisation and/or other adverse compounds
- ✓ Relevant degree or certifications of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or crop consultants
- ✓ Evidence of sub-surface drainage infrastructure, and a schedule of regular monitoring and maintenance
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicator 2.2.1 (Cropland Soil Management)

Resources:

- See resources for *Indicator 2.2.1 (Cropland Soil Management)* above



OBJECTIVE 3

WATER RESOURCES



INDICATOR 3.1.1.

Agricultural Water Withdrawal: A process for avoiding the depletion of available groundwater resources beyond the recharge capacity of the watershed or catchment and by direct withdrawal where groundwater depletion is an issue as determined by a groundwater regulatory agency.

Guidance: This Indicator is only applicable if a *groundwater regulatory agency* has determined where *groundwater depletion* is an issue AND you irrigate using groundwater. Groundwater depletion has become a critical risk to regional agricultural and municipal sustainability in some areas. A *groundwater regulatory agency* is a public authority or government agency with statutory authority to exercise regulatory or supervisory oversight in the extraction of groundwater. Well-established irrigation practices can be used by growers to avoid contributing to *groundwater depletion*. A process is a *purposeful series of practices or routines (formal or informal)*.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe practices used to avoid groundwater resources depletion beyond the recharge capacity (where groundwater depletion is an issue as determined by a groundwater regulatory agency)
- ✓ Documentation for groundwater removals
- ✓ Acquisition due diligence reports on water availability
- ✓ Groundwater removal permits and reports
- ✓ Participation in groundwater regulatory agency workshops
- ✓ Documentation of conformance with relevant regional water board requirements
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 3.1.2 (Regional Water Conservation) and 3.1.3 (Water Conservation) if it addresses groundwater withdrawal and conservation

INDICATOR 3.1.2.

Regional Water Conservation: Participation individually or collaboratively in regional water conservation programs where appropriate to help foster responsible use and conservation of groundwater and surface water used for agriculture.

Guidance: This Indicator is only applicable if regional water *conservation* programs exist and if you use surface water and/or groundwater to irrigate the orchard. This may include participation in local irrigation districts, if they exist. Regional water conservation programs help conserve groundwater and surface water used for agriculture and ensure its availability and reduce costs. Regional efforts can pool resources, which can scale up water use conservation and help achieve water conservation goals.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of participation in regional water conservation programs by direct participation in regional water boards by you, other operators on your farm, and/or farm employee or indirect participation through your membership in agricultural organisations (e.g., agricultural organisations, Ag Bureau)
- ✓ Farm participation noted in reports, meeting minutes, plans, email exchanges, and/or documents
- ✓ Conformance with relevant regional water board requirements

INDICATOR 3.1.3.

Water Conservation: A water management program that uses appropriate technology (including crop/irrigation system design) and applies agricultural best management practices to utilise water efficiently; to provide water tailored to tree needs; and to control pests, pathogens, salinisation and accumulation of other adverse compounds.

Guidance: Water conservation gains have been achieved by systematically improving orchard/irrigation systems and applying *agricultural BMPs*, which also have reduced costs and increased productivity. This Indicator only applies where Program Users use *surface water* and/or *groundwater* to irrigate the *orchard*.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe irrigation and water conservation practices and routines e.g. type of irrigation system, schedule of regular monitoring and maintenance of irrigation infrastructure
- ✓ Irrigation system design informed by soil survey with site topography, certified design, drainage plans
- ✓ Able to describe your process to conserve water and manage pests and disease, salinisation, and other adverse impacts
- ✓ Able to describe soil or plant moisture sensing technologies or commercial irrigation scheduling services
- ✓ Able to describe water conservation technologies used
- ✓ Able to describe any recent improvements to the irrigation infrastructure and technology
- ✓ Documentation of conformance with relevant regional water board requirements

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Irrigation management plans and/or agricultural water management plans
- ✓ Water use permits and reports
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicator 3.1.2 (*Regional Water Conservation*)

Resources:

- Australian Board of Almonds. 2025. Water Management. Australian Board of Almonds. Loxton, SA.
- Sommer, K. 2013. Optimising water use of Australian almond production through deficit irrigation strategies. Horticulture Australia Ltd. Sydney, NSW.
- Skewes, M. 2020. Almond irrigation best practice management. Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW.
- Edwards, J.E. 2021. Better tree performance and water use efficiency through root system resilience. Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW
- Australian Almonds. Undated. Increasing Irrigation Efficiency. Australian Almonds. Loxton, SA.
- Hort Innovation. 2020. Drip Irrigation Evaluation Tool. Australian Almonds. Loxton, SA.
- Department Environment, Land, Water and Planning. 2018. Your dam: Your responsibility: A guide to managing the safety of small dams – Chapter 7 Operation and maintenance of dams. Victorian Government. Melbourne, VIC.

INDICATOR 3.2.1.**Input Application on Agricultural Lands:**

Application of agricultural best management practices when applying fertilizers and other soil amendments, crop protectants and other agricultural inputs to avoid and control infiltration of nutrients, crop protectants and pathogens into groundwater.

Guidance: Nutrients, pesticides, and salts from agriculture can enter *groundwater* and pose a risk to human and environmental health. *Groundwater* contamination can be minimised by applying *agricultural BMPs* to control infiltration of *agricultural inputs*. In contrast to Indicator 3.2.2 (Water Quality Protection), this Indicator focuses on in-field application of *agricultural input* practices to avoid infiltration of all *agricultural inputs* into *groundwater*. This includes *agricultural BMPs* to control application of inputs and protect water quality.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field agricultural BMPs used to protect groundwater from agricultural inputs

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Nutrient management plans
- ✓ Able to describe chemical use practices (reduce chemical use, use chemicals with short half-lives) that reduce infiltration.
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 2.1.3 (Nutrient Management Program - nutrient loss to water; and Indicators 4.1.3 (Pest Control Practices) and 4.2.1 (Application and Storage of *Crop Protectants* - application and storage of *crop protectants* to avoid their release into *groundwater*)

Resources:

- Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. 2013. Guidelines for groundwater quality protection in Australia: National Water Quality Management Strategy. Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. Canberra, ACT.
- Lovell, J. et. Al. 2006. Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture. Horticulture Australia Limited. Sydney, NSW.

INDICATOR 3.2.2.

Water Quality Protection: Application of agricultural best management practices to manage water runoff from cropland into surface water and protect wetlands, riparian areas and water quality of groundwater and surface water.

Guidance: *Water pollution* from *agricultural runoff* can be measurably reduced by applying *agricultural BMPs*. *BMPs* may include structural practices, which physically control *water runoff* and protect wetlands and water resources. This Indicator focuses on applying *agricultural BMPs* to manage *surface runoff* leaving the orchards while Indicator 3.2.1 (Input Application on Agricultural Lands) focuses on in-field practices for managing agricultural inputs.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field agricultural BMPs used to protect groundwater from agricultural inputs
- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field agricultural BMPs used to minimise soil erosion and damage to cropland and practices used to restore soil health
- ✓ Able to share related crop consultant recommendations for orchard management and in-field structural practices, which control soil erosion
- ✓ Nutrient management plans to apply the right amount of nutrient at the right time to avoid run-off.
- ✓ Irrigation system design informed by soil survey with site topography, certified design and drainage plans
- ✓ Subsurface drainage infrastructure
- ✓ Tillage practices (conservation tillage, no-till tillage) that reduce water runoff
- ✓ Chemical use practices (reduce chemical use, use chemicals with short half-lives) that reduce infiltration
- ✓ Documentation of conformance with relevant regional water board requirements
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 2.1.3 (Nutrient Management Program - nutrient loss to water; and Indicators 4.1.3 (Pest Control Practices) and 4.2.1 (Application and Storage of *Crop Protectants* - application and storage of *crop protectants* to avoid their release into *groundwater*)

Resources:

- Skewes, M. 2020. Almond irrigation best practice management. Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW.

- Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council. 2000. Rural Land Uses and Water Quality: A Community Resource Document. Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council & Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia. Canberra, ACT.

- Edwards, J. & Wiechel, T. 2022. An Integrated Disease Management Programme for the Australian Almond Industry. Horticulture Australia. North Sydney, NSW.

- Long, R., Gan, J. and Nett, M., 2005. Pesticide choice: Best management practice (BMP) for protecting surface water quality in agriculture. University of California, Davis, CA.

- Almond Board of Australia. 2022. Almond Fungicide Planner Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.

- Almond Board of Australia. Almond Fungicide Planner Instructions. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.

- HortInnovation, 2017. Almond Production Spreadsheet. Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited. North Sydney, NSW.



OBJECTIVE 4

CROP PROTECTION



General resources for Objective 4:

- Agriculture Victoria Research (Invertebrate & Weed Sciences). 2018. Almond IPM: What does it mean? Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. Melbourne, VIC.
- Edwards, J. & Wiechel, T. 2022. An Integrated Disease Management Programme for the Australian Almond Industry. Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW.
- Madge, D. 2022. An integrated pest management program for the Australian Almond industry (AL16009). Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW.
- Agriculture Victoria Research (Invertebrate & Weed Sciences). 2021. A review of off-target impacts of pesticides used in Australian almond production. Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. Melbourne, VIC.
- Agriculture Victoria Research (Invertebrate & Weed Sciences). 2020. Almond IPM: Natural enemies of almond pests. Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. Melbourne, VIC.
- Agriculture Victoria. 2019. Almond IPM: Impact of pesticides and fungicides on beneficial species. Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. Melbourne, VIC.
- Agriculture Victoria. 2019. All About Almonds Orchard Management: Viruses in Australian Almonds. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
- Almond Board of Australia. 2022. Almond Fungicide Planner Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
- Almond Board of Australia. Almond Fungicide Planner Instructions. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
- HortInnovation, 2017. Almond Production Spreadsheet. Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited. North Sydney, NSW.

INDICATOR 4.1.1**Pest Monitoring: Monitoring of pests to prevent excessive crop loss and economic injury to crop plants.**

Guidance: Regular pest monitoring is used to determine the kinds of pests present, whether pest numbers warrant control, the timing of control, and whether control measures area adequate. It is also a core part of any *IPM program*. It can help significantly reduce the use of *crop protectants* and their cost and avoid major *yield* losses.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ GLOBALG.A.P. certification (see musts under CB 6 Integrated Pest Management) or FreshCare Environmental accreditation
- ✓ A description of pest monitoring efforts and its contribution to reducing *crop* loss and *crop* plant injury
- ✓ Identification of threshold effects resulting in excessive *crop* loss and plant injury
- ✓ Pest scouting records
- ✓ Service provider invoices for monitoring
- ✓ Pest scouting credentials of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or vendors.

INDICATOR 4.1.2.

Crop Protection: A process for preventing excessive crop loss from pests, crop protectant resistance and buildup and spread of pests.

Guidance: IPM reduces crop losses by applying a set of *agricultural BMPs* to prevent excessive *crop* loss from pests, *crop protectant* resistance and buildup, and spread of pests. It often includes the prudent application of crop protectants. Be prepared to describe your process (routine) practices for protecting crops from pests. A process is a purposeful series of practices or routines (formal or informal).

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field the set of practices used to achieve crop protection, including the prevention of excessive crop loss, crop protectant resistance and buildup and spread of pests
- ✓ Pest scouting records for pest and beneficial species
- ✓ Vendor invoices for monitoring and application
- ✓ Pest applicators licenses of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or applicators.
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 4.1.1 (Pest Monitoring) and 4.1.3 (Pest Control Practices), which focuses on applying lowest risk, selective treatments when appropriate.

INDICATOR 4.1.3.

Pest Control Practices: Prioritization of the use of lowest risk, most selective treatment options to achieve crop protection goals whenever appropriate.

Guidance: A key *IPM* practice is to prioritise lowest risk, selective treatments, which also can help maintain natural enemies of pests and other beneficial invertebrates such as pollinators and reduce human health and environmental risks from crop protectants. Low risk, selective treatments may also reduce costs.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe the selection of lowest risk, most selective (narrow spectrum), avoiding using multiple products with the same active crop protection treatment options
- ✓ Crop protectant recommendation reports
- ✓ Demonstrate knowledge of pest control options in the interview
- ✓ In-field observations of physical (e.g. dust management to control spider mites), genetic (e.g., pest resistant varieties), cultural (e.g., cover crops, mulching), and/or biological controls (e.g. introduction and support of beneficial insects, owl nesting boxes, bio-pesticides, matting disruptor materials).
- ✓ Orchard hygiene e.g. removal of mummy nuts, levelling orchard floor to maximise nut pickup during harvest.
- ✓ Strategy for resistance management.
- ✓ Vendor invoices for pest control treatments
- ✓ Pesticide applicators licenses of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or applicators
- ✓ See conformance evidence for Indicator 4.1.2 (Crop Protection) that may be applicable

Resources (additional):

-
- Almond Board of Australia. 2020. All About Almonds Orchard Management: Managing Mice in Australian Almonds. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
-
- Almond Board of Australia. 2021. All About Almonds Orchard Management: Pest Bird Management. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
-
- Australian Research Council Linkage. Undated. Native birds in agricultural landscape. Australian Research Council Linkage. Canberra, ACT.
-
- Agriculture Victoria. 2018. Natural enemies of almond pests in Australia, and the potential for a biocontrol program. Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. Melbourne, VIC.

INDICATOR 4.2.1.

Application and Storage of Crop Protectants:
Application and storage of *crop protectants* according to label instructions and regulatory requirements and application of practices to protect employees, farm workers, public health, and the environment and avoid drift of *crop protectants* offsite.

Guidance: *Crop protectant* label instructions and regulatory requirements provide instructions for safe and effective use of *crop protectants* and help achieve maximum benefits and compliance with regulatory requirements. They also provide guidance for regulatory compliance in the application and storage of *crop protectants* which helps human and environmental health. This includes consideration of *crop protectant* application practices, storage practices, and facilities.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field how crop protectants are stored and applied according to regulatory requirements
- ✓ Demonstration of appropriate crop-protectant storage
- ✓ Able to demonstrate availability to employees of SDS sheets
- ✓ Crop protectant recommendation documents
- ✓ Able to show employee and/or vendor awareness of label restrictions
- ✓ Vendor invoices for selective treatments
- ✓ Documentation of compliance with relevant state and regional pesticide storage requirements
- ✓ Pest applicator licenses of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or applicators.
- ✓ Able to describe chemical use practices (reduce chemical use, use chemicals with short half-lives) that reduce infiltration
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 4.1.2 (Crop Protection), 4.1.3 (Pest Control Practices) where they address application practices for crop protectants; and for Indicator 6.1.1 (Waste Disposal) and Indicator 6.1.3 (Management of Agricultural Chemicals and Other Materials) when they address appropriate disposal of agricultural inputs; and for Indicator 10.2.1 (Personnel and Contract Worker Training) when it addresses employee training for storage and application of crop protectants

Resources:

- Bodnaruk, K. 2021. Regulatory support and coordination (pesticides). Horticulture Innovation. North Sydney, NSW.
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. 2025. Agricultural and Veterinary Permits Search Tool. Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. Canberra, ACT.
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. 2025. Public Chemical Registration Information System Search. Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. Canberra, ACT.
- Rosenzweig, B. & Furness, G. 2013. Airblast Spray Coverage Part 1. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
- Almond Board of Australia. Undated. Honey Bee Best Management Practices: A QUICK GUIDE for spray operators. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.



OBJECTIVE 5

ENERGY USE, AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE



INDICATOR 5.1.1**Energy Conservation: Use of technologies and application of *agricultural best management practices* to conserve energy where *appropriate*.**

Guidance: Energy conservation is the decrease in energy use. It can be achieved in farming by using technologies and practices which reduce direct energy use (e.g., use of electricity and fuels) or indirect energy use (e.g., reduction in energy consuming agricultural inputs such as fertiliser, crop protectants, and/or water). It leads to increased efficiency and reduced costs and emissions that are harmful to human and environmental health. **Agricultural BMPs for energy conservation may not always be available or cost effective for all almond growers and so may not be appropriate for all operations.**

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ An explanation as to why energy conservation was not appropriate to your farm. OR
AND/OR
- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field of energy conservation technologies and practices, including:
 - ✓ Tracking of annual energy costs
 - ✓ Use of software to track energy use of individual equipment, e.g. tractor passes planned
 - ✓ Efforts to reduce tractor passes by combining operations into one pass
 - ✓ Power units and tractor upgrades to more efficient equipment, including variable speed drives
 - ✓ Follow manufacturer's motorised equipment maintenance schedule, records of servicing and maintenance
 - ✓ Irrigation pump monitoring and maintenance
 - ✓ Office and farm building energy efficiency considered in design, e.g. improving roof insulation, strategic orientation of buildings
 - ✓ Use of conservation tillage and irrigation practices
 - ✓ Lighting upgrades, including LEDs, office equipment energy efficient models
 - ✓ Examples of CAPEX proposals for energy conservation technologies
 - ✓ See conformance evidence for Indicators 2.1.3 (Nutrient Management Program), 3.1.3. (Water Conservation), and 4.1.3 (Pest Control Practices) when they include practices or technologies which reduce direct and indirect energy use.

Resources:

- Natural Resources South Australian Murray Darling Basin. 2016. Energy Efficiency Case Study – Freeman Farming. Natural Resources South Australian Murray Darling Basin.
- Hutton, L., O'Connor, J., 2021. Purchasing a fuel-efficient tractor. NSW Department of Primary Industries. Orange, NSW.
- DPI Agriculture Water Unit, 2015. Electric Irrigation Pumps – Performance and Efficiency. NSW Department of Primary Industries. Orange, NSW.
- Agriculture Victoria. 2025. Energy use on farms. Agriculture Victoria. Melbourne, VIC.

INDICATOR 5.1.2

Renewable Energy: Use of renewable energy technologies and application of agricultural best management practices where appropriate.

Guidance: *Renewable energy* includes energy from sources that are naturally replenishing and virtually inexhaustible such as wood, waste, geothermal, wind, photovoltaic, tides and waves, hydropower, and solar thermal energy. Their use can help reduce fossil fuel consumption and air emissions that are costly and harmful to humans and the environment. **Renewable energy and agricultural BMPs and technologies may not be available, practical, and/or cost-effective and hence appropriate for all operations.**

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to describe why renewable energy **is not** appropriate for your farm
- OR**
- ✓ Be able to describe and/or provide Pro Forma documents indicating analysis and consideration of *renewable energy* technologies and practices
- AND/OR**
- ✓ Be able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field use of renewable energy systems, which include solar panels, solar pumps, wind turbines, etc.

Resources:

- Almond Board of Australia. Undated. Renewable Energy Production from Almond Waste. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.

INDICATOR 5.2.1

Air Emissions: Use of low-emission technologies when compatible with agricultural best management practices.

Guidance: Use of fertilisers, pesticides, and fuels in farming may be significant sources of air emissions, which can be detrimental to human and environmental health. Technologies and practices, which reduce direct energy use (e.g., use of electricity and fuels) or indirect energy use (e.g., reduction in energy consuming agricultural inputs such as fertiliser, crop protectants, and/or water) may also reduce air emissions. This Indicator is not applicable if low-emissions technologies are not compatible with *agricultural BMPs*.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to explain why low-emissions technologies are not compatible with *agricultural BMPs*
- OR**
- ✓ Be able to describe and/or provide evidence of one or more *low-emissions technology* upgrades, including:
 - ✓ Documentation of CAPEX proposals indicating attention to *low emissions technologies*
 - ✓ In-field *low emissions technology*, such as replacement of fuel driven pumps with electrical and/or VSD pumps;
 - ✓ Orchard management practices which reduce machinery passes
 - ✓ Orchard management practices which reduce use of fertilisers (e.g., nutrient management plan) and pesticides (e.g., IPM)
 - ✓ Renewable energy systems
 - ✓ Tractor engines upgrades to Tier 3 engines
 - ✓ Documentation of compliance with relevant state and regional air emissions requirements
 - ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 5.1.1 (Energy Conservation) and 5.1.2 (Renewable Energy) if it reduces air emissions.

Resources:

- See Resources for *Indicators 5.1.1 (Energy Conservation)* and *5.1.2 (Renewable Energy)* if it reduces air emissions.
- Indicator 5.2.2 Airborne Dust Control: Application of agricultural best management practices to minimize airborne dust where and when it adversely affects human health and/or the environment.

Guidance: In some areas and times of year, dust from agricultural operations can be a human health hazard. This Indicator applies only when and where airborne dust adversely affects humans, including nuisance to neighbours, and/or the environment. The need for dust control measures may vary seasonally and across regions.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Be able to explain why control of airborne dust is not necessary and why this Indicator is not applicable
OR
- ✓ Be able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field and other road dust control measures applied when necessary to avoid human health and safety and/or environmental adverse impacts

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Vendor invoices for road dust control
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicator 9.4.1 (Public Health and Safety) when it addresses dust emissions to be managed to protect public health.

Resources:

- Almond Board of Australia. 2024. Managing Dust at Harvest. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.

INDICATOR 5.3.1

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Application of climate-smart agricultural best management practices that minimize greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural operations and farmland and/or sequester greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change where appropriate.

Guidance: The agricultural sector contributes about 16% of Australia's GHG emissions. Climate change poses a significant threat to the global environment and agriculture. All sectors need to reduce GHG emissions to address this challenge. Many farms apply agricultural BMPs, which reduce and/or sequester GHG emissions as they aim to cut costs, reduce energy or fertiliser use, and/or improve soil health.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Able to describe why it is **not** appropriate to apply any agricultural BMPs to minimise emissions or sequester GHGs
OR
- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field *agricultural BMPs* that minimise *GHG* emissions and/or sequester *GHGs*

- ✓ Crop consultant recommendations
- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate management practices which reduce emissions
- ✓ Composting of discarded almonds and hulls where applicable and reuse through the orchard, or assessment of processor life cycle for almonds (e.g. hull use for energy production or animal feed)
- ✓ Installation of integrated units where on-farm renewable energy is used for irrigation pumping

Other Evidence:

- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 2.1.3 (Nutrient Management Program), Indicator 3.1.3 (Water Conservation), 5.1.1 (Energy Conservation) and 5.1.2 (Renewable Energy), which may reduce fossil fuel use and hence GHG emissions, and for Indicators 2.1.4 (Crop Residues) and 6.2.2 (Resource Recovery of Agricultural Waste), which may increase soil organic matter and hence maintain and/or increase carbon sequestered on soil.

Resources:

- See Resources for *Indicators 5.1.1 (Energy Conservation)* and *5.1.2 (Renewable Energy)* if it reduces air emissions.
- Petrie, P. Fleming, N. & Shanmugam, K. 2025. Pathway to carbon neutral – whole orchard recycling in almond orchards. Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW.
- Hetherington, B. Day, S. 2024. Pathway to carbon neutral – life cycle analysis in almond orchards. Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW.

INDICATOR 5.3.2

Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience: Application of climate-smart agricultural best management practices to adapt to climate change impacts and enhance farm or management unit resilience where appropriate. Examples could include, but are not limited to, use of heat-resistant crop varieties, new crop species, practices that improve soil moisture retention and soil drainage, and training on management of new crop pests.

Guidance: *Climate-smart agricultural* practices promote sustainable increases in crop productivity (including sustainable intensification) while adapting to climate change. They can play a role in ensuring that farm operations are sustainable in the long-term. Almond production is greatly impacted by weather and is vulnerable to climate change. Key solutions build resilience by improving soil health and management of orchard soil moisture.

Activities as Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description and/or in-field demonstration of use of other *agricultural BMPs* (e.g., addition of soil amendments and cover cropping) for maintaining or enhancing soil fertility, soil nutrients, and soil biological characteristics.
- ✓ Able to describe why climate smart practices are **NOT** appropriate at this time
- ✓ Apply one or more of the following practices:
 - ✓ Soil health and water management practices
 - ✓ Employee awareness about potential climate change impacts to regional agriculture (e.g. changes to drought conditions, rainfall, frost, chill hours, pollination (timing of flowering))
 - ✓ Crop insurance
 - ✓ Use and planning of heat-resistant or drought-resistant crop varieties and/or rootstocks or consideration in development plans
 - ✓ Practices that improve soil moisture retention and/or soil drainage
 - ✓ Training for management of new almond pests
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 2.1.1 (Soil Quality) may enhance soil health and weather-resilience; and 3.1.3 (Water Conservation) may enhance irrigation in drought years; and Indicators 2.2.1 (Cropland Soil Management) and 3.2.2 (Water Quality Protection) aim to control soil erosion and runoff, which could improve or reduce impacts to soil health and water quality, and 12.1.3, Agricultural Innovation, can be technology or practices that are new or under trial by the producer and/or industry.

Resources:

- Thomas, D. & Hayman, P. 2019. The North Adelaide Plains Climate for Almond production: Analysis of strengths and challenges. South Australian Research & Development Institute. Adelaide, SA.
- Thomas, D. & Hayman, P. 2019. The Murraylands Climate for Almond production: Analysis of strengths and challenges. South Australian Research & Development Institute. Adelaide, SA.
- Thomas, D. & Hayman, P. 2019. The Riverina Climate for Almond production: Analysis of strengths and challenges. South Australian Research & Development Institute. Adelaide, SA.
- Thomas, D. & Hayman, P. 2019. Loxton's climate for Almond production: Analysis of strengths and challenges. South Australian Research & Development Institute. Adelaide, SA.
- Mallee Catchment Management Authority. 2022. Climate Change impact on Almond Industry. Mallee Catchment Management Authority. Irymple, VIC.
- Almond Board of Australia. 2020. All About Almonds Orchard Management: Drought Strategies for Almonds. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. 2025. Carbon Farming Outreach Program training package. Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- Future Drought Fund. My Climate View. Australian Government. Canberra, ACT.
- Bureau of Meteorology: seasonal outlooks and weather forecasts. Australian Government. Canberra, ACT.

INDICATOR 5.3.3

Preparedness for Severe Climate and Weather Events: Application of climate-smart agricultural best management practices to prepare for and mitigate the impact of severe climate and weather events on agricultural operations.

Guidance: In Australia, extreme events are becoming more common with droughts, bushfires and floods increasing in frequency and severity. Conformance evidence for four other Indicators may be applicable to this indicator: Indicator 2.1.1 (Soil Quality) may enhance soil health and weather resilience as increasing soil carbon and ground cover aids in moisture retention and soil stability; Indicator 3.1.3 (Water Conservation) may enhance irrigation in drought years; and Indicators 2.2.1 (Cropland Soil Management) and 3.2.2 (Water Quality Protection) aim to control soil erosion and runoff, which could impact soil health and water quality in the case of prolonged droughts or extreme rainfall events.

Activities as Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ A description and/or in-field demonstration of use of other *agricultural BMPs* (e.g., addition of soil amendments and cover cropping) for maintaining or enhancing soil fertility, soil nutrients, and soil biological characteristics.
- ✓ Able to describe why climate smart practices are **NOT** appropriate at this time
- ✓ Apply one or more of the following practices:
 - ✓ Soil health and water management practices
 - ✓ Employee awareness about potential climate change impacts to regional agriculture (e.g. changes to drought conditions, rainfall, frost, chill hours, pollination (timing of flowering))
 - ✓ Orchard insurance
 - ✓ Use of heat or drought-resistant varieties and/or rootstocks or consideration in redevelopment plans
 - ✓ Practices that improve soil moisture retention and/or soil drainage
 - ✓ Training for management of new almond pests
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Indicators 2.1.1 (Soil Quality) may enhance soil health and weather-resilience; and 3.1.3 (Water Conservation) may enhance irrigation in drought years; and Indicators 2.2.1 (Cropland Soil Management) and 3.2.2 (Water Quality Protection) aim to control soil erosion and runoff, which could improve or reduce impacts to soil health and water quality.

Resources:

- Giddings, J. 2022. Climate Change impact on Almond Industry. Mallee Catchment Management Authority. Irymple, VIC.
- RMCG Consulting Group. 2024. Implications of Climate Change on the Water Requirements of Horticulture in the Victorian Mallee – Phase III. Mallee Catchment Management Authority. Irymple VIC.
- Thomas, D. 2019. Managing Almond Production in a Variable and Changing Climate. Horticulture Innovation Australia. North Sydney, NSW.
- Department of Primary Industries, undated. Growing almonds (Nonpareil) in New South Wales: preparing for a changing climate. Department of Primary Industries Climate Change Research Strategy. Orange, NSW.
- Future Drought Fund. My Climate View. Australian Government. Canberra, ACT.
- Bureau of Meteorology: seasonal outlooks and weather forecasts. Australian Government. Canberra, ACT.
- Australian and New Zealand Council for fire and emergency services. Seasonal Bushfire Outlook.



OBJECTIVE 6

WASTE AND MATERIAL MANAGEMENT



INDICATOR 6.1.1

Waste Disposal: Implementation of a process for properly handling and disposing of universal, hazardous and solid waste, avoiding the burning of rubber, plastics, chemically treated materials, or other materials which produce excessive or noxious smoke, unless combustion results in usable energy or some other demonstrably beneficial byproduct, or where viable alternatives do not exist

Guidance: Solid waste is any solid, semi-solid, liquid, or that contains gaseous materials such as garbage, construction debris, and commercial refuse. Proper waste handling by Standard Users can prevent costly regulatory actions and negative effects to social license to operate and human and environment health. The amount of hazardous waste in Australia is climbing each year. Hazardous waste, which can be liquid, solid, gas or sludge, is waste that is dangerous or potentially harmful to human and environmental health. It may include large volumes of discarded products, like unused crop protectants. Its improper disposal can make cropland unsafe for growing feed or food.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to describe and/or provide written documentation of routines for properly handling and disposing of universal, hazardous and solid waste
- ✓ Demonstrate in-field appropriate waste management and storage of waste

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Vendor agreements for waste disposal and field practices for waste management
- ✓ Crop consultant recommendations for managing leftover pesticide
- ✓ Employee training on waste management
- ✓ Documentation of compliance with relevant state and regional waste management requirements
- ✓ Hazardous Material Business Plan
- ✓ See conformance evidence for other LH Indicators: 4.2.1. (Application and Storage of Crop Protectants) and 6.1.3 (Management of Agricultural Chemicals and Other Materials), and 9.4.1 (Public Health and Safety) also address handling of some wastes; Indicator 10.3.3 (Employee Sustainability Training) also addresses safety and handling training; and Indicators 11.1.2 (Program User Compliance Program) and 11.2.1 (Written Compliance Policy) also address legal compliance assurance for waste laws and regulations.

Resources:

- Latimer, G. 2022. Australian hazardous waste data and reporting standard. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water & Blue Environment Pty Ltd. Docklands VIC.
- Axio, I. 2022. Options for improved waste management: Current practices and opportunities for improved pre-farm gate waste management in agriculture, fisheries and forestry. AgriFutures Australia. Wagga Wagga, NSW
- Boland, A. et al. 2022. Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry National Waste and Resource Recovery Roadmap. AgriFutures Australia. Wagga Wagga, NSW.
- Australian Farm Waste Portal. Accessible at: <https://farmwaste.com.au/>

INDICATOR 6.1.2

Resource Recovery: Implementation of a process for properly handling waste to be reused, repurposed or recycled, or converted to energy, where appropriate.

Guidance: Resource recovery is using waste as material to create valuable products and reduce waste. About sixty percent of waste in Australia is repurposed, reused, or recycled. In agriculture, this can include plastic films and containers; metal from equipment, old buildings, and trellises; and wood from old buildings and trellises. Resource recovery can reduce costs and the environmental footprint of materials used in farming. It may not always be cost effective or appropriate in regions lacking waste recovery facilities. .

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to describe routines for handling waste to be reused, repurposed, recycled, or converted to energy

Other Evidence (will help achieve conformance):

- ✓ Waste transporter contractual agreements
- ✓ Vendor recommendations for resource recovery
- ✓ Evidence of use of product recycling programs e.g. ChemClear, drumMUSTER, bagMUSTER, Big Bag Recovery, Netafim Recoil.

Resources:

- Boland, A. et al. 2022. Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry National Waste and Resource Recovery Roadmap. AgriFutures Australia. Wagga Wagga, NSW.
- bagMUSTER, Accessible at: <https://www.bagmuster.org.au/>

INDICATOR 6.1.3

Management of Agricultural Chemicals and Other Materials: Management, use and storage of agricultural chemicals and equipment gases, fluids and fuels according to regulatory requirements and application of practices to manage spills and protect employees, farm labor and the environment.

Guidance: *Agricultural chemicals* and equipment gases, fluids and fuels are the most common hazardous materials in agriculture. *Agricultural chemicals* include fertilisers, liming and acidifying agents, road dust stabilisers, crop protectants (including insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and nematicides) and other agricultural inputs used to support agriculture. Their proper management can help prevent costly regulatory actions and impacts on people and the environment.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to describe and/or demonstrate in the field the appropriate management, use, storage and disposal of *agricultural chemicals* and equipment gases, fluids, and fuels
- ✓ Able to demonstrate knowledge of regulatory requirements
- ✓ Able to describe standard operating procedures (SOPs) and employee knowledge of SOPs for managing spills
- ✓ Able to demonstrate availability of appropriate spill kits for managing spills
- ✓ Able to share licensed pesticide applicator's recommendations for using crop protectants
- ✓ Pesticide applicators' license held by grower(s), farm manager(s), and consultant(s)
- ✓ Able to demonstrate safety data sheets (SDS) for crop protectants are available to employees
- ✓ Documentation of compliance with relevant state and regional requirements for managing agricultural chemicals
- ✓ See conformance evidence for other Indicators 4.2.1. (Application and Storage of Crop Protectants) and 9.4.1 (Public Health and Safety) also address safe handling; 10.2.1 (Personnel and Contract Worker Training) and 10.3.3 (Employee Sustainability Training) address safety and handling training; and 11.1.2 (Program User Compliance Program) and 11.2.1 (Written Compliance Policy) address legal compliance assurance, including regulatory compliance when using *agricultural chemicals*.

Resources:

- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. 2020. Understanding Pesticide Chemical Labels. Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. Sydney, NSW.
- AgSafe. Recycling agricultural containers for a cleaner, safer future: <https://www.agsafe.org.au/>, e.g. ChemClear (old/unwanted chemical), drumMUSTER (old clean chemical containers)

INDICATOR 6.2.1

Food and Agricultural Product Waste: Prevention of excessive loss of food crops and other agricultural products during harvest and on-farm storage.

Guidance: About 20 to 40% of food in Australia is lost before it reaches supermarket shelves. Lost agricultural products also increase environmental impacts per unit of product, which increases the product's environmental footprint. Supply chains view food waste as a significant contributor to the environmental footprint of crops. Farmers can reduce the environmental footprint of agricultural products and costs by preventing food waste and crop loss on the farm and address supply chain concerns.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to describe efforts to prevent excessive loss of food crops and other agricultural products during harvest and on-farm storage
- ✓ Be able to share Informal or formal SOPs for crop harvesting and storage AND/OR describe the:
- ✓ Enrolment in a food safety program (e.g., FreshCare, GLOBALG.A.P.)
- ✓ An annual review of harvest records
- ✓ Routine calibration of harvest equipment to minimise crop loss
- ✓ Sanitation of harvest and storage equipment to avoid mold, disease, and vermin
- ✓ Stockpile management
- ✓ Practices to ensure optimal storage conditions in terms of temperature and humidity control
- ✓ Effective harvest logistics
- ✓ Crop loss monitoring
- ✓ Harvest equipment loss checks when starting a new field or block
- ✓ Integrated Pest and Disease Management Plan
- ✓ Weather review and crop inspection to ensure optimal timing of harvest to minimise losses.

INDICATOR 6.2.2

Resource Recovery of Agricultural Surplus and Waste: Reuse, repurpose, and/or recycle surplus product or crop residues, manure, other agricultural wastes and/or agricultural inputs (e.g., tailwater recovery) where appropriate.

Guidance: *Agricultural Waste* is solid waste that is generated by the rearing of animals (e.g., manure) or the production and harvest of *agricultural products* (e.g., *crop residues*). It can be used to improve *soil health* and *soil productivity* by increasing soil organic matter and nutrients; control soil erosion; and improve soil moisture retention, structure, biodiversity, water filtration, and water retention. Recovery of these materials can also reduce fertiliser expenses but may not be cost effective for all cropping systems. This Indicator is not applicable if it is not appropriate to the operation or region.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field the reuse, repurposing, and/or recycling of surplus product or *crop residues*, manure, other *agricultural wastes*, and/or agricultural inputs

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Discarded almonds are composted and/or returned back into the orchard
- ✓ Crop consultant recommendations that consider reuse, repurposing, and/or recycling of *agricultural wastes* and/or agricultural inputs
- ✓ Nutrient management plans when crop residues, cover cropping, whole orchard recycling, mulching of prunings, compost, or manure are included
- ✓ Nutrient test results for applied *agricultural waste*
- ✓ Vendor invoices for application of *agricultural waste*
- ✓ Lifecycle analysis for the orchard product, waste and/or surplus product
- ✓ See the conformance evidence for Indicator 2.1.4 (*Crop Residues*)

Resources:

- Petrie, P. Fleming, N. & Shanmugam, K. 2025. Pathway to carbon neutral – whole orchard recycling in almond orchards. Horticulture Innovation Limited. Almond Board of Australia. Undated. Renewable Energy Production from Almond Waste. Almond Board of Australia. Loxton, SA.



OBJECTIVE 7

CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY



INDICATOR 7.1.1**Species at Risk: A program to locate and protect known viable occurrences of species at risk on enrolled farmland.**

Guidance: Species at risk are one essential part of conserving biodiversity. They are plant and animal species identified under either state or national laws as threatened or endangered, due to reductions in numbers, distribution and threats. They can occur in agricultural landscapes. Their conservation helps maintain biodiversity and avoid risk of regulatory actions. At a national level species may be recorded on the Atlas of Living Australia or state-based databases. These can be accessed by the general public. Conformance evidence for Indicators 7.2.1 (Native Habitats and Natural Communities) and 7.2.2 (Ecologically Important Sites) may include protection of habitat of threatened species and so be applicable to this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe an assessment of species at risk to determine if any species at risk are present
 - ✓ Able to describe practices for managing species at risk when present
- OR**
- ✓ A species at risk assessment completed by a third party, which evaluates operations effect on at risk species
- OR a**
- ✓ Guidance from USDA FSA or NRCS about T&E species management
 - ✓ Documentation for compliance with relevant state and regional at risk species management requirements

Other Evidence:

- ✓ An analysis for presence of at risk species using the Protected Matters Search Tool and/or state wildlife agency databases
- ✓ An at risk species assessment, which can be based on a due diligence assessment before farmland acquisition
- ✓ Materials for field staff for identifying and management of at risk species
- ✓ Employee training on at risk species identification and management

Resources:

- National at risk species / endangered and threatened species
- <https://www.ala.org.au/>
- Tasmania natural values assessment
- Queensland
- New South Wales
- Victoria
- South Australia
- Northern Territory
- Western Australia
- Australian Capital Territory
- Conserving endangered species on private land

INDICATOR 7.1.2

Species at Risk Protection: Protection of species at risk when they occur on enrolled farmland and management of agricultural operations with consideration of species at risk in the local watershed catchments and landscapes of operation.

Guidance: Conservation of at-risk species can prevent local extirpation or increase in listing status to critically endangered. Endangered species are species with an endangered designation by state or national conservation agencies. Their designation is carefully reviewed by scientists.

Standard Users need to protect at-risk species that are recorded from or likely to be found on enrolled farmland. Conformance evidence for Indicators 7.2.1 (Native Habitats and Natural Communities) and 7.2.2 (Ecologically Important Sites) may include protection of habitat of endangered species and so be applicable to this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Viable occurrences of species at risk have been demonstrated to be **NOT** present
- OR**
- ✓ An analysis for the presence of populations of at-risk species and their viability using the Protected Matters Search Tool or state wildlife agency databases; and
- ✓ Practices for managing the viable occurrence of species at risk are present (see conformance evidence for Indicators 7.2.1 (Native Habitats and Natural Communities) and 7.2.2 (Ecologically Important Sites))

INDICATOR 7.2.1

Native Habitats and Natural Communities: Maintenance or conservation of native habitats and natural communities in areas not used for agricultural production.

Guidance: Loss of *native habitats* and *natural communities* is a leading global threat to biodiversity. Native habitats have the biological and physical conditions necessary for survival, including areas for feeding, shelter, protection, and/or reproduction of native species. *Natural communities* are an assemblage of interacting native plant species and animal species and their common environment, recurring across the landscape. Both provide essential habitats for common and rare wildlife and plant species, including threatened and endangered and species at risk, and allow species to disperse across landscapes. Most commonly these are remnant forest natural communities in landscapes originally forested, remnant wetlands, or remnant grassland natural communities in areas originally grasslands. Reforested farmland and restored uplands and wetlands, may provide important wildlife habitats but are NOT considered *native habitats* and *natural communities*.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ An assessment of native habitats and natural communities to determine their presence OR an assessment conducted as part of one or more of the following:
 - ✓ An assessment of native habitat and natural communities completed by a third party
 - ✓ Able to describe practices for managing native habitats and natural communities OR describe the application of guidance from state or regional organisations about native community management

Other Evidence:

- ✓ See your conformance evidence for LH Indicators 7.2.2 (Ecologically Important Sites) and 7.3.1 (Habitat Conversion)

INDICATOR 7.2.2

Ecologically Important Sites: Participation individually or collaboratively in plans or programs that manage Ecologically Important Sites in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

Guidance: Ecologically Important Sites are sites of exceptional ecological importance including areas with critically endangered or endangered species or natural communities, rare natural communities or unique ecological landscape features. Plans may be developed independently or in collaboration with government agencies or other organisations.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence (at least one):**

- ✓ Able to describe whether Ecologically Special Sites are present (could be a combination of assessments for species at risk (Indicator 7.1.1), species at risk protection (Indicator 7.1.2) and native habitats and natural communities (Indicator 7.2.1 Native Habitats and Natural Communities))

Other Evidence (may help achieve conformance, none required):

- ✓ See your conformance evidence for LH Indicators 7.2.1 (Native Habitats and Natural Communities) and 7.3.1 (Habitat Conversion)

Resources:

- See resource assessments for Indicators 7.1.1 (Species at risk) and 7.2.1 (Native Habitats and Natural Communities)

INDICATOR 7.2.3

Cropland for Wildlife Habitat: Application of agricultural best management practices on cropland to create temporary wildlife habitat where appropriate.

Guidance: Agriculture has the most widespread impact on wildlife habitat of any activity in Australia. Many *agricultural BMPs for cropland* (e.g., cover cropping, structural practices to control soil erosion) or supportive practices such as delayed mowing, seeding areas with native grassland seed mixes, planted bird habitat outside the orchard, can be used to create temporary habitat for mammals, birds, and soil organisms and protect aquatic habitats and contribute to conserving biodiversity of agricultural landscapes.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe or demonstrate in-field the application of other *agricultural BMPs on cropland* used to create temporary wildlife habitat (See your conformance evidence for Indicators 2.1.1 [*Soil Quality*], 2.1.4 [*Crop Residues*], and 3.2.2 [*Water Quality*])
- ✓ Evidence of participation in regional landscape improvement programs

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Vendor invoices for applying specific practices (e.g., cover cropping, seed mixes, earthworks)
- ✓ Bee Friendly Farming certification

INDICATOR 7.3.1

Habitat Conversion: Demonstration of commitment to avoid the land use conversion and fragmentation of natural communities and Ecologically Important Sites on enrolled farmland.

Guidance: Habitat loss through conversion is the greatest threat to biodiversity in Australia. Avoiding land use conversion helps maintain regional biodiversity. The deliberate use of fire for land clearing purposes should also be avoided, when and where applicable.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Be able to describe your commitment to avoid the land use conversion and fragmentation of natural communities and Ecologically Important Sites

Other Evidence (may help achieve conformance evidence, none required):

- ✓ Description or in-field demonstration of conserved natural communities and *Ecologically Important Sites* (see conformance evidence for *Indicator 7.2.2 (Ecologically Important Sites)*)
- ✓ Management plans for conserved natural communities and *Ecologically Important Sites*
- ✓ Maps of conserved natural communities and *Ecologically Important Sites*

INDICATOR 7.3.2

Deforestation: Demonstration of commitment to prevent deforestation of natural forest when farming where biome-specific or geography-specific deforestation protocol(s) are in place, by a written policy to demonstrate the Standard user’s commitment to a zero-deforestation policy that identifies the regions of application, relevant natural forest types, appropriate deforestation cut-off date(s) in areas with biome-specific or geography-specific deforestation protocols.

Guidance: Globally, deforestation to create cropland is a major threat to climate and biodiversity. Deforestation protocols in Australia vary from state to state. Hence there is not an agreed national cutoff date for cessation of clearing activities across the country, and different state-based legislation applies to land clearing in different jurisdictions. An appropriate cut-off date is a date (day, month and year) specified by the most relevant biome- or geography-specific deforestation protocol(s) after which farmed land cannot have been deforested, unless allowed within the parameters of a regulated no-net-negative impact (or equivalent) program. An example of a relevant deforestation protocol could include, but is not limited to, the Science Based Targets initiative.

A written *zero deforestation policy* should identify the regions of application, relevant natural forest types, and appropriate deforestation cut-off date(s) in areas with deforestation protocols. Standard Users may elect to have simple zero-deforestation policy without a cutoff date unless otherwise determined by state deforestation protocols, but which identifies the application region and relevant natural forest types. If selecting their own cutoff date, “appropriate” means that the Standard User can substantiate their selected cutoff date with evidence that is justifiable.

Examples of written deforestation policies:

X Farm acquires and manages agricultural lands to further its stewardship goals. Consistent with its Farmland Stewardship Commitment, X Farm is committed to protecting natural forests and will not engage in deforestation of natural forests in [state or region where your operation, e.g., New South Wales], including [list of common forest types which can be found at web site of a state forestry agency, e.g., “mallee, open woodland”. Further, X Farm will not acquire or rent farmland on which deforestation of natural forests has occurred after ##### [cutoff date that you select]. We will ensure that our land purchases do not directly or indirectly contribute to deforestation of natural forests.

X Farm is committed to stopping deforestation and protecting natural forests. It will not engage in deforestation of natural forests on its land in [state or region where you operate, e.g., New South Wales], including [list of major forest types in your state or region where you operate, e.g., mallee, open woodland, , etc.]; nor will it acquire or rent farmland where natural forests were converted to other cropland or pasture after ##### [cutoff date that you select].

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to provide a written deforestation policy in line with appropriate deforestation protocols and legislation

Resources:

- Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), Forest, Land and Agriculture.
- UN-convened Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance. 2025. Guidelines and Recommendations for Halting Deforestation. UN Environment Program: Finance Initiative.

INDICATOR 7.3.3

Responsible Land Acquisition: Demonstration of due diligence to prevent the acquisition of farmland that was converted from natural forest after an appropriate deforestation cutoff date(s) identified by the Standard user in areas with biome-specific or geography-specific deforestation protocols.

Guidance: This Indicator ensures that Program Users avoid purchasing farmland that was converted from natural forest after an appropriate deforestation cutoff date. Applying a cutoff date provides a tangible disincentive for current landowners to participate in deforestation to create cropland. As, deforestation protocols in Australia vary from state to state, there is not an agreed national cutoff date for cessation of clearing activities across the country, and different state-based legislation applies to land clearing in different jurisdictions. Unless there are cut-off dates determined by state deforestation protocols, which identifies the application region and relevant natural forest types, the Standard User should determine their own appropriate cut-off date for deforestation prior to acquisition. "Appropriate" means that the Standard User can substantiate their selected cutoff date with evidence that is justifiable.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe your due diligence to prevent acquisition of *farmland* converted from *natural forest* after a cutoff date

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Due diligence standard operating procedure (SOP) to prevent acquisition of *farmland* converted from *natural forest* after a cutoff date
- ✓ Examples of reports of due diligence before acquisition

Resources:

- See resource assessments for Indicator 7.3.2 (Deforestation)

INDICATOR 7.4.1

Crop and Genetic Diversity: Use of a variety of crop species, crop varieties, companion crops (e.g., cover crops, cross-pollination donors) and/or crop rotation where appropriate.

Guidance: Tree and genetic diversity can help control weeds and pests, improve soil health, and improve orchard yields. It may be achieved by planting alternating varieties in blocks or changing varieties and rootstocks over time, cover cropping, and using cross pollination donors. Loss of tree and genetic diversity can increase regional orchard susceptibility to infectious pests and diseases. By incorporating orchard and genetic diversity into farming, you can contribute to the sustainability of regional agriculture.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Describe why crop and genetic diversity practices are not appropriate for your operation
- OR**
- ✓ Able to describe the annual use of different varieties, and/or companion crops (e.g., cover crops, cross-pollination donors)
 - ✓ Area planted using different varieties is reported using maps, GIS layers, and/or farm maps
 - ✓ Able to describe the strategy for using different varieties and/or rootstocks, companion crops (e.g., cover crops, cross-pollination donors), and/or crop rotation



OBJECTIVE 8

PROTECTION OF SPECIAL SITES



INDICATOR 8.1.1

Special Site Identification: Use of information such as existing natural heritage data or expert advice in identifying or selecting Special Sites.

Guidance: *Special Sites* are typically cemeteries, Indigenous sites, archeological sites (post-European settlement sites), and unusual geological features (e.g., remarkable waterfalls, cliffs). While they may occur infrequently on farmland in Australia, depending on the region, this indicator helps ensure the use of appropriate information when identifying *Special Sites*.

You should use available resources to determine whether Special Sites exist on your farm. State registries are available to provide information on possible Special Sites. Property title documents can provide information on sites registered against the relevant titles. Information that methodically describes how Special Sites were identified is essential to conformance with this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Print outs from online maps or databases indicating presence or absence of Special Sites on your land
- ✓ Description or records of communications with experts regarding presence or absence of Special Sites on your land (emails or notes from phone calls)
- ✓ A legal due diligence or property title document for the farm indicating presence or absences of cultural, archeological, or historic sites
- ✓ Link to 9.3.2 (Land Tenure Rights of Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples)

Resources:

- *Culturally Important Features:* All states have an online historic sites database with cemeteries, Indigenous sites, archeological sites (post-European settlement sites) that includes publicly accessible data. Information on the state-based databases can be found on the state government websites. Information on the state-based databases can be found on the state government websites. Note, these may not be exhaustive and information regarding some sites may be sensitive and restricted.

Geologically Unique Features: You probably already know about unique geological features on your farm, but you can check with state mapping or a geologist if you are uncertain. They usually occur in inoperable areas, but excessive use from recreationists and others may need to be managed. If you don't know how to manage these sites, you can contact a local geologist and they can provide you with guidance about managing unique geologic features.

INDICATOR 8.1.2

Special Site Management: Appropriate mapping, cataloging and management of identified Special Sites in a manner that recognises their unique qualities.

Guidance: *Special Sites* are sites filled with valuable information about geology or culture and history that explain human history. Damage or destruction of these sites can mean the loss of irreplaceable information. It can also lead to the loss of areas of cultural significance to all people, including *Indigenous Peoples*. This Indicator helps ensure that the unique qualities of *Special Sites* are maintained. Some cultural sites can be managed by leaving them undisturbed. Cemeteries or archeological sites should be protected from soil disturbance. They may be degraded by trees and so vegetation management (tree removal, and annual mowing, or brush saw treatment) may be necessary to maintain these sites. Sites which have been in cultivation for decades may be so disturbed that avoiding excavation may be the only practice needed to maintain unique qualities.

A description of sensible management and demonstration of use of expert information are important to achieving conformance with this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of how *Special Sites* are managed (e.g. *Special site* management plan)
- ✓ Emails exchanged with experts regarding management of *Special Sites*

Resources:

- Information on the state-based special site and karst system databases can be found on the state government websites.
- An example of state management advice for [Department of Transport and Planning. Regional Strategy Plan – Sites of Cultural Significance: 8. Management of Sites of Cultural Significance. Department of Transport and Planning.](#)



OBJECTIVE 9

LOCAL COMMUNITIES



INDICATOR 9.1.1

Economic Contributions: Payment of federal, state and local taxes and, as appropriate, employment of staff from local communities and local procurement of supplies and services.

Guidance: Farming employs approximately 2.5% of the Australian workforce, with 82% of workers living regionally. It has a greater economic multiplier effect on rural economies than other sectors because of its contributions to local employment, tax payments, and local procurement. Farming helps sustain rural economies and fosters local support for agriculture. Standard users may employ non-local workers and purchase non-local services and materials when appropriate.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe local purchases and use of local vendors.
- ✓ Able to describe employee numbers and estimated percentage from local communities

Other Evidence:

Able to share:

- ✓ Local vendor invoices
- ✓ Copies of tax invoices, records, or forms
- ✓ Other documents indicating local employment and procurement

Able to describe:

- ✓ Local employment and procurement
- ✓ Employment of summer employees from local communities or regional agricultural universities

Resources:

- Information regarding priming production activities and their tax implications can be found at: <https://www.ato.gov.au/businesses-and-organisations/income-deductions-and-concessions/primary-producers/primary-production-activities>

INDICATOR 9.2.1

Community Engagement: Engagement in positive relationships with neighbors and local communities thus raising the awareness of sustainable agriculture.

Guidance: Neighbour and community engagement can be essential to generate local support for sustainable agriculture and maintain relationships and reduce conflicts. Neighbours and local communities can also be engaged to help maintain local support for sustainable agriculture and a social license to operate. Engagement activities will differ based on what is best suited for each operation.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of engagement activities with local communities
- ✓ Leadership roles filled by grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or employee(s) in local agriculture-related organisations and local government
- ✓ Farm signage with farm name and contact information
- ✓ Hosting of agriculture meetings, workshops, and/or presentations for neighboring farm managers, and/or community members
- ✓ Contribution to Almond Board of Australia events and resources, e.g. hosts or speakers, host research trials, development of resources and/or participation in ABA value chain committees
- ✓ In-kind or financial support for agricultural events, secondary vocational programs, agricultural scholarships, etc.
- ✓ Participation in regional planning efforts related to agriculture
- ✓ Phone lists of key local community contacts
- ✓ Newsletter for neighbours
- ✓ Your conformance evidence for Leading Harvest Indicator 9.3.3 (Local Communities' and Indigenous Peoples' Inquiries) may be applicable to this Indicator (e.g., annual newsletters with contact information).

Resources:

- McShane, C. Quirk, F. Swinbourne, A. undated. The Role of Farm Families in Future Economic and Community Sustainability. *International Journal of Social Sustainability in Economic, Social and Cultural Context*.

INDICATOR 9.3.1

Local Community and Indigenous Peoples Policy: A written policy demonstrating a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of local communities and treaty rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Guidance: Respect for local community and *land rights* is essential for supporting the social dimension of agricultural sustainability and achieving legal compliance. These rights vary among state and/or local government jurisdictions. Local communities may have rights concerning public health and safety, land use, water quality, soil erosion, invasive species, and wildlife. Land rights of *Indigenous Peoples* also vary depending on *Indigenous Peoples* local group(s) and are often identified during due diligence of title searches when land is purchased. *Land rights* may include access to *Special Sites*, and water, hunting, fishing, and wild food procurement, and other land access rights.

This Indicator requires a very simple statement describing your commitment to abide by local regulations and respect land rights of *Indigenous Peoples*. Farm co-owners (e.g., business partners and family members) and employees may need to understand and be able to implement your Local Community and Indigenous Peoples Policy. A written commitment statement and evidence of communication and understanding by employees are key to achieving conformance with this Indicator.

Two examples of a written commitment policy:

X Farms is committed to recognise and respect the rights of local communities and treaty rights of Indigenous Peoples. We abide by the regulatory requirements of local communities. We welcome and respect the cultures, customs, and values of the Indigenous Peoples in [state or region where you operate, e.g., New South Wales] and the local communities where we conduct business and appreciate their concerns and aspiration regarding their history, heritage, and traditions. We respect the right of Indigenous Peoples to determine their own way of life, on their own lands, and to do so according to their time-honored cultures, traditions, and beliefs.

X Farm recognises that the identities and culture of Indigenous Peoples are tied inextricably to the lands on which they live and the natural resources upon which they depend. We acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples, as social groups, can be among the most marginalised and vulnerable members of humanity. We welcome and respect the cultures, customs, and values of the Indigenous Peoples in [state or region where you operate, e.g., New South Wales], and the local communities where we conduct business and

appreciate their concerns and aspiration regarding their history, heritage, and traditions. We respect the right of Indigenous Peoples to determine their own way of life, on their own lands, and to do so according to their cultures, traditions, and beliefs.

We recognise the rights of these communities to meaningful and appropriate consultation regarding issues affecting their lands and natural resources. X Farms is committed to engaging with Indigenous communities where we conduct business operations. Meaningful engagement begins with respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, whose legally recognised lands and traditional territories are near the areas where we operate.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Able to share a written policy demonstrating a commitment to recognise and respect the rights of local communities and *land rights* of *Indigenous Peoples*
- ✓ Able to describe communication with employees to ensure their understanding of the written policy and that they are able to implement the written policy
- ✓ Able to describe relevant local regulatory bodies (e.g., landscape management boards, native title boards, local councils)
- ✓ Assessments of state registers outlining land rights of Indigenous groups

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Onboard training regarding written policy on rights of local communities and *Indigenous Peoples*
- ✓ Employee training attendance sheet
- ✓ A description of informal and formal supporting policies and/or practices
- ✓ Internal communication

Resources

- State registers of indigenous rights

INDICATOR 9.3.2

Land Tenure Rights of Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples: Demonstration of due diligence to prevent infringing on the land tenure rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples when purchasing and managing land.

Guidance: Respect for land tenure rights of local communities and *Indigenous Peoples* begins by first understanding existing rights. *Indigenous Peoples* in Australia include two very distinct indigenous cultural groups: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with 250 different language groups across the country. *Land rights* of Indigenous Peoples varies depending on the local jurisdiction and group(s). These rights are often revealed in due diligence during *farmland* acquisition. *Land rights* may include access to *Special Sites*, and water, hunting, fishing, bush food procurement, and other land access rights. Respect for the land tenure rights of local communities and *Indigenous Peoples* supports the right to self-determination and legal compliance and helps maintain social license to operate. **This Indicator applies when a Program User is purchasing farmland when land rights and local land use restriction associated with a land parcel is discovered. If land rights have been found during due diligence, then diligence must also be applied during management of farmland.** A description of efforts to identify tenure rights of local communities (e.g., zoning) and land rights is key conformance evidence for this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description and/or documentation of due diligence regarding tenure rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples when purchasing and managing land
- ✓ Able to describe applicable local land rights (if any) and land use regulations

INDICATOR 9.3.3

Local Communities' and Indigenous Peoples' Inquiries: Demonstration of commitment to be receptive to local communities' and Indigenous Peoples' inquiries and concerns.

Guidance: Being receptive to local inquiries and concerns is important for ensuring effective communication and relationships with key stakeholders and is necessary for maintaining a social license to operate. This is most easily demonstrated by providing contact information with neighbours, leaders in local communities and for Indigenous Peoples. Responses need not include remedies that satisfy every inquiry or concern.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Providing contact information to neighbors and leaders in local communities and *Indigenous Peoples* communities (if present locally)

Other Evidence (any help achieve conformance):

- ✓ Farm signage with contact information
- ✓ Periodic listening sessions with stakeholders from local community and *Indigenous Peoples*
- ✓ Online anonymous suggestion box
- ✓ Records of inquiries from local community or *Indigenous Peoples* and Program User's response
- ✓ Submission of news articles in local newspapers about sustainable agriculture and contact information for inquiries
- ✓ Employee training for managing simple inquiries
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for LH Indicators 9.2.1 (Community Engagement), Indicator 9.3.1 (Local Community and Indigenous Peoples Policy), and Indicator 9.3.2 (Land Tenure Rights of Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples) if it demonstrates receptivity to inquiries and concerns.

Resources:

- See resources for Indicators 8.1.1 (Special Site Identification) and 9.4.1 (Public Health and Safety)

INDICATOR 9.4.1

Public Health and Safety: Application of health and safety agricultural best management practices that protect public health from adverse impacts of agricultural chemicals, excessive nutrients, equipment gases and fluids, fuels and air pollution and that train employees to operate equipment safely.

Guidance: The largest concern of local communities for agriculture is health and safety impacts. Hence, the protection of public health and safety can help growers maintain a social license to operate and public support for agriculture. Program Users are expected to comply with applicable laws, statutes, and regulations concerning the handling and use of agricultural chemicals, gases, fluids, fuels, and wastes.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description and/or in-field demonstration of the application of health and safety *agricultural BMPs*
- ✓ A description of management, use, and storage of agricultural chemicals and equipment gases, fluids and fuels
- ✓ A description of how licensed pesticide applicator's recommendations are used to apply crop protectants
- ✓ Noise
- ✓ Dust
- ✓ Able to share pesticide applicators' license held by pesticide applicator(s)

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Employees training to operate equipment safely
- ✓ Binder of safety data sheets (SDS) for crop protectants available to employees and where materials are stored
- ✓ A description of knowledge of regulatory requirements
- ✓ A description of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and employee knowledge of SOPs for managing spills and protecting employees, farm labor and the environment
- ✓ Your conformance evidence for Leading Harvest Indicators 4.2.1 (Application and Storage of Crop Protectants) and 6.1.3 (Management of Agricultural Chemicals and Other Materials) may provide relevant evidence where *agriculture BMPs* are applied to protect human and environmental health from crop protectants and other agricultural chemicals; Indicators 10.2.1 (Personnel and Contract Worker Training) and 10.3.3 (Employee Sustainability Training) may provide evidence of employee safety BMP training for this Indicator.

Resources:

- ChemCert accreditation is a widely adopted training certificate for chemical handling and use.
<https://www.chemcert.com.au/>
- See Indicator 4.2.1 (Application and Storage of Crop Protectants)



OBJECTIVE 10

PERSONNEL AND FARM LABOR



INDICATOR 10.1.1**Equal Opportunity Employment: Provision for equal opportunity employee recruitment and occupations, including equitable access to professional development.**

Guidance: Equal opportunity environments can help attract qualified talent, comply with state and federal laws, and contribute to fair and effective workplace culture. Workplace fairness is essential to ensuring that talented employees advance and contribute to business performance and sustainability. Women, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) (including Indigenous) employees are greatly under-represented in Australian agriculture. Barriers include discrimination, lack of training opportunities, pipeline barrier in the sciences, and lack of childcare. e. Conformance evidence for Indicator 10.1.2 (Respectful Work Environment) may be applicable to this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe equal-opportunity, formal or informal activities applied to achieve equal opportunity employee recruitment and occupations, and equitable access to professional development.
- ✓ A description of how employees are selected and assigned job roles to help achieve equal opportunity
- ✓ Confidential employee interviews

Other Evidence (help demonstrate conformance but not required):

- ✓ Hiring of women and minority groups
- ✓ Reporting under the Gender Pay Gap

Resources:

- Workplace Gender Equality Agency: The Gender Pay Gap: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/>

INDICATOR 10.1.2**Respectful Work Environment: Maintain a safe, gender equitable and professional work environment.**

Guidance: Working in the dynamic and casual environment of agriculture can make it challenging to establish an effective professional environment without being rigid. A gender equitable, professional working environment fosters high morale, consideration of diverse perspectives, promotes collaboration, and business and professional growth for everyone, and contributes to greater productivity and sustainability. Signage, workplace practices, and setting expectations are key though other activities identified by other LH Indicators can help achieve conformance.

Conformance Evidence Example:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Signage (as required by law) for employees on workplace discrimination and safety
- ✓ Able to describe and/or demonstrate in-field practice of health and safety agricultural BMPs;
- ✓ Able to describe workplace expectation of appropriate professional behavior
- ✓ Participation in OH&S audit programs

Other Evidence (any helps achieve conformance, none required):

- ✓ On-board training of new employees about safe, respectful, and gender-equitable workplace requirements
- ✓ Managerial and professional development training for employees
- ✓ Employee handbook explaining expectations for workplace behavior
- ✓ Safety reports
- ✓ Safety KPIs
- ✓ Written performance reviews that review safety and professional performance and outcomes
- ✓ See conformance evidence for four Indicators: 10.1.1 (Equal Opportunity Employment; evidence of equitable employment recruitment and hiring outcomes); 10.2.1 (Personnel and Contract Worker Training, evidence of safety and professionalism training); 11.1.1 (Access to Compliance Information, evidence of employee access to discrimination and safety regulatory information); 11.1.2 (Program User Compliance Program, evidence of compliance with discrimination and safety regulations); and Indicator 12.1.1 (Performance Review, evidence of employee coaching and/or responsiveness to workplace concern).

Resources:

- Safe Work Australia: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/industry-and-business/agriculture>
- Safe Work Australia, 2016. Work Health and Safety in the Agricultural Industry. Safe Work Australia. Canberra, ACT.
- Farmsafe Australia. 2025. Safer Farms Agricultural Injury and Fatality: 2025 Trend Report. Farmsafe Australia. Barton, ACT.

INDICATOR 10.2.1**Personnel and Contract Worker Training:** Health, safety and occupational education and training for Standard user personnel and contract management company employees.

Guidance: Farming is one of the most dangerous occupations in Australia. leading to a workplace setting, and so is highly regulated by federal and state laws. Health, safety, and occupational employee training plays a key role in avoiding costly workplace injuries and cost regulatory actions and improving employee knowledge to advance sustainable agriculture. This Indicator focuses on employee health, safety and occupational training, but overlaps with Indicator 10.3.3 (Employee Sustainability Training), which focuses on agricultural sustainability training sufficient to fulfill their roles and responsibilities under the LH Standard 2025. A description of relevant training and employee interviews are critical though external training and performance reviews help achieve conformance.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe or demonstrate the health, safety and occupational education, training, and continuous training process for employees
- ✓ Participation in OH&S audit programs

Other Evidence

- ✓ Certificates, diplomas, and/or other credentials indicating relevant professional training
- ✓ Attendance records and certificate for health, safety, and occupational training workshops
- ✓ Be able to describe:
 - ✓ Performance reviews with professional development objectives
 - ✓ Examples of training materials used in-house
 - ✓ Attendance at meetings of professional organisations
 - ✓ Applicable conformance evidence for LH Indicator 10.3.3 (Employee Sustainability Training)

Resources:

- Safe Work Australia, 2016. Work Health and Safety in the Agricultural Industry. Safe Work Australia. Canberra, ACT.
- State requirements for chemical handling training: <https://www.chemcert.com.au/resources/state-legislation/>
- Safe Work Australia, 2012. Fact Sheet: Understanding safety data sheets for hazardous chemicals. Safe Work Australia. Canberra, ACT.
- Safe Work Australia, 2023. Infographic: Tractor safety. Safe Work Australia. Canberra, ACT.

INDICATOR 10.3.1**Sustainability Policy Commitment:** Standard users shall provide a written policy demonstrating commitment to the Leading Harvest Standard that is communicated throughout the organization, particularly to facility and farm managers.

Guidance: The sustainability commitment statement clearly communicates your commitment to LH Standard 2025 and provides clear direction to employees. It also communicates to supply chains and other key stakeholders (e.g., lenders, government programs staff, regulatory agency staff) how you are committed to sustainability, which can also help maintain a social license and business relationships. The statement can be a brief and very simple statement describing a commitment to abide by the LH Standard 2025 Principles, Objectives, Performance Measures, and Indicators. A written commitment statement and evidence of communication and understanding by employees are key to achieving conformance with this Indicator.

Example of Sustainability Policy Commitment:

At X Farm, we believe growers play a vital stewardship responsibility and commitment to society and future generations. This includes maintaining commercially viable farmland and supporting an agricultural system that renews its ability to provide food and other agricultural products and sustains rural communities and natural resources. We seek to appropriately apply and improve agricultural best management practices on the farmland that we manage and promote such practices on other farmland to advance sustainable agriculture. We are committed to abide by the Leading Harvest Standard 2025 Principles, Objectives, Performance Measures, and Indicators and communicate our Leading Harvest Standard 2025 commitment to our employees.

Conformance Evidence Example:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A written statement describing your commitment to the LH Standard 2025
- ✓ Confidential interviews to confirm communication about commitment

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Able to describe how the statement is communicated to employees
- ✓ Onboard training routines to communicate the written commitment to LH Standard 2025
- ✓ A description of actions used to showcase staff members are able to implement your written policy

INDICATOR 10.3.2

Employee Roles and Responsibilities for Sustainability: Assignment and understanding of roles and responsibilities for achieving the Objectives of the Leading Harvest Standard.

Guidance: The assignment of workplace roles and responsibilities for achieving the LH Standard 2025 ensures effective communication of expectations and employees are able to carry out their roles and responsibilities. It also helps ensure that employees can be accountable and work together to achieve the LH Standard 2025 Objectives. Conformance evidence for *Indicators 12.1.1 (Performance Review)* can provide an accountability mechanism and evidence that employees understand their LH Standard 2025 roles and responsibilities. A description of roles and responsibilities and evidence of communication and understanding by employees are key to achieving conformance.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Ability to describe employee roles and responsibilities assignments under the LH Standard 2025
- ✓ A demonstration that employees understand their role and responsibilities for the LH Standard 2025
- ✓ Able to share job descriptions AND/OR organisation chart that identify LH Standard 2025 roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Able to describe periodic (e.g., quarterly, annually) group and individual review of employees on LH Standard 2025 roles and responsibilities
- ✓ See conformance evidence for *Indicator 12.1.1 (Performance Review)* which may include performance reviews of employee role and responsibilities for the LH Standard 2025

Resources:

- State requirements for chemical handling training: <https://www.chemcert.com.au/resources/state-legislation/>
- Safe Work Australia, 2012. Fact Sheet: Understanding safety data sheets for hazardous chemicals. Safe Work Australia. Canberra, ACT.
- Safe Work Australia, 2023. Infographic: Tractor safety. Safe Work Australia. Canberra, ACT.

INDICATOR 10.3.3

Employee Sustainability Training: Staff education and training for Standard user personnel and contract management company employees sufficient to fulfill their roles and responsibilities under the Leading Harvest Standard.

Guidance: Employee sustainability training is critical so that they accomplish their roles and responsibilities under the LH Standard 2025. The first part of this Indicator is unique to this Indicator: the training of employees to understand their roles and job responsibility under the LH Standard 2025. Evidence for the second part of this Indicator describes the training of employees to carry out these roles and responsibilities under the LH Standard 2025 and can overlap considerably with evidence for under Indicator 10.2.1 (Personnel and Contract Worker Training). A description of training, and demonstration of continuous improvement training, are essential to achieving conformance.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe or demonstrate in-house training about employee roles and responsibility for carrying out the Leading Harvest Standard which could include assigning responsibility of specific LH Indicators to specific employee(s)
- ✓ Able to demonstrate relevant professional training (e.g., college degrees, professional certificates) necessary for carrying out roles and responsibilities identified by LH Indicators
- ✓ Able to demonstrate continuing education to be up to date on responsibilities for LH Indicators

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Attendance records and certificate for training workshops relevant to LH Indicators
- ✓ Performance reviews with professional development objectives
- ✓ Attendance at meetings of professional organisations
- ✓ Applicable conformance evidence for LH *Indicator 10.2.1 (Personnel and Contract Worker Training)*

INDICATOR 10.4.1**Wages and Pay: Compensation to ensure an equitable and fair wage for Standard User personnel and contract management company employees.**

Guidance: Agricultural wages are modest for entry-level workers. Hence, they are a significant concern for supply chains. An equitable and fair wage (or “living wage”) is estimated from the cost of living in a region based on typical expenses and supports a minimum standard of living. Realistic wages are necessary to attract skilled employees and ensure long-term labour supply. The wages of the lowest paid employee can often serve as a key reference point for assessing whether wages meet the criteria for an equitable and fair wage. Payment in a reliable frequency is also an important element of an equitable and fair wage. Additionally, any deductions from wages should be legally permitted, clearly recorded and communicated to personnel, and not made for disciplinary purposes.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe wages and/or salaries that demonstrate employees are receiving a *living wage*
- ✓ Pay slips, and wage range documents for low-wage positions

Resources:

- Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman Fair Work Calculator, Find Your Award: <https://calculate.fairwork.gov.au/FindYourAward>

INDICATOR 10.5.1

Farm Labour Monitoring Program: A program to monitor farm labor contractors employed by Standard users or Contract Management Companies to ensure compliance with applicable federal, state, and local labor laws, statutes, and regulations by reviewing policies, practices, and training addressing workplace environment, equal opportunity, worker health, safety, and compensation, including equitable and fair wage and, where appropriate, housing and transportation.

Guidance: *Farm Labour Contractors* provide critical services to agriculture. Farm employers are legally required to take reasonable steps to ensure that their *farm labour contractors* have valid registration certificates. Many contracted farm workers are immigrants who do not know their legal rights and this makes them economically and socially vulnerable. Moreover, labour rights are a key component of the social aspect of sustainable agriculture. **This Indicator is not applicable to Program Users who do not contract for labour with contract management companies or farm labour contractors.** A description of your farm labour contractor monitoring program and evidence of its application is important to achieving conformance.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe and/or show in-field a monitoring program with organised set of activities to ensure *Farm Labour Contractor* is addressing legal requirements for the workplace environment, equal opportunity, worker health, safety, and compensation, including *equitable and fair wage* and, where *appropriate*, housing, and transportation
- ✓ Able to share:
 - ✓ *Farm labour contractor* contracts that identify topics/activities for monitoring
 - ✓ Documented exchanges (e.g., emails) about *farm labour contractor* monitoring with *farm labour contractor*
 - ✓ Annual or more frequent written reviews of *farm labour contractors*
 - ✓ Applicable evidence from Leading Harvest *Indicator 11.1.2 (Program User Compliance Program)*

Resources:

- Pacific Labour Mobility scheme: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/pacific-labour-mobility>
- Citrus Australia, 2021. *Farm Labour All you need to know: An employer’s guide to labour options and staff requirements.* Citrus Australia, Mildura, VIC.



OBJECTIVE 11

LEGAL AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE



INDICATOR 11.1.1

Access to Compliance Information: A process by which personnel have access to information of relevant laws, statutes, and regulations in appropriate locations.

Guidance: Employees are legally required to have access to regulatory information so that they are aware of their legal labour protections, legal safety requirements, and this makes it possible for employees to help your farm achieve regulatory compliance. Enrolled growers can address this Indicator by making sure legally mandated labour law signage is posted in accessible locations, making SDSs for farm chemicals available to employees, and having a routine for training employees (a process) so that they know where to find this information. Your employees should have access to basic legal information, but you will have to ensure employees know where to find this information. Posting legally required labour rights signage and access to SDS sheets as well as instructions about where to find these materials and other relevant regulatory information are critical to achieving conformance.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of a purposeful set of practices for ensuring employee access to appropriate legal information
- ✓ Signage posted as required by law to inform employees of labour rights, workplace requirements, and safety and environmental regulations
- ✓ SDS binders in office or workshop and pesticide storage areas

Other Evidence (any helps achieve conformance no one required):

- ✓ Confidential employee interviews to assess their awareness of relevant workplace laws, statutes, and regulations
- ✓ An employee handbook outlining relevant legal requirements
- ✓ Voluntary signage to inform employees about relevant legal requirements
- ✓ Employee training regarding applicable laws, statutes, and regulations
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Leading Harvest Indicator 10.2.1 (Personnel and Contract Worker Training)

Resources:

- Fair Work legislations and regulations: <https://www.fwc.gov.au/about-us/legislation-and-regulations>
- Safety data sheets: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/chemicals/safety-data-sheets>
- Department of Environment, 2014. Farming and national environmental law. Commonwealth of Australia. Canberra, ACT.

INDICATOR 11.1.2

Standard User Compliance Program: A program to achieve compliance with applicable federal, state or local laws, statutes, and regulations.

Guidance: Regulatory compliance of a company is necessary to manage regulatory risk and achieve a basic level of sustainability. It helps ensure that a grower or farm manager meets their legal obligations, avoids costly regulatory actions, and focuses on efficient operations, safety, public relations, and employee retention. This Indicator requires the application of a systematic set of routines (a *program*) to achieve legal compliance. A description of routines used to achieve regulatory compliance, signage or employee handbooks, and employee interviews are strong indications of conformance with this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of your organised routines that helps achieve compliance with applicable federal, state or local laws, statutes, and regulations (e.g., hiring practices, pesticide use, handling of contracts)
- ✓ Able to share professional licenses necessary for regulatory compliance
- ✓ Have an employee handbook addressing policies regarding ethical and legal compliance issues and obligations
- ✓ Signage as required by law to inform employees of labour rights, workplace requirements, and safety and environmental regulations

Other Evidence

- ✓ Evidence of employee training to ensure consistent legal compliance
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Leading Harvest Indicators 11.1.1 (*Access to Compliance Information Indicator*), 11.1.3 (*Compliance Commitment*), and 11.2.1 (*Written Compliance Policy*) may be applicable to this Indicator when they are organised as part of a legal compliance program

INDICATOR 11.1.3**Compliance Commitment: Demonstration of commitment to legal compliance through available regulatory action information.**

Guidance: *Regulatory action information* is information related to compliance with government regulations such as required permits, licenses, reports and documentation of corrective actions, which may be required by a regulatory agency or court. It helps demonstrate a grower or farm manager's commitment to legal compliance, which is essential to sustainability. A description or reveal of *regulatory action information* and legally required labour rights signage are strong evidence for demonstrating your commitment to legal compliance.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of regulatory action information (permitting applications and reports, permits, and licenses) from your farm
- ✓ Able to share any regulatory permit applications, reports, and permits
- ✓ Able to describe signage to inform employees of labour rights, workplace requirements, and safety regulations
- ✓ Able to share professional licences necessary for regulatory compliance (e.g., pesticide applicator license)

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Able to share corrective action documents demonstrating required and voluntary efforts to remedy legal compliance issues
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Leading Harvest Indicators 11.1.1 (Access to Compliance Information Indicator), 11.1.3 (Compliance Commitment), and 11.2.1 (Written Compliance Policy) may be applicable to this Indicator when they are organised as part of a legal compliance program

INDICATOR 11.2.1**Written Compliance Policy: A written policy demonstrating commitment to comply with social laws, such as those addressing civil rights, equal employment opportunities, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures, workers' compensation and equitable and fair wage, Indigenous Peoples' rights, workers' and communities' right to know, prevailing wages, workers' right to organize, and workplace health and safety.**

Guidance: The written compliance policy can be a brief statement describing a simple commitment to comply with local, state, and federal social laws as they apply to farming

in the state or region where you operate. Legal compliance is the process by which a farming operation adheres to the complex rules, policies and processes that regulate business practices in a particular jurisdiction. This can include regulations having to do with employee and neighbor health and safety, environmental responsibilities (e.g., land, water, air, pesticides, fuels and lubricants), financial and accounting requirements, employment law, tax law, business law. The state and federal departments may have web pages that can help growers understand their regulatory environment and understand what a commitment might entail. A written compliance policy and evidence of communication and understanding by employees are key to achieving conformance with this Indicator.

Example of Written Compliance Policy:

At X Farm, we are committed to complying with all social laws, including those that address civil rights, equal employment opportunities, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures, workers' compensation and equitable and fair wage, Indigenous Peoples' rights, workers' and communities' right to know, prevailing wages, workers' right to organize, and occupational health and safety. We are an equal opportunity employer and abide by all fair labour laws and occupational health and safety laws.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A written commitment statement demonstrating commitment to comply with social laws, such as those addressing civil rights, equal employment opportunities, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures, workers' compensation and *an equitable and fair wage*, *Indigenous Peoples' rights*, workers' and communities' right to know, prevailing wages, workers' right to organize, and occupational health and safety.
- ✓ Communication to ensure employees understand and can implement the written policy.

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Grower and his/her leadership team are knowledgeable about the written commitment statement and how it applies to farm operations.
- ✓ Onboard training regarding written policy.
- ✓ An employee handbook which describes written commitment policy and how to apply it.

INDICATOR 11.2.2**Consistency with International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions:**

Demonstration of commitment to respect the principles concerning fundamental rights set out in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

Guidance: ILO Principles are an international set of principles aimed at protecting freedom of association of employees and right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour and workplace discrimination, and the abolition of child labour. Many standards require a commitment to ILO Principles. A commitment demonstrates respect for labour rights, a key social attribute of agriculture, and can bolster credibility and social license with supply chains and other key stakeholders.

This Indicator applies only to the core conventions not fully covered by existing Australian Fair Work framework as outlined in the Fair Work Act 2009 Part 2.4 - Enterprise agreements. This Indicator helps ensure that Standard users respect widely respected principles concerning key labour rights set out in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Conformance evidence for Indicator 10.1.1 (Equal Opportunity Employment) may be applicable to this Indicator.

Standard Users should ensure recruitment fees or other labour costs (e.g., providing PPE) are not charged to workers. Additionally, Standard Users should ensure that personnel do not exceed the maximum number of working hours per day and consecutive working days, in accordance with relevant legislation and ILO Conventions..

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A statement of commitment to respect rights set out in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including the right of employees to organise and collectively bargain if they choose to do so.

OR

- ✓ A written commitment statement demonstrating commitment to comply with social laws (*Indicator 11.2.1*) and to respect rights set out by ILO Conventions including the right of employees to organise and collectively bargain if they choose to do so.

Other Evidence:

- ✓ An employee handbook, which describes commitment to relevant ILO Principles
- ✓ Confidential employee interviews on the topic of collective bargaining and freedom of association

- ✓ Employee training for managers which outlines ILO Principles and general labor law as it pertains to their responsibilities

INDICATOR 11.2.3**Consistency with Farmland Tenant Law:**

Demonstration of commitment to respect the rights of farmland tenants of leased lands with respect to the covenant of quiet enjoyment as determined by national, state and/or local laws, statutes, and regulations.

Guidance: The covenant of quiet enjoyment means that a *farmland tenant* has the right to enjoy his or her leased *farmland* without “substantial interference” from the *farmland* owner. It ensures that *farmland tenants* benefit from the full use and enjoyment of their leased *farmland*. **This Indicator only applies to enrolled growers who lease land to *farmland tenants* AND the enrolled grower elects to enroll the leased land in the Leading Harvest Standard 2025.**

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe activities that demonstrate commitment to respect rights of *farmland tenants* of leased lands with respect to the covenant of quiet enjoyment
- ✓ Leases language addressing right to “quiet enjoyment”

Other Evidence

- ✓ Communications with *farmland tenants*
- ✓ Employee training on *farmland tenant* oversight and lease management regarding right to quiet enjoyment
- ✓ See conformance evidence for Indicators in Objective 13

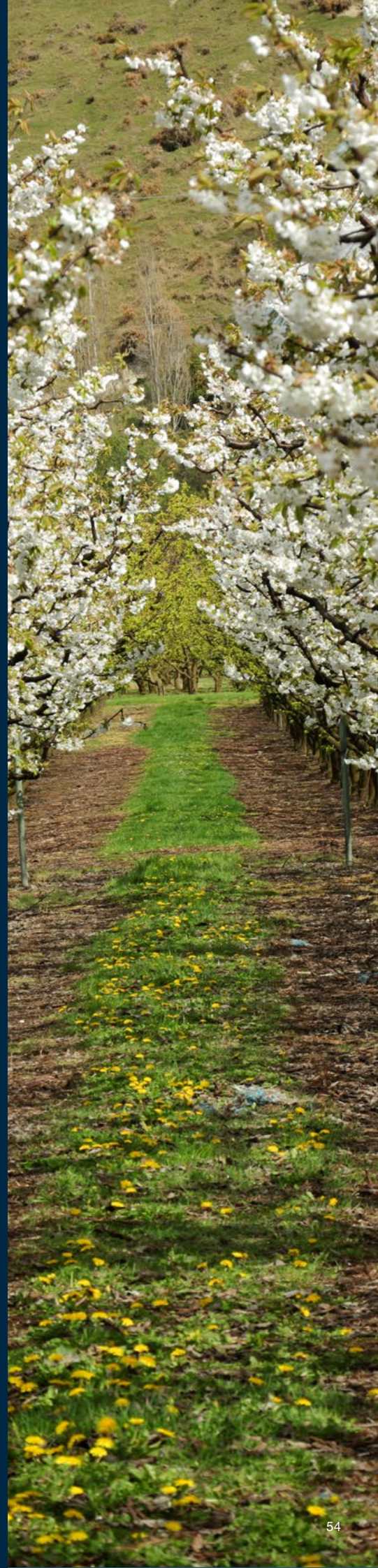
Resources:

- Ashby, R. & Ashby, D. 2011. Successful Land Leasing in Australia: A Guide for Farmers and their Advisors (Second Edition). Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Barton, ACT.



OBJECTIVE 12

MANAGEMENT REVIEW AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT



Overall Guidance: Food safety programs have requirements that include performance review programs and growers can build on these programs by including Objectives of the Leading Harvest Standard 2025 as a part of the review process.

INDICATOR 12.1.1

Performance Review: A system to review commitments, programs, procedures and measures of progress; evaluate their effectiveness; and review progress toward achieving goals for employees, contractors, use of agricultural inputs, management of adverse and positive environmental impacts, and agricultural production, including greater resource-use efficiency.

Guidance: A performance review system can improve communication and working relationships and provide useful feedback about job and operational performance, ultimately leading to improved farm performance and long-term viability. It also helps growers and farm managers select timely financial, social, and environmental objectives that reduce cost and increase revenue and efficiency.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ A description of performance review system and how it: reviews commitments, operations, and progress toward achieving goals for employees, contractors, use of agricultural inputs, management of adverse and positive environmental impacts, and agricultural production, including greater resource-use efficiency; and evaluates effectiveness.

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Performance review documents
- ✓ Relevant degree or certifications of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or crop consultants
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for Leading Harvest Indicators 1.2.1 (*Adapting to Critical External Factors*), 12.1.2 (*Monitoring Performance*), 12.1.3 (*Agricultural Innovation*), and 12.1.4 (*Annual Review and Improvement*)

INDICATOR 12.1.2

Monitoring Performance: A program for collecting, reviewing and reporting information to management regarding progress in achieving Leading Harvest Standard Objectives and Performance Measures.

Guidance: This Indicator focuses on the process of monitoring progress toward achieving the LH Standard 2025. Participation in food safety programs could be used as evidence of a program (an organised system) for reviewing and reporting progress if growers (1) periodically review their progress toward Leading Harvest Objectives and (2) consider their progress in light of the Leading Harvest Objectives and Indicators. Preparing for a Leading Harvest audit by reviewing your food safety program and determining gaps in conformance with Leading Harvest would be conformance evidence for this Indicator.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Annual enrolment and review of a food safety program
- ✓ A description of your monitoring performance program for collecting, reviewing and reporting information to management regarding progress in achieving Leading Harvest Standard Objectives and Performance Measures

Other Evidence:

- ✓ SOP Documents
- ✓ Employee interviews
- ✓ Records of relevant financial, environmental, and productivity metrics.
- ✓ Relevant degree or certifications of grower(s), farm manager(s), and/or crop consultants
- ✓ See your relevant conformance evidence for monitoring and review for *Performance Measure 4.1 (Integrated Pest Management)*, *Indicator 2.1.3 (Nutrient Management Program)*, and *Indicator 12.1.1 (Performance Review)*

INDICATOR 12.1.3

Agricultural Innovation: A process for identifying and considering opportunities for achieving improved farming efficiency, deploying improved technologies, and using new markets for underutilized agricultural products, new crops and low-grade agricultural materials (e.g., bioenergy markets).

Guidance: Innovation entails improving business operations and processes to become more efficient and less impactful and increasing product value, profitability, and financial viability. Growers and farm managers who routinely apply a purposeful series of formal or informal practices to identify innovative opportunities will likely discover practices and technologies for improving farming efficiency and new markets. *Indicator 12.2.1 (Support for Agricultural Research)* addresses the research aspect of R&D whereas this Indicator addresses the development part of R&D and implementation.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of routines used to identify and consider opportunities for improving farming efficiency, applying improved technologies, and using new markets
- ✓ Able to describe internal review of new technology and market opportunities
- ✓ Able to share CAPEX project development documents

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Employee attendance records for professional meetings about new agricultural technology and innovation

INDICATOR 12.1.4

Annual Review and Improvement: An annual review of progress by management and determination of changes and improvements necessary to continually improve agricultural efficiency and farm conformance to the Leading Harvest Standard.

Guidance: Periodic reviews are a key step in continual improvement, improving agricultural efficiency, and achieving the Objectives of the LH Standard 2025. Enrolled growers also are required to conduct an annual review of progress regarding *Leading Harvest Standard 2025* Indicators. Growers could expand the review system they might be using to comply with food safety programs to include Objectives under the Leading Harvest Standard 2025.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Ability to describe the annual review of progress regarding *Leading Harvest Standard 2025* Indicators
- ✓ Annual review documents
- ✓ Business plan documents
- ✓ CAPEX evaluations
- ✓ See your conformance evidence for *Indicator 12.1.2 (Monitoring Performance Indicator)*

INDICATOR 12.2.1

Support for Agricultural Research: Participation individually or collaboratively in agricultural research or other science-based programs that improve the knowledge and practice of sustainable agriculture.

Guidance: Agricultural research generates information that leads to improvements in agricultural technologies, practices, and efficiencies and reductions in adverse impacts. Growers who support agricultural research often learn about new, improved practices, technologies, and other new business opportunities and help advance sustainable agriculture. This Indicator addresses the research aspect of R&D whereas *Indicator 12.1.3 (Agricultural Innovation)* addresses the development part of R&D. The auditor may ask to see if there are additional areas of support for research. Examples could include, but are not limited to, trials of new varieties, rootstocks and management practices; citizen science projects; demonstration days; research or partnerships to address agricultural productivity, water quality, community issues or similar topics that broaden the understanding of the benefits and impacts of sustainable agriculture.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ A description of participation in agricultural research or other science-based programs

Other Evidence:

- ✓ In-field visit to show test plots, trials for new crop varieties, or evidence of trialing new practices
- ✓ Research proposals and/or reports identifying your participation
- ✓ Participation in citizen science projects
- ✓ Hosting farming demonstration day
- ✓ Engagement with or contribution to Almond Board of Australia events



OBJECTIVE 13

TENANT- OPERATED OPERATIONS



General resources for Objective 13:

- Ashby, R. & Ashby, D. 2011. *Successful Land Leasing in Australia: A Guide for Farmers and their Advisors* (Second Edition). Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Barton, ACT.

General Guidance: Objective 13 only applies to Program Users with management responsibilities for leased farmland. Farmland leasing is widespread with leased lands composing about 40 percent of U.S. farmland. Almost all *farmland tenants* also operate their own *farmland*. Most *farmland tenants* lease from landowners for longer than 3 years, though most operate using annual agreements. Long-term lease agreements allow *farmland tenants* to have greater interest in soil conservation and landowners to have greater interest in soil health and other long-term values. Leasing terms can foster application of sustainable agriculture practices by *farmland tenants* and create opportunities for landowners to influence farming practices by *farmland tenants* on their lands.

Conformance with Objective 13 and its Indicators is assessed at the level of the management system to determine whether the *Program User* is in conformance with Objective 13 *Indicators*. Operations on tenant-operated lands can then be used to corroborate management system conformance, to determine whether tenant-operated farmlands are managed consistently with requirements in Objective 13: landowner goals for tenant-operated lands (e.g., Indicators 1.1.1 Farmland Stewardship Commitment and 13.1.3 Communicating Leased-Land Objectives) lease agreement requirements (e.g., Indicator 13.1.2 *Farmland Tenant Agreements*), *farmland tenant* written social responsibility commitment (e.g., Indicator 13.1.4 *Farmland Tenant Social Responsibility Commitment*), application of practices consistent with *agricultural best management practices* (e.g., Indicators 13.1.2 *Farmland Tenant Agreements* and 13.2.1 *Verifiable Monitoring System*) and LH Standard 2025 *Principles and Objectives* (e.g., Indicator 13.1.1 *Leased-Land Program*).

The activities of *farmland tenants* can contribute to the performance of the Program User for *Objectives* 2 through 6 and *Indicators* 7.2.3, 7.3.1 and 9.4.1, but the Program User is responsible for conformance to these *Objectives*, *Performance Measures*, and *Indicators*. Poor conformance with Objectives 2 to 6 and Indicators 7.2.3, 7.3.1, and 9.4.1 on *tenant-operated* lands would suggest a failure to apply appropriate influence and achieve conformance by the management system of the landowner. Conformance issues are the responsibility of the landowner and may reflect their inability to exert influence on *farmland tenants* to achieve Objective 13.

INDICATOR 13.1.1

Leased-Land Program: A program to help ensure that farmland management complies with the agricultural best management practices and the Principles and Objectives of the Leading Harvest Standard as determined by a Program User and farmland tenants.

Guidance: This Indicator helps ensure that Program Users apply an organised set of activities to help ensure management of *farmland tenants* conforms to the *agricultural BMPs* and the *Principles and Objectives* of the LH Standard 2025. Conformance to *agricultural BMPs* is determined jointly by the Program User and *farmland tenants*.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Able to describe an organised set of activities used to help ensure farmland management by tenants conforms to the *agricultural BMPs* and the *Principles and Objectives* of the LH Standard 2025
- ✓ Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for lease-land oversight, evaluation, and communication
- ✓ See conformance evidence for other LH Indicators: Indicators (13.1.2 Farmland Tenant Agreements), 13.1.3 (Communicating Leased-Land Objectives), 13.1.4 (Farmland Tenant Social Responsibility Commitment), 13.2.1 (Verifiable Monitoring System), and 13.2.2 (Improvement of the Verifiable Monitoring System)

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Communications with *farmland tenants*
- ✓ Annual review materials shared with *farmland tenants*

INDICATOR 13.1.2

Farmland Tenant Agreements: Written agreements with farmland tenants demonstrating their commitment to applying agricultural practices consistent with agricultural best management practices.

Guidance: This Indicator helps ensure that Program Users clearly communicate their commitment to having *farmland tenants* apply *agricultural practices* consistent with *agricultural BMPs* and foster *farmland tenant* commitment. Written agreements can be included in the lease agreement or other types of agreements (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding, Letters of Intent, Memorandum of Agreement). Indicator 13.1.4 (*Farmland Tenant Social Responsibility Commitment*) is limited to fostering responsible operations, safe working environment, and legal compliance of *farmland tenants* whereas this Indicator is limited to fostering the *farmland tenant* application of *agricultural practices* consistent with *agricultural BMPs*.

Example of Text for Written Agreement:

[Tenant Grower] agrees to commit to applying agricultural practices consistent with agricultural best management practices developed by regional land grant universities when they are appropriate to field and crop conditions. These include application of practices for maintaining or improving soil health, water resources conservation, pest control, waste management, and wildlife conservation.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Written agreements with *farmland tenants* demonstrating farmland tenant commitment to apply *agricultural practices* consistent with *agricultural BMPs*
- ✓ Able to describe how written agreements are communicated to *farmland tenant* oversight staff
- ✓ Employee training regarding *farmland tenant* agreements and tenant's application of *agricultural practices* consistent with *agricultural BMPs*

INDICATOR 13.1.3

Communicating Leased-Land Objectives: A written statement clearly defining sustainable agriculture goals of the Program User for leased farmland that is shared with farmland tenants and made available to appropriate stakeholders upon request.

Guidance: Clear communication with farmland tenants is essential to achieving mutual goals. This Indicator helps ensure that Program Users communicate their sustainable agriculture goals for leased *farmland* to *farmland tenants*.

Goals listed for Indicator 1.1.1 (Farmland Stewardship Commitment) should be consistent with goals listed for this Indicator.

Sustainable Agriculture Goals: Sustainable agriculture goals are statements that indicate general sustainability goals for a farm for the next 5 to 10 years. The number of goals is determined by what you think is necessary to communicate your commitment and values. They should be realistic and apply to your operation and property. There may be a single goal or more to address the *triple bottom-lines*: financial, social, and environmental. Stewardship goals can address these and other topics: profitability, long-term financial sustainability, productivity, safety, teamwork, lifestyle and quality of life, conservation (e.g., soils, water, wildlife), and resource use.

Examples of Sustainable agriculture goals:

- ✓ Achieve long-term profitability with a purpose by balancing income and the family life of our employees
- ✓ Maintaining and enhancing the long-term soil health and productivity of our cropland
- ✓ Farming efficiently while conserving the soil, air, water, and wildlife resources
- ✓ Optimally managing land, soil, and water resources to achieve farm productivity
- ✓ Being a good steward and neighbor where we work
- ✓ Applying a practice of continual improvement to enhance crop productivity, stewardship of land and people, employee safety, and natural resource conservation.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ A written statement clearly defining sustainable agriculture goals of the *Program User* for leased *farmland*
- ✓ Indication that a written statement has been shared with tenants (e.g., shared in meetings with prospective and existing *farmland tenants* or in routine communications to *farmland tenants*)

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Farm manager training regarding sustainable agriculture goals of the *Program User* for leased *farmland*
- ✓ SOPs for sharing sustainable agriculture goals of the *Program User* for leased *farmland* with prospective or existing *farmland tenants* and stakeholders

INDICATOR 13.1.4**Farmland Tenant Social Responsibility**

Commitment: A written statement by farmland tenants demonstrating their commitment to operate safely and responsibly; provide a safe working environment; and comply with applicable federal, state and local laws, statutes, and regulations.

Guidance: This Indicator helps ensure that farmland tenants clearly communicate their commitment to operate safely and responsibly; provide a safe working environment; and comply with applicable federal, state and local laws, statutes, and regulations. A written statement by farmland tenants can be included in the lease agreement or be a simple written statement. Indicator 13.1.2 (*Farmland Tenant Agreements*) intends to foster the application by *farmland tenants* of *agricultural BMPs* whereas this Indicator intends to foster safe and responsible operations, safe working environment, and legal compliance.

Example of Farm Tenant Written Statement:

As a farmland tenant, I am committed to operate safely and responsibly; provide a safe working environment; and comply with applicable federal, state and local laws, statutes, and regulations.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Written Social Responsibility Commitment statement signed by *farmland tenants* regarding safe and responsible operations, safe working environment, and legal compliance,

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Farm manager training for supporting *farmland tenants* and their preparation of a Social Responsibility Commitment statement
- ✓ Educational materials for *farmland tenants* about Social Responsibility Commitment statement

INDICATOR 13.2.1

Verifiable Monitoring System: Use of a verifiable monitoring system with:

Indicator 13.2.1a A process for monitoring the agricultural practices used by farmland tenants; and

Guidance: This part of the Indicator helps ensure that Program Users apply a purposeful series of practices or routines (formal or informal) for monitoring the *agricultural practices* used by *farmland tenants*. The monitoring process can be simple and monitor the *agricultural practices* used by *farmland tenants* (see Objectives 2-6).

Examples of Conformance Evidence:**Strong Evidence:**

- ✓ Able to describe a series of practices for monitoring the *agricultural practices* used by *farmland tenants*
- ✓ Indications of leased-land visits

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Written *farmland tenant* monitoring SOPs
- ✓ Standardised *farmland tenant* monitoring forms and records

Indicator 13.2.1b A process for evaluating application of agricultural practices by farmland tenants and identifying and communicating areas where farmland tenants can improve their performance and achieve greater consistency with the agricultural best management practices and the Principles and Objectives of the Leading Harvest Standard.

Guidance: This Indicator uses information from Indicator 13.2.1a to ensure that the Program User actively influences the farmland tenant's practices. It prompts Program Users to apply a purposeful series of practices or routines (formal or informal, i.e., a *process*) to evaluate the *agricultural practices* of the *farmland tenant* and then identify and communicate areas of improvement to the *farmland tenant*. The key reference points for evaluating *farmland tenant* practices are *agricultural BMPs* and the *Principles and Objectives* of the LH Standard 2025.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Able to describe a set of practices used for evaluating the *agricultural practices* of the *farmland tenant*
- ✓ Demonstration of documentation and communication of areas of improvement to the *farmland tenant*

Other Evidence:

- ✓ Annual performance reviews of *farmland tenants*
- ✓ Annual face-to-face meetings with *farmland tenants*
- ✓ Communications with *farmland tenants* regarding performance
- ✓ Standardised annual or quarterly leased land review forms and records

INDICATOR 13.2.2

Improvement of the Verifiable Monitoring System: A process for using information from the verifiable monitoring system to identify areas of performance improvement for the verifiable monitoring system.

Guidance: The purpose of this Indicator is to ensure that Program Users have a process to evaluate the *verifiable monitoring system* for tenant-operated farmland and identify areas of improvement. This could lead to improvements that make the *system* more effective or provide better tenant oversight. Updates to the *verifiable monitoring system* are a key part of *continual improvement*.

Examples of Conformance Evidence:

Strong Evidence:

- ✓ Able to describe the series of practices for using information from the *verifiable monitoring system* to identify areas of performance improvement of the *verifiable monitoring system*
- ✓ A description of improvements in the *verifiable monitoring system* (e.g., in data collection, monitoring standard operating procedures, and standardised monitoring forms)
- ✓ Updates on using *agricultural BMPs* as an evaluation reference point
- ✓ Review of *farmland tenant* performance goals
- ✓ Communications describing periodic performance review of the *verifiable monitoring system*



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