

Building Investor Confidence in Farmland Sustainability



CASE STUDY

HOW REST AND WARAKIRRI USE LEADING HARVEST FOR INDEPENDENT ASSURANCE AT SCALE

The Challenge: Sustainability Assurance at Scale

Demonstrating the responsible management of investments provides a transparent way for Australian superannuation funds to evidence strong stewardship and long-term value creation.

For institutional investors in agriculture, verifying on-farm sustainability practices presents a unique challenge. Assets are geographically dispersed, operationally diverse and governed by highly localised environmental conditions. Each pension fund typically conducts its own environmental, social and governance due diligence and ongoing monitoring, and these processes are

resource-intensive, areas of focus can vary, and investments can be difficult to benchmark.

With growing interest in sustainability across the investor landscape, Warakirri sought **a credible, independent framework** that could provide ongoing assurance for its sustainability practices that was:

- ✓ **universal** - to apply across diverse geographies and crop types
- ✓ **rigorous** - to satisfy institutional scrutiny, and
- ✓ **transparent** - to report to investors and stakeholders.

The Solution: The Leading Harvest Farmland Management Standard

In 2023, Warakirri adopted the Leading Harvest Farmland Management Standard; a comprehensive, outcomes-based certification designed specifically for Australian agriculture.

Unlike prescriptive compliance checklists, the Leading Harvest Standard is built around 13 Principles, 33 Performance Measures and 73 Indicators that cover the full spectrum of sustainable farm management:

- 1 Sustainable Agriculture
- 2 Soil Health & Conservation
- 3 Protection of Water Resources
- 4 Protection of Crops
- 5 Energy Use, Air Quality & Climate Change
- 6 Waste & Material Management
- 7 Conservation of Biodiversity
- 8 Protection of Special Sites
- 9 Local Communities
- 10 Employees & Farm Labour
- 11 Legal & Regulatory Compliance
- 12 Management Review & Continual Improvement
- 13 Tenant-Operated Operations

The Standard is **outcomes-based**, meaning it sets clear sustainability objectives but gives farmland managers the flexibility on how best to achieve them, recognising that practices vary by region, climate and commodity. Critically, it requires **continuous improvement** meaning certified organisations must show measurable progress from one year to the next.

CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

Rest is one of Australia's largest superannuation funds, managing around A\$105 billion on behalf of more than two million members*. As a recognised RIAA Responsible Super Fund Leader, Rest incorporates environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors into investment decisions, to better manage risk and generate sustainable, long-term returns.

Warakirri Asset Management is one of Australia's most experienced agriculture investment managers, with over A\$3 billion in assets under management across approximately 200,000 hectares of farmland.

Since 1996, Warakirri has managed Warakirri Cropping on behalf of Rest with over 155,000 hectares of large-scale broadacre cropping across four states.

Warakirri adopted Leading Harvest to provide investors, including Rest, with independent, third-party assurance that their assets meet robust sustainability benchmarks.

*Data as at 31 March, 2026.

How It Works: Independent Audit and Assurance

- > **Document Review:** Comprehensive review of Warakirri's management system against the Standard's indicators.
- > **Site Audits:** Physical inspections of a representative sample of properties. In 2023, field sites across NSW, Queensland and Victoria were examined.
- > **Stakeholder Interviews:** Interviews with operational staff to verify that documented practices are being implemented.

Warakirri achieved certification in August 2023, one of the first Australian agriculture asset managers to do so. A surveillance audit was completed in 2024, finding zero major or minor non-conformances, and noting that practices had improved since the prior year in several areas, including threatened species and deforestation. Recertification is required every three years.

SUSTAINABILITY IN PRACTICE: WARAKIRRI CROPPING

- > **Rainfed operations** — all farms rely on natural rainfall rather than irrigation
- > **Precision agriculture** — camera-guided sprayers that precisely target weeds, reducing chemical use
- > **Nitrogen management** — precise application rates to limit fertiliser escape into waterways and atmosphere
- > **Low-emission fertiliser trials** — testing next-generation fertilisers that release less nitrous oxide
- > **Stubble retention** — keeping crop stubble on the soil surface after harvest to improve soil health, reduce water loss and increase yield
- > **Climate-smart practices** — minimising greenhouse gas emissions and building climate resilience across operations

The Outcome: Confidence for Investors and Stakeholders

“One of Rest’s six responsible investment pillars is focused on disclosure and transparency. The Leading Harvest certification of Warakirri Cropping supports this pillar through the robustness of an assurance standard, as well as ensuring sustainability integration remains a foundational part of our investment process in delivering returns to Rest members.”

- Leilani Weier, General Manager, Responsible Investment & Sustainability, Rest Super

For Rest, Leading Harvest certification provides an important ongoing monitoring input providing a single, credible reference point for sustainability assurance. In addition to Rest's internal due diligence processes and ongoing monitoring, Rest are able to source an independent, internationally recognised certification that:

- ✔ Covers comprehensive sustainability considerations for farmland
- ✔ Is independently verified through annual audits
- ✔ Requires measurable, year-on-year improvement - not just a point-in-time snapshot
- ✔ Applies across geographies, crop types and management structures
- ✔ Provides transparent, publicly available audit summary reports

For Warakirri, certification reinforces their position as a leader in Australian agriculture and provides a framework for driving continuous improvement.

As Warakirri noted upon achieving certification:

“Warakirri’s proud history and long-term experience in agriculture has taught us those agricultural investments committed to environmental sustainability, positive social impact and responsible management, produce higher and more sustainable long-term returns. We believe the Standard sets the benchmark as a sustainability program that is tailored to the Australian agriculture environment. We are very proud of this accomplishment and thank our clients, staff, managers, tenants and business partners for their continued commitment to furthering sustainable agriculture.”

- Jim Mackay, CEO & Managing Director, Warakirri Asset Management

For the broader industry, the Rest-Warakirri experience demonstrates a practical model: when institutional investors ask for credible sustainability assurance of farmland assets, Leading Harvest certification provides the independent, scalable and universally applicable framework to deliver it.

