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UN environment
A joint organisation of UN Environment and SETAC

SETAC

Consumer Information Programme for Sustainable Consumption & Production
10YFP — Global Action for Sustainable Consumption and Production

Guidance for Communicating hotspots: The effective use of sustainability information to drive action and improve performance

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Purpose and need for this guidance

Purpose:

- To promote the use of clear, accurate and relevant claims and information arising from hotspots analysis to enable actions to be taken by decision-makers and other key stakeholders, including the end users of consumer products
- To support the implementation of the hotspots analysis methodological framework

Need:

- To understand and follow best practice
- To provide clear, unambiguous information which is actionable by those best-placed to address the hotspots identified in any study
- To have greater confidence on the claims/information and actions arising from hotspots analysis
- To highlight that the ultimate aim of hotspots analysis is to be able to distil and communicate often complex technical information to an end user/consumer in a way that allows them to more easily understand and act on it for significant/optimum sustainability benefit
- To align with other standards, codes and guidance (please see other useful references at the end of this guidance)

How to use this guidance

This guidance is meant to be used alongside the "Hotspots analysis methodological guidance development report" Phase 1 and Phase 2. Specifically Step 7 - Presentation and Communication of the hotspots analysis methodological guidance

This guidance includes:

- A brief background to hotspots analysis

- Target audience and examples of communication vehicles

- General considerations for communicating information from hotspots analysis

- Validation of hotspots communication and information

- Core principles for communication

- Principles for communicating the information visually

- Best practice examples

- Other useful reference documents

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Rationale behind this communication guidance

What is this communication guidance?

→ This guidance helps to ensure that the results from hotspots analysis are used to support informed decision-making and to drive action across the different stakeholders that are best placed to take action, recognising that their information needs and technical knowledge may vary considerably.

Why is this communication guidance developed?

→ Hotspots analysis is not just an impact and benefits quantification exercise – it is intended to provide actionable information to stakeholders. Therefore, the communication of results to those stakeholders able to take action is a critically important step in any hotspots analysis study.
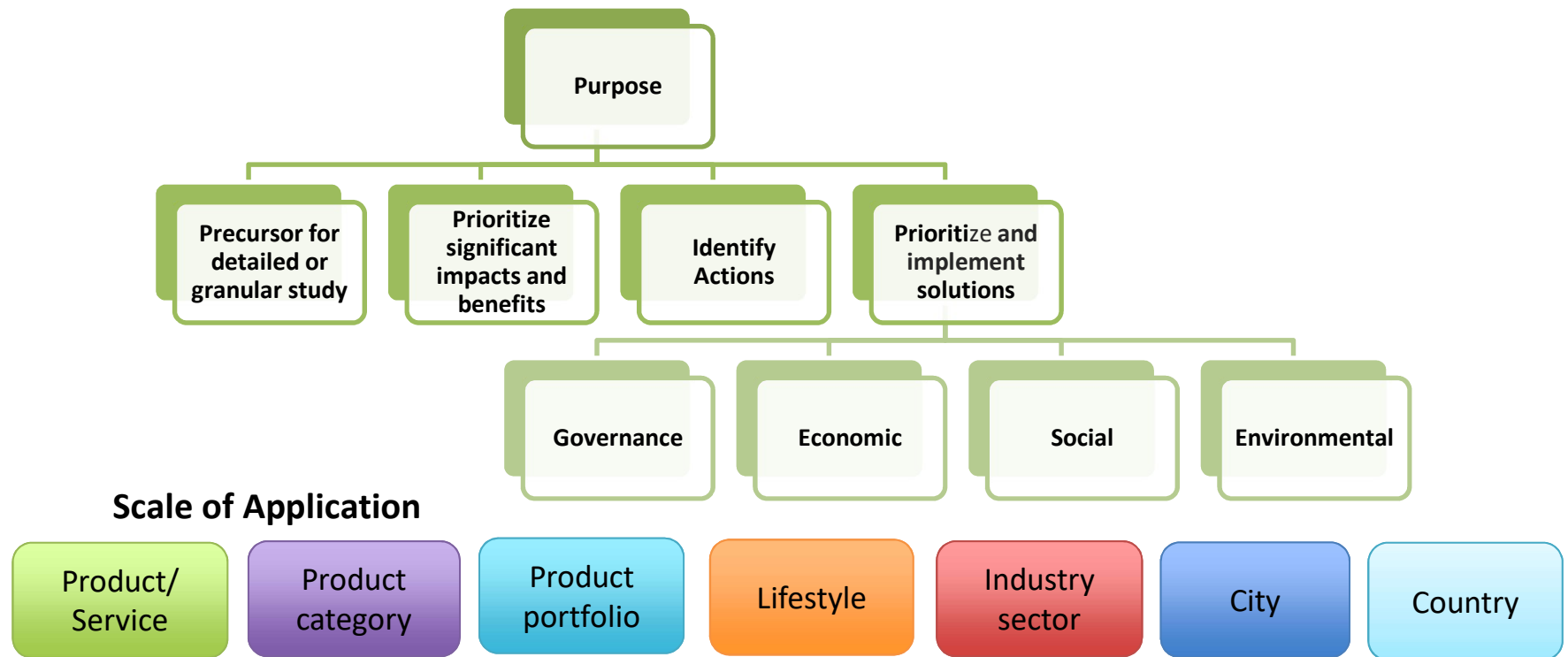
Who is expected to use this communication guidance?

→ This guidance is expected to be used by practitioners using the UNEP/SETAC LCI hotspots analysis methodological framework to drive change; and those wanting to commission a hotspots analysis study. This would include hotspots analysis methodology developers, pratitioners and life cycle experts, sustainability officers, academics, policy developers, marketing professionals, civic societies, trade associations and sector representable bodies, government departments, and agencies, etc.

How does this guidance fit with the hotspots analysis methodological framework?

→ Step 7 of the UNEP/SETAC LCI hotspots analysis methodology framework describes the basic process that users need to go through to ensure the efficient and effective use and communication of study findings to a wider audience. This communication guidance supports a number of steps in the methodological framework, providing specific guidance on the principles to be followed and best practice examples of how and who to communicate with to ensure that action is taken.

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What is Hotspots Analysis

"A **methodological** framework that allows for the **rapid assimilation and analysis** of a **range of information sources**, including **life cycle** based and **market** information, **scientific** research, **expert** opinion and **stakeholder** concerns". (UNEP 2014)

Purpose

- Precursor for detailed or granular study
- Prioritize significant impacts and benefits
- Identify Actions
- Prioritize and implement solutions
  - Governance
  - Economic
  - Social
  - Environmental

Scale of Application

| Product/ Service | Product category | Product portfolio | Lifestyle | Industry sector | City | Country |

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How is Hotspots Analysis being applied?

Priority Products
Focusing on the products that matter by virtue of their impact and / or sales volumes

Pathfinders & pilots
Real world product improvement programmes (pilots, working groups, industry implementation)

Value chain optimisation and resource efficiency
Tesco's global food loss and waste initiative

Sustainability Indices
From domestic appliances to public gardens

Water catchment management*
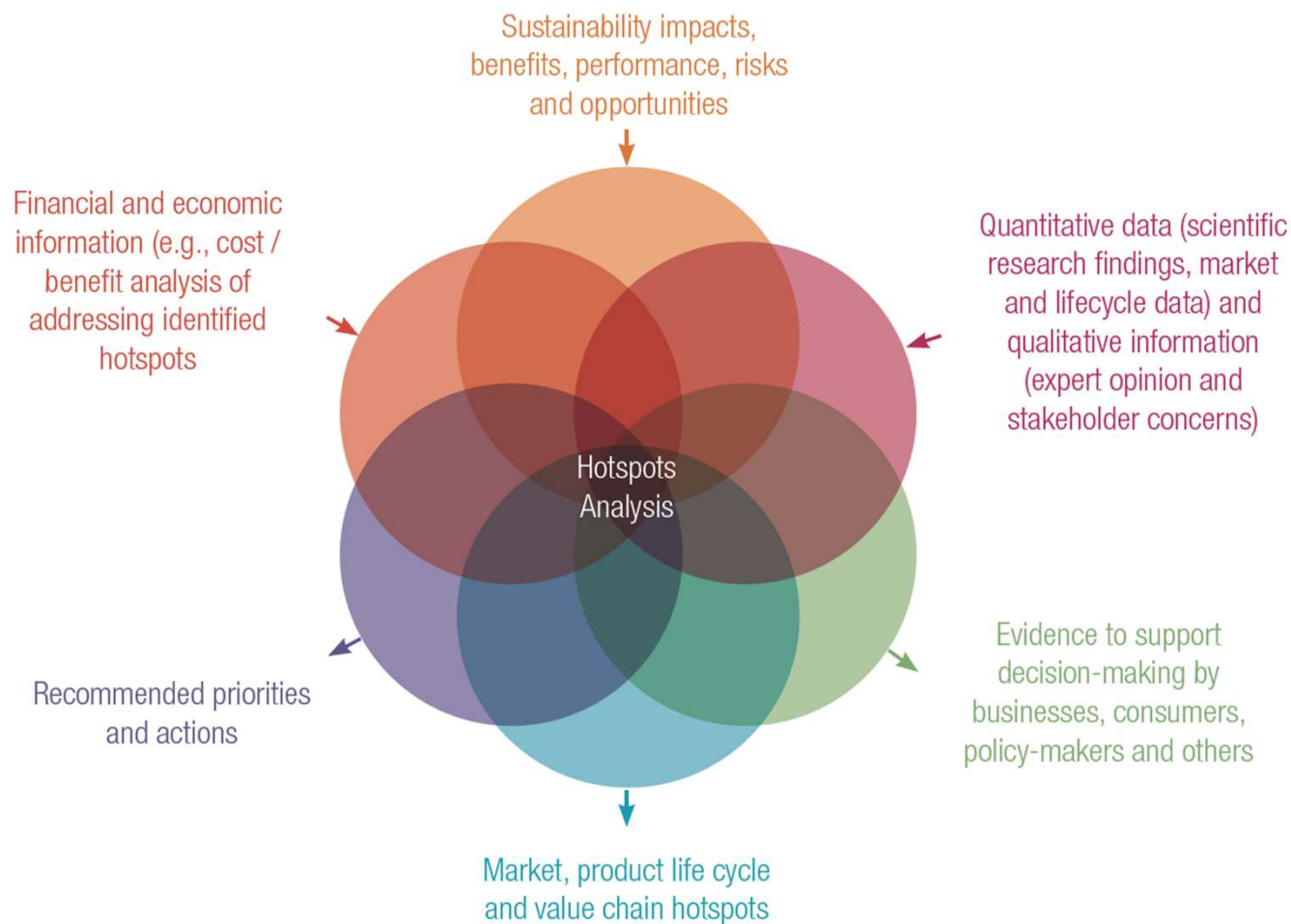Understanding water scarcity hotspots and water resource management

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*Greenhouses in San Agustin near Almería, Andalusia, Spain (36°42' N – 2°44' W) © Yann Arthus-Bertrand / Altitude

Sustainability impacts, benefits, performance, risks and opportunities

Financial and economic information (e.g., cost / benefit analysis of addressing identified hotspots

Quantitative data (scientific research findings, market and lifecycle data) and qualitative information (expert opinion and stakeholder concerns)

Hotspots Analysis

Recommended priorities and actions

Evidence to support decision-making by businesses, consumers, policy-makers and others

Market, product life cycle and value chain hotspots

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Target Audience(s)

Broader Audience

- Decision makers at NGOs
- Policy developers
- Government agencies
- Academics
- Companies
- Consumers
- Trade bodies

Target Audience

- Leadership and experts at NGOs
- Policy researchers and experts
- Govt officials responsible for policy development
- Academic experts and researchers
- Chief sustainability officers and expert team members
- Product/ service buyers
- Technical representatives at trade bodies

Technical Audience

- Technical representatives at NGOs / trade bodies
- Corporate teams – e.g. technical, sustainability, etc.
- Academics and research institutes
- Other subject matter experts – e.g. technical advisers
- Relevant government policy experts

Non Technical Audience

- Product, Category and Brand Managers
- Marketing personnel and advertisers
- Senior decision-makers (e.g. board members)
- Investors / donors
- B2B and B2C relationships

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Example from Hotspots Analysis: from information to action

Case Study: Environmental hotspots for a Household Cleaning Product

Hotspots identified

1) Raw materials: 5-7 high impact ingredients
2) Recyclability of pack - trigger assembly not recyclable
3) Product wastage: from inconsistent spray application / dosing

Action

1) Reformulation: chemical to algal surfactants

2) Recyclability: move to single polymer trigger

3) Reduce wastage: redesign nozzle / new dosage information

Communication vehicle

Internal & external communication*

Internal & external communication*

Internal communication, retailers and consumers *(on-pack & at point of sale)

Actors

Product developers & technologists / buyers/ suppliers

Product developers, suppliers, consumers

Product designers, suppliers, marketing team, consumers

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*Refer notes below for details

Example for Hotspots Analysis Communication- Product Category

TSC works at the product category level, using a hotspot methodology called the Sustainability Measurement and Reporting System. Below are the **different communication vehicles used to enable action** from the hotspots results (**Example: Dairy**)

Key Performance Indicators

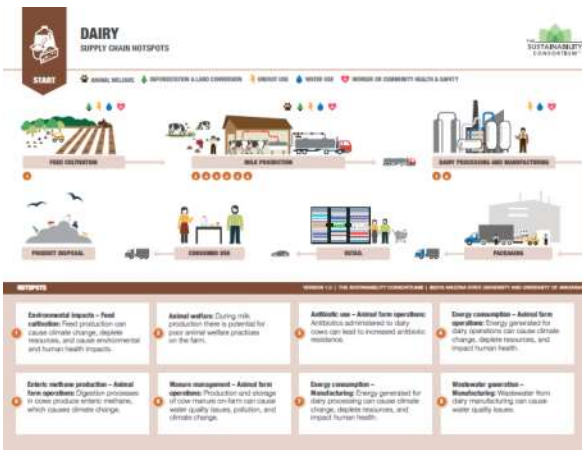**Audience**: Retailers; Brands / Tier 1 Suppliers

Sustainability Insights and Supply chain diagram

Audience: General public; Business users without sustainability expertise

Communication by business users: e.g. Walmart's Sustainability Leaders Badge

Audience: Consumers

General Considerations

A robust study with clearly defined scope can be used and communicated in many ways

Availability and clarity of underpinning data and information (including assumptions made and use of any proxy data)	**Clarity and transparency around the most material (relevant) and critical issues**	**Clarity and transparency on extent of expert / stakeholder engagement and consistency of feedback**
Diversity and level of inclusiveness of expert / stakeholder engagement process	**Geographical applicability and relevance of hotspots, data, information gathering and expert / stakeholder representation**	**Use of widely accepted methodology for hotspots analysis**

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Guiding Principles Overview

Life cycle approach

Reliability

Relevance

Clarity

Collaboration/ Engagement

Transparency

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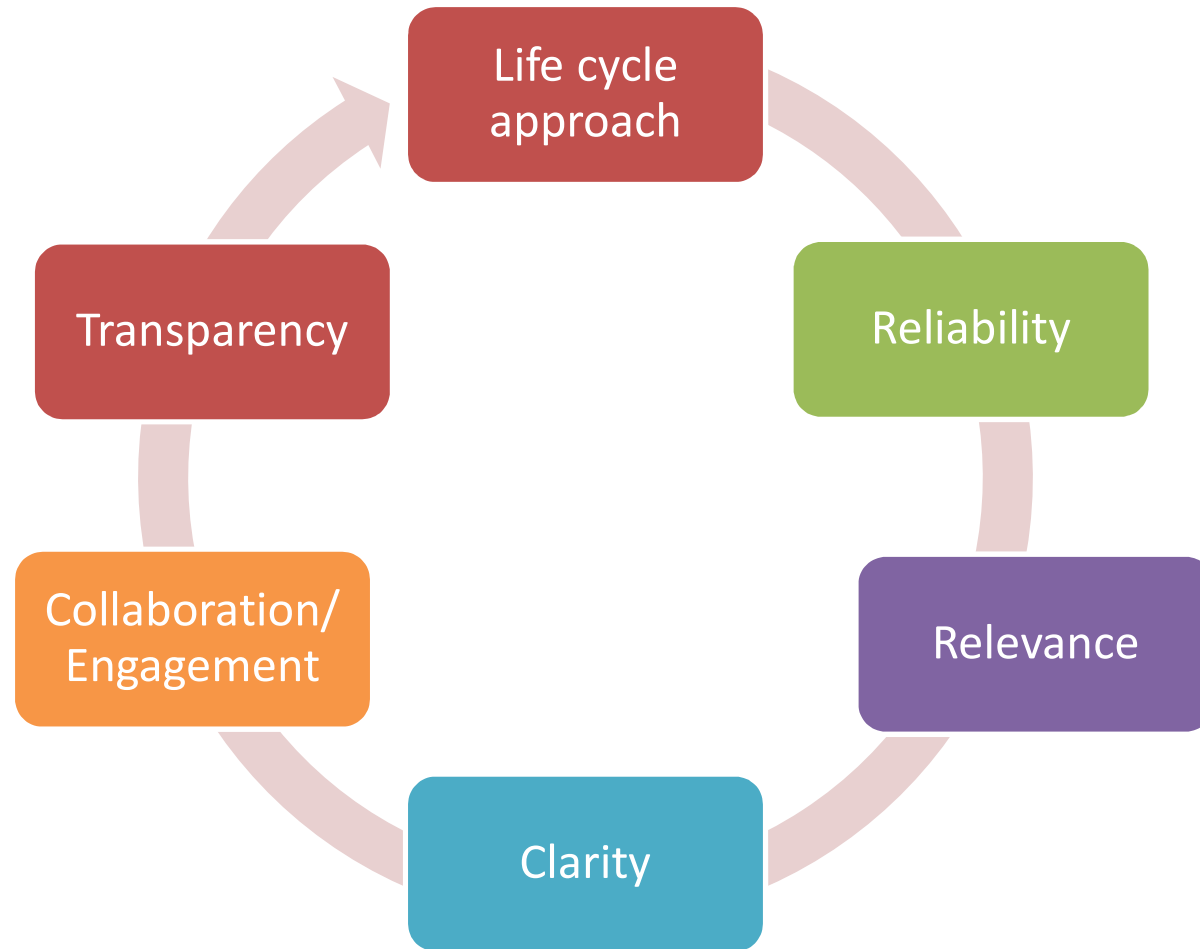
How to Read – Shall, Should and May

The principles described in this guidance uses **"shall"**, **"should"** and **"may"** to **distinguish** between **requirements and recommendations**. The terminologies are based on ISO/TS 14072 and ISO 14044/ISO 14040 in that order.

→ **"Shall"** is used when this strength of obligation is also required in the aforementioned guidance documents

→ **"Should"** is used to identify recommended elements that can be disregarded with proper justification.

→ **"May"** is used for other allowed elements or alternatives.

Each of the guiding principles have a **mandatory (shall) element (sub-aspect)** to them. **Some also have discretionary/optional sub-aspects (should/may)** that are **intended** to **illustrate best practice** or offer **useful examples** on how a given principle can be met.

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Guiding Principles (a)

Guiding principles: a. Life Cycle Approach

Sub Aspects	What it means/ example
The user shall ensure that the information provided reflects impacts / hotspots from all life cycle stages	Information provided shall be material to the shortlisted hotspots identified and acknowledge that there are / may be hotspots in other phases of the lifecycle
The user shall use whole value chain thinking	May specify where the hotspot is physically located; and with relevant stakeholders, communication shall include the best ways or actors to address it (ensuring the 'actionability' of information provided)

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Guiding Principles (b)

Guiding principles: b. Reliability

Sub Aspects	What it means/ example
Information communicated shall be supported by a clear statement of the level of confidence in the study findings	E.g. quality and completeness of underlying data and information that forms the basis of the study / communication
Users shall ensure that the hotspots methodology used and the way it is applied is appropriate to the way in which information is likely to be communicated	E.g. if the study is not suitable for comparing sectors or products, it should not be used or communicated in such a way
Data quality should reflect the goal and scope of the study and any intended use or communication of findings	Communications should reflect the currency, accuracy and temporal / geographical scope of the underlying study data

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Guiding Principles (c)

Guiding principles: c. Relevance

Sub Aspects	What it means/ example
Information* shall be relevant to the scope, actions and solutions identified to address each hotspot	Information* provided shall support/ be supported by the findings of the study e.g. if a shortlisted hotspot exists at end of life, guidance should be provided to help consumers dispose of – or recycle - a product responsibly
The information* provided from study findings shall be relevant and appropriate to the scale of application, system or situation in which it will be used	E.g. information* from a hotspots study on large scale farming in Europe is unlikely to provide a lot of relevant information for produce from a small-scale farm in Latin America; and therefore care should be taken in how it is used

*Information should reflect positive & negative aspects of sector or product performance to enable a reasoned assessment of overall performance.

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Guiding Principles (d)

Guiding principles: d. Clarity

Sub Aspects	What it means/ example
Information provided shall be commensurated with the level of confidence in the study findings to support effective decision-making and facilitate action by all relevant stakeholders	Information derived from the study shall be structured in a way that is actionable and provides sufficient context for informed decision-making by technical and non-technical audiences. The use of visualisation (e.g. info-graphics / decision-trees) in support of textual information can support this objective
Clarity shall be provided on sources used to provide the information including exclusions, assumptions and proxies etc. Sources for the information shall be clearly referenced	The target audience should be able to substantiate the information they receive. Any exclusions, assumptions, models and proxies used should be clearly stated to provide clarity and transparency to the target audience and allow for informed decision-making. This would include the sources used to provide information, including the level of confidence that the source provides in relation to the hotspot and the (range of) actions that could be used to address it

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Guiding Principles (e)

Guiding principles: e. Collaboration

Sub Aspects	What it means/ example
The type of stakeholders involved, extent of collaboration and feedback shall be considered in planning communications (this may involve consideration of the percentage of the market represented in any stakeholder engagement undertaken during the study)*	E.g. national/ sector representation including stakeholders that represent the most impactful/ actionable life cycle phases. This may include SMEs, academics, corporates, NGOs, etc. Frequency of meetings / consultations with stakeholders; and effectiveness of feedback process e.g. include medium and process to accept or reject feedback.
The most appropriate communications vehicle to use and disseminate the study findings should be considered in planning communications	Issues such as geography, language, mobility and technology should be considered in selecting any communication vehicle e.g. face-to-face meetings, launch events, workshops, webinars or telephone calls; written actions required
The most appropriate feedback mechanisms should be considered for users of the information being communicating to / with	E.g. website, on-line or telephone surveys, email addresses, telephone contact number / enquiry line

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*NOTE: as an example, the EU Environmental Footprinting methodology requires more than 50% of a market to be involved in a study.

Guiding Principles (f)

Guiding principles: f. Transparency

Sub Aspects	What it means/ example
The type of stakeholders involved, extent of engagement and collaboration; and volume and consistency of feedback provided during the hotspots analysis study shall be clearly communicated	e.g. involvement of SMEs, academics, corporates, NGOs, consumer groups, etc. during the study. Meeting intervals with stakeholders, feedback process e.g. include medium and process to accept or reject feedback. Any confidentiality issues should be understood and addressed
The sources and context for study reference materials relating to the information provided shall be transparent to those receiving the information	The sources, context and reliability of the study materials relating to any information provided should be accurately described to ensure that it is useful and credible to end users – e.g. list of published/open/easily accessible materials used in support of communications. Any confidentiality issues should be understood and addressed

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Validation of Hotspots Analysis information & communication

Developing steps and a process for validating: a) the information to be communicated to stakeholders; and b) the most effective communications vehicle for the audience, improves the chances of successful communication and the effectiveness of any actions

On-line / phone surveys, social media, etc.

M&S – Think 30 degrees campaign, lower temperature / impact washing

Use of hot water is identified as a hotspot for clothes and laundry detergents

Cotton

3. Validation of impact of communication from the target audience - Done by HSA experts, market researchers, relevant authorities

2. Validation of communication vehicle and visualization for communication and action - Done by HSA experts, relevant authorities, communication experts and infographic designers

1. Technical validation that ensures the information reflects key findings - Done by HSA experts, academics, relevant authorities, NGOs, scientific researchers

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Visualisation of Hotspots Analysis (1)

General principles on visualisation of hotspots analysis

1. **Be clear about the** scope and context of information you are visualising
2. Be accurate (not misleading / no potential for misinterpretation)
3. Be clear in language (use of plain, unambiguous language, no jargon)
4. Use relevant and easy to understand imagery
5. Be explicit about the meaning of any symbol, acronym or image used
6. Provide link or source to obtain more information that can be substantiated

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Visualisation of Hotspots Analysis (2)

Protein Scorecard

	FOOD	IMPACT (GHG emissions per gram of protein)	COST (Retail price per gram of protein)
LOW	Wheat		$
	Corn		$
	Beans, chickpeas, lentils		$
	Rice		$
	Fish		$$$
	Soy		$
	Nuts		$$$
	Eggs		$$
MEDIUM	Poultry		$$
	Pork		$$
	Dairy (milk, cheese)		$$
HIGH	Beef		$$$
	Lamb & goat		$$$

Lighter shade shows emissions from agricultural production, darker shade shows emissions from land-use change.
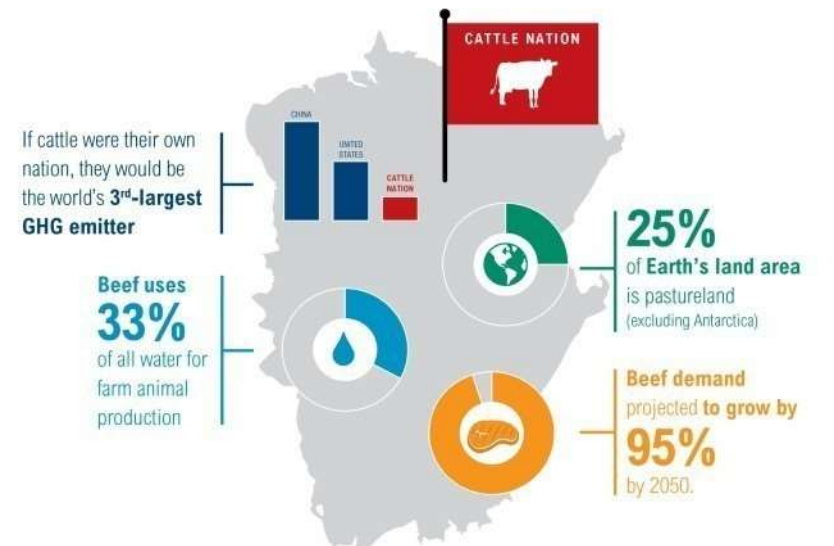
Sources: GlobAgri-WRR model developed by CIRAD, Princeton University, INRA, and WRI (GHG data); USDA and BLS (2016) (US retail price data).

www.wri.org/proteinscorecard   WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Beef Creates a Huge Environmental Footprint

✓ Clear language, no ambiguity
✓ Explicit about meaning of the symbol used
✓ Clarity in scope
✓ Link available for more information

✓ Relevant and easy to understand imagery
✓ Clarity in scope
✓ Language is simple to understand
✓ Link available for more information

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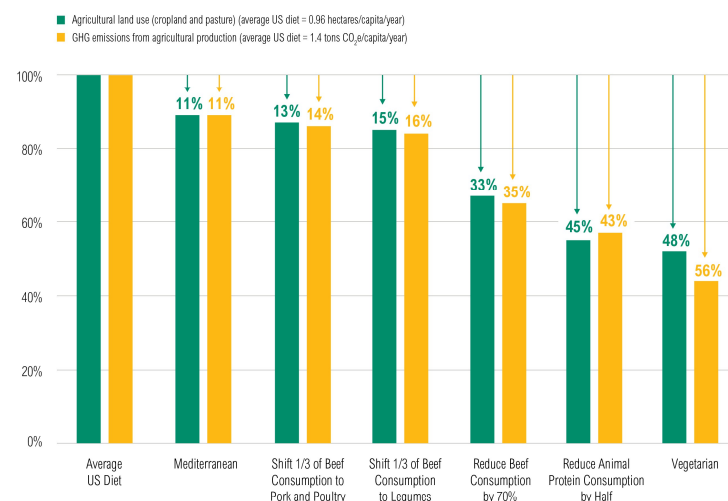
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Visualisation of Hotspots Analysis (3)

The Shift Wheel: Changing Consumer Purchasing

wri.org/shiftingdiets

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Shifting High Consumers' Diets Can Greatly Reduce Per Person Land Use and GHG Emissions

- Agricultural land use (cropland and pasture) (average US diet = 0.96 hectares/capita/year)
- GHG emissions from agricultural production (average US diet = 1.4 tons CO_2e/capita/year)

wri.org/shiftingdiets

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✓ Action oriented
✓ Language- easy to understand
✓ Clarity in scope
✓ Link available for more information

✓ Scenarios communicated clearly
✓ Imagery simple to understand- no ambiguity
✓ Clarity in scope
✓ Link available for more information

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Visualisation of Hotspots Analysis (4)

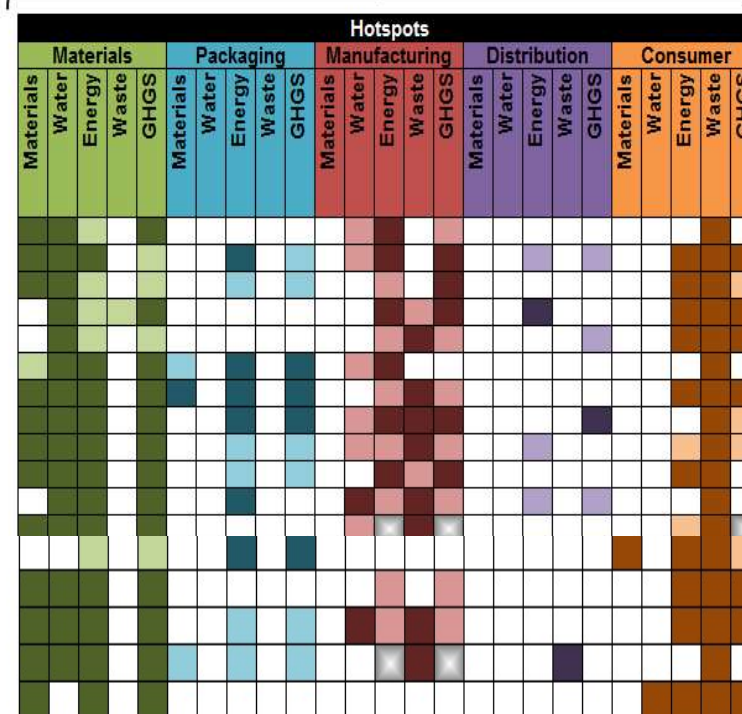**Grocery Sector Map**

Sector total estimates developed by PSF research partners. Dashes denote where no impact data is available

Primary (darker) and secondary (lighter) hotspots for each life cycle stage

Product	Product Mass (000 tonnes)	GHG Emissions (000 tCO2e)	Energy (000 GJ)	Total Water Footprint (000 million litres)
Milk	5134	10501	55	1831
Carbonates	3144	3062	22	967
Dilutables	2280	2221	-	1529
Bread & Rolls	2001	3121	30	731
Potatoes	1635	1923	16	121
Juices	1101	2457	28	616
Ready Meals (chilled & frozen)	912	6540	17	-
Beer	827	801	7	283
Poultry, fresh & frozen	815	4081	36	1215
Potato crisps	812	2421	11	220
Wine	767	2252	22	399
Pork (fresh & frozen)	762	5320	34	2801
Deodorants	91	450	-	-
Tea	90	628	7	627
Coffee	59	7773	5	1663
Pre-packed sandwiches	46	152	-	5
Laundry powder detergents	37	94	-	-

Please note: this document is correct as of 1 August 2014

Likely hotspot, no data identified

✓ Clarity in scope, data applicability and limitations identified

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Linkages to UN SDGs

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
(Global Goals For Sustainable Development)

Consider linking the actions taken to reduce the impact of hotspots to the appropriate UN SDG for Communication and Visualization

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Alignment of this Communication Guidance with the 10YFP CI-SCP Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information*

Title	Guidelines for Providing Product Sustainability Information	Hotspots Analysis Communication Guidance
Purpose	International guidance for reliable sustainability information and product-related communications and claims.	Use and communication of information derived from hotspots analysis and the communication of results to those actors best placed to take action to address hotspots
Target audience	Information providers and 'watchdogs', such as producers and retailers, marketing professionals, procurers, governments, market surveillance bodies, NGOs, as well as labelling bodies.	Direct and indirect, technical and non-technical audiences depending on the goal and scope of hotspots analysis. e.g. Chief Sustainability Officers, product developers, marketing professionals, government bodies, civil society groups, policy makers, etc.
Main difference in approaches to underlying principles	Life Cycle Thinking is an underlying/ encouraged principle, not mandatory. Relevance (covering significant aspects, i.e. hotspots) is required	Life Cycle Thinking is a required principle
Application	Products (goods and services)	Products, product categories, sectors of the economy, city-scale, national-level
Visualisation principles	Not covered yet	Covered – including best practice examples
Principles alignment	Principle are aligned in context with the purpose	Principles are aligned in context with the purpose

Additional references & sources

Additional references and sources of information:

→ ISEAL (2015b). Building demand for sustainable commodities. How brands and retailers are engaging domestic markets in Brazil, China and India (London: ISEAL Alliance)

→ Green Claims Guidance (2011) DEFRA

→ Mikael Klintman (2015). A Review of Public Policies Relating to the Use of Environmental Labelling and Information Schemes (ELIS)

→ The Consumer Ombudsman Norway (2009). The Consumer Ombudsman's Guidelines on the Use of Environmental and Ethical Claims in Marketing (Norway)

→ ISO (2000). ISO 14020:2000 Environmental labels and declarations – General Principles (Geneva: International Organization for Standardization)

→ United Nations (2003). United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection.

→ 10YFP CI-SCP Guidelines for providing product sustainability information (forthcoming).

→ http://www.isealalliance.org/infographic/iseals-credibility-principles

→ https://www.greenbiz.com/article/case-sustainable-food-system-12-charts

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Additional references & sources (2)

Additional references and sources of information:

→ Code of Advertising and Marketing (ICC, 2011),

→ Environmental Footprint Guide (European Commission, 2013)

→ European Meta Study on Environmental Information Guidelines (DG Justice, 2015),

→ ISO 14021 (ISO, 2000)

→ Five Universal Truths "Challenge the label" (ISEAL, 2015b)

→ OECD (Mikael Klintman, 2015)

→ GENICES – Member Guide (GEN, n.n.)

→ Claims or fair eco-advertising in Practice (CENIA, 2010)

→ Credibility Principles (ISEAL, 2013)

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Contacts

To learn more about the Life Cycle Initiative, please refer to
www.lifecycleinitiative.org

Contact: **info@lifecycleinitiative.org**

To learn more about the 10YFP Consumer Information Programme for Sustainable Consumption and Production, please refer to
http://www.scpclearinghouse.org/consumer-information-scp

Contact: **ciscp@unep.org**

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