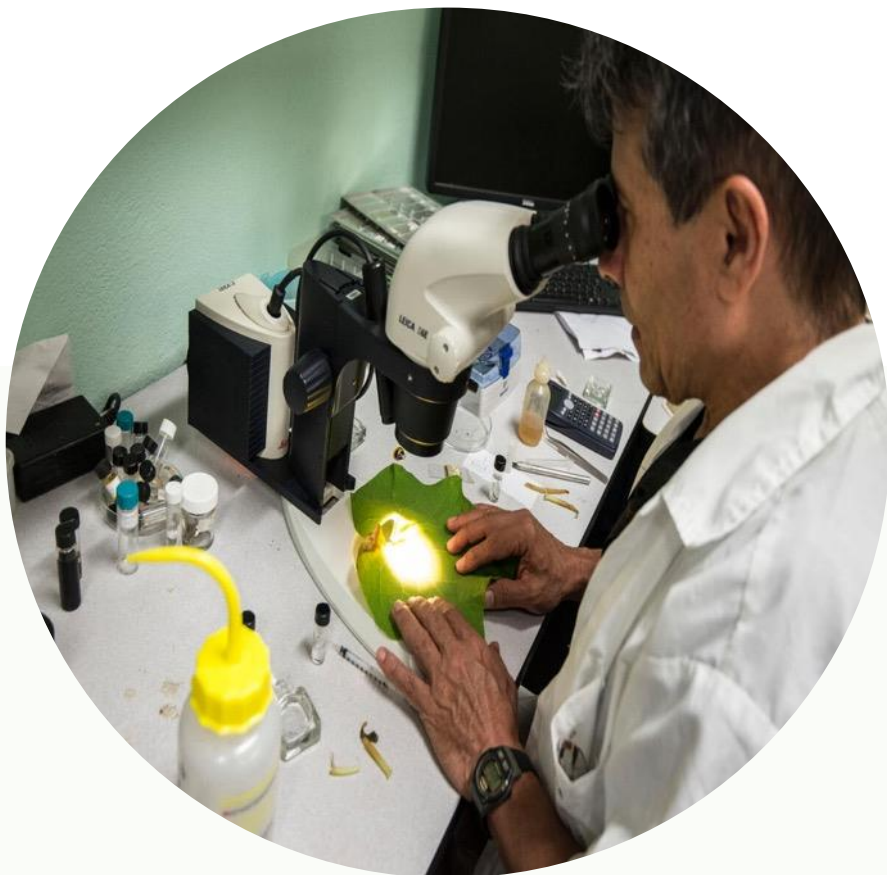Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Generating evidence for sustainability and resilience

in the tropical fruit sector

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What will we discuss today?

✅ How MEL can support tropical fruit value chains to **become more resilient and sustainable.**

✅ The steps tropical fruit businesses can take to **start developing a MEL system**

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of the United Nations

Why this guide?

✓ To help value chain stakeholders **enhance** the sustainability and resilience of their operations based on evidence

✓ **Fill a gap** in MEL for tropical fruit businesses

✓ To support tropical fruit businesses to **comply** with market regulations (e.g. due diligence)

✓ To **advance** sustainability and resilience in tropical fruit value chains

What is monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) for business?

MEL is the process of **collecting data** on **business' performance** to make **informed decisions** that will ultimately **improve their operations**.

When focused on **resilience** and **sustainability**, MEL helps businesses measure their:

✅ a) **positive impact** on environmental, social and economic wellbeing (**sustainability**).

✅ b) ability to **withstand, adapt to, and recover** from various shocks, stresses and risks (**resilience**).

Each component has a different purpose:

Monitoring (M)

Continuous assessment of the activity implemented by your business.

"How do you know that your activities are happening the way the business planned?"

Evaluation (E)

Deeper, objective assessment of the achievements of your activities or programmes.

"Are the interventions contributing to a business' resilience and sustainability goals?"

Learning (L)

Translate M&E findings into knowledge to improve and/or develop new activities.

"What and how should a business improve based on the new information?"

Part 2.
Why is MEL important to the resilience and sustainability of tropical fruit businesses?

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

MEL supports:

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- Establishing **mechanisms and metrics** to identify risks, track progress and measure impact.

- **Creating a plan** to address current and future risks (risk-based DD).

- **Learning** from results.

- **Evidence generation** that back up sustainability claims and reporting.

- **Accountability** and **transparency**.

MEL contributes directly to **responsible business conduct (RBC)** and **due diligence** required by international markets

Communicate results | 5 | 1 | Commit to RBC

Track results | 4 | Five-step due diligence framework | 2 | Identify and prioritize risks

3 | Cease, remedy, prevent, mitigate

Incorporate:

- Meaningful engagement with stakeholders
- A gender perspective into due diligence
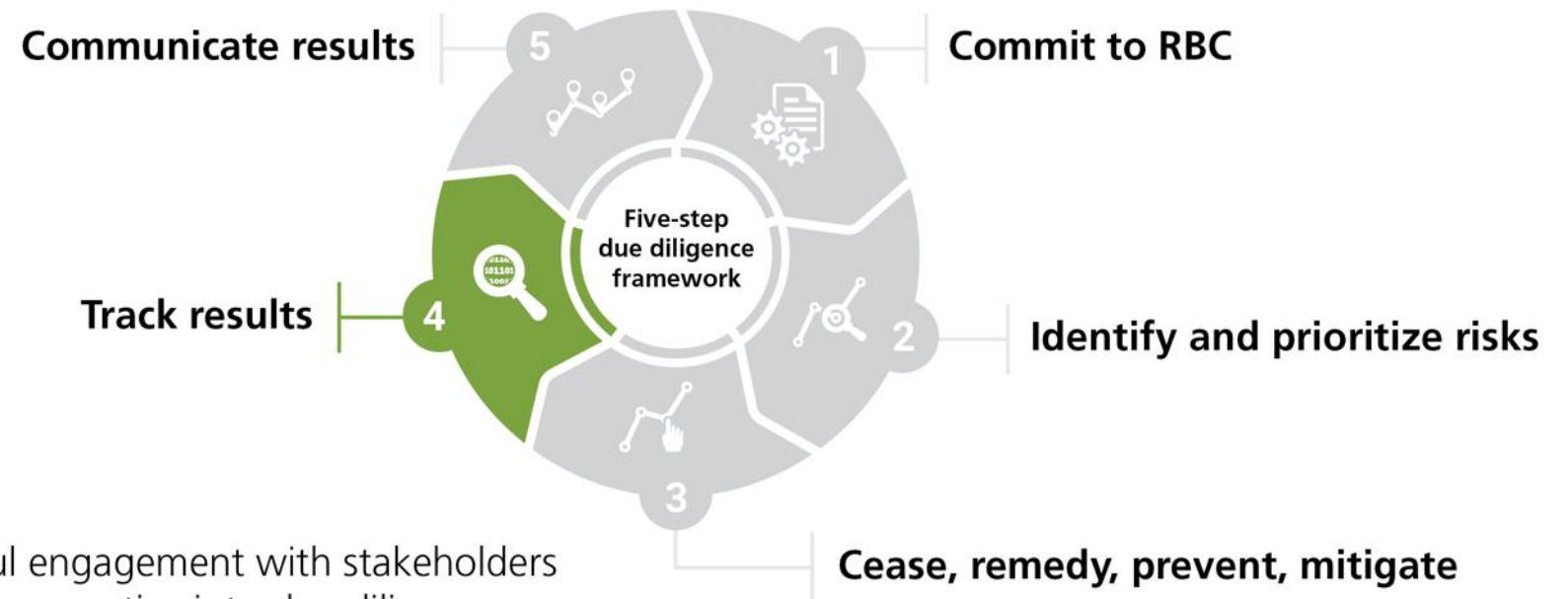
Key aspects to consider when designing a MEL system:

Design your MEL system **before** starting any activities.

Include MEL in your **budget**.

Engage senior management and key staff to align objectives and improve decision-making.

Assign clear responsibilities for tracking activities and results across the business.

Ensure **traceability** of the business processes and activities.

Understand **stakeholder information needs** to generate useful information only.

⚠️ Note!

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Your MEL system for sustainability and resilience building activities should be **fully connected to the business' own priorities.**

The **capacity** and **resources** of the business also impact its development. **MEL activities should build on existing processes**!
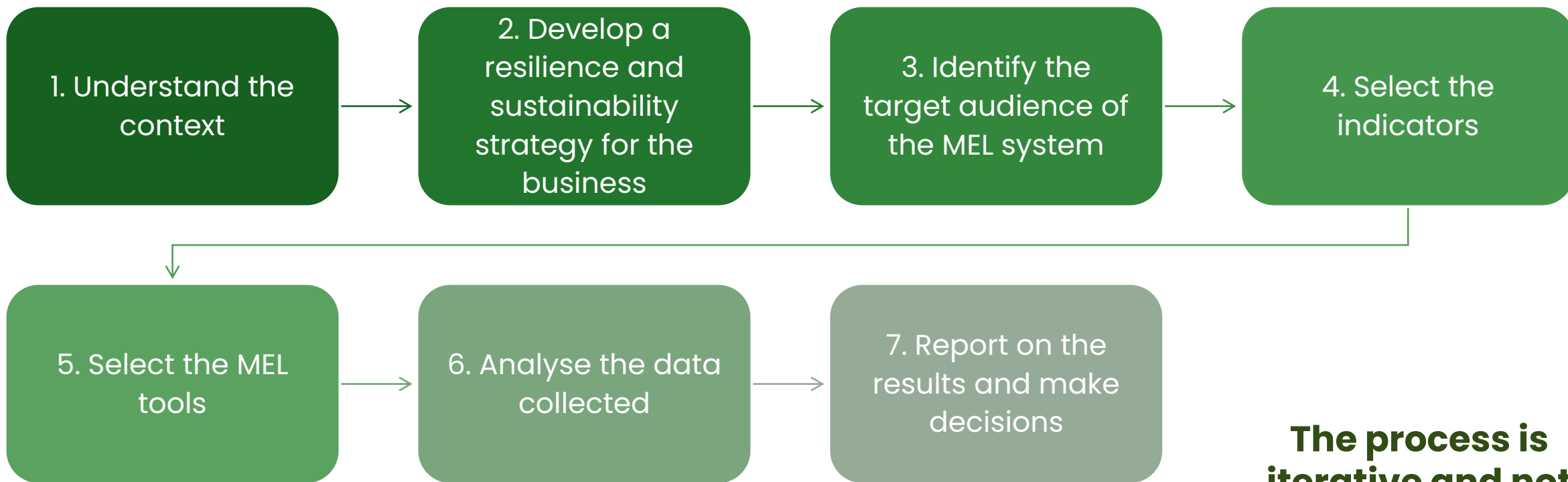

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Part 3.
Putting MEL into practice

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Step 1. Understand the context

Analyse the environmental and socioeconomic situation in which the main business activities evolve, including:
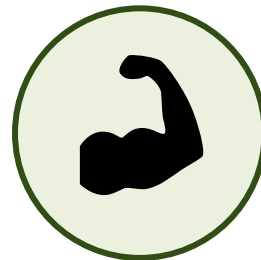
Main risks impacting the operations.

Operations and people exposed to the risks.

Timing of the risks.

Capacity of the business to address the risks.
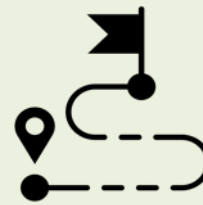
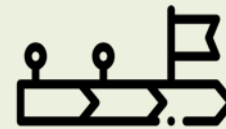# **Step 2.** Develop a resilience and sustainability strategy for your business

The strategy lays out what the business **wants to achieve** and **how it will get there**:

- Set out resilience and sustainability short- and long-term goals.

- Define how to achieve the goals (activities, actions, programmes, etc.)

Theory of change (ToC)

Logical framework (log frame)

How to build a resilience and sustainability strategy?

Designed in reverse order!

4. Define the activities

3. Set the outputs (short-term targets)

2. Define the outcomes (mid-term targets)

1. Set the resilience and sustainability goal

What actions are you taking/implementing to deliver the outputs?
(Fully controlled by the business!)

What is your business doing to achieve the outcomes?

What needs to happen to reach your goal?

What do you want to ultimately achieve?
(NOT Fully controlled by the business!)

Shocks, stresses and risks
Populations or landscapes benefited from the strategy

Let's take this example of Company's A goal:

Company A's goal

*"In the next decade – despite **extreme weather events** – the company will consolidate its position in national and international markets, by **offering safe**, **healthy** and **sustainably produced** fruits, increasing the **profitability of growers** and **wellbeing of all workers**."*

What **short- and mid-term steps** and **activities** are necessary for Company A to achieve this goal?

Example (continued)

4. Define the activities	3. Set the outputs	2. Define the outcomes	1. Goal
• Training of farmers on IPM • Purchase of inputs with lower chemical load • Seminar delivered on phytosanitary regulations and MRL	By 2025, at least 50 % of producers have reduced the use of agrochemicals by 15 % of annual consumption.	By 2030, at least 30 % of all fruit grown and sourced by the company is produced using sustainable agricultural practices.	*"In the next decade – despite **extreme weather events** – the company will consolidate its position in international markets, by **offering safe** and **sustainably produced** fruits, increasing the **profitability of growers** and **wellbeing of all workers**."*

Extreme weather events and stricter environmental and social regulations in markets
Beneficiaries: the business, company growers and workers

Notes:
IPM=Integrated pest management; MRL=maximum residue limits

Step 3. Identify the target audience of your MEL system

Identify and prioritize the stakeholders who will use the information and learning generated through your MEL system.

Internal users

Those with a high stake in the business activities and who make decisions.

Ex: board of directors, senior management, divisional directors, and local communities (if applicable).
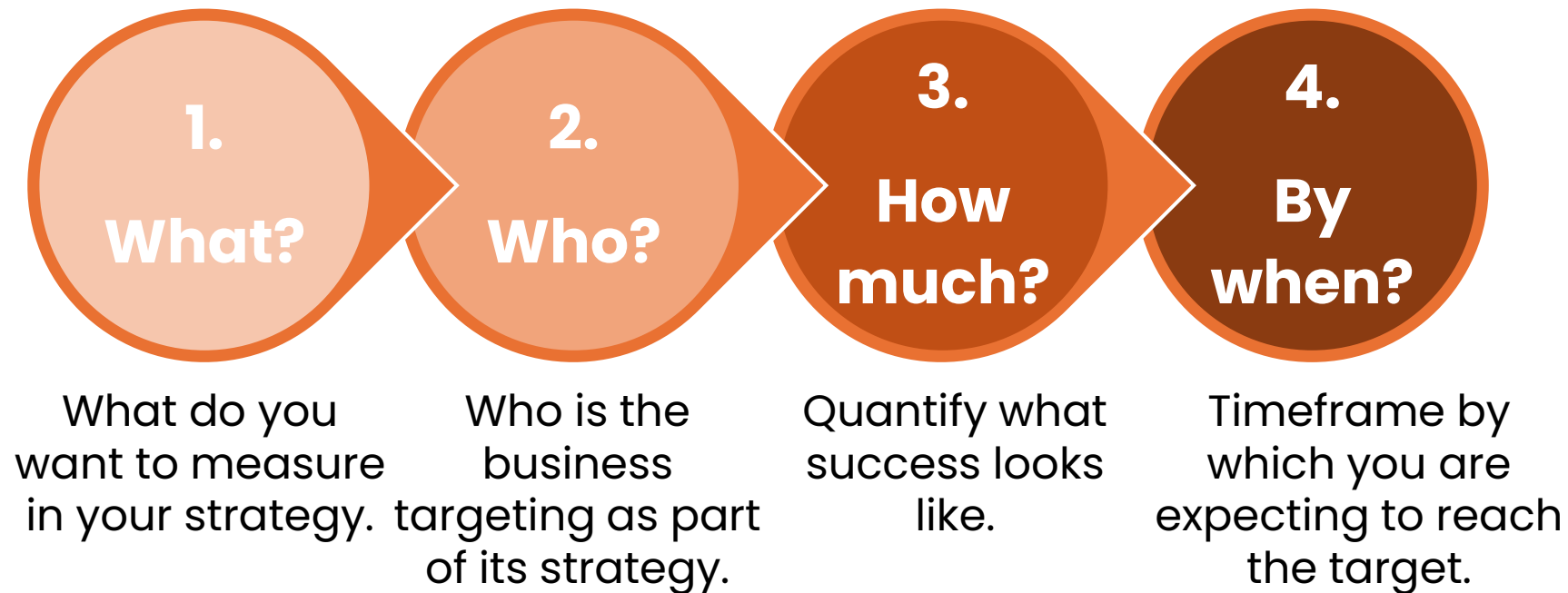
External users

Those not directly engaged with the business but with an interest in its activities.

Ex: importing companies, consumers, service providers, retailers, certification bodies, policymakers, researchers, etc.

Step 4. Select the indicators

How to define them?

1.
What?

2.
Who?

3.
How much?

4.
By when?

What do you want to measure in your strategy.

Who is the business targeting as part of its strategy.

Quantify what success looks like.

Timeframe by which you are expecting to reach the target.

Indicators should generate **consistent** results and track **progress** under the **same conditions over time**!

Let's take this example:

Company A's short-term goal (output):

By 2027, all farmers and growers have increased their efficiency in water use for irrigation.
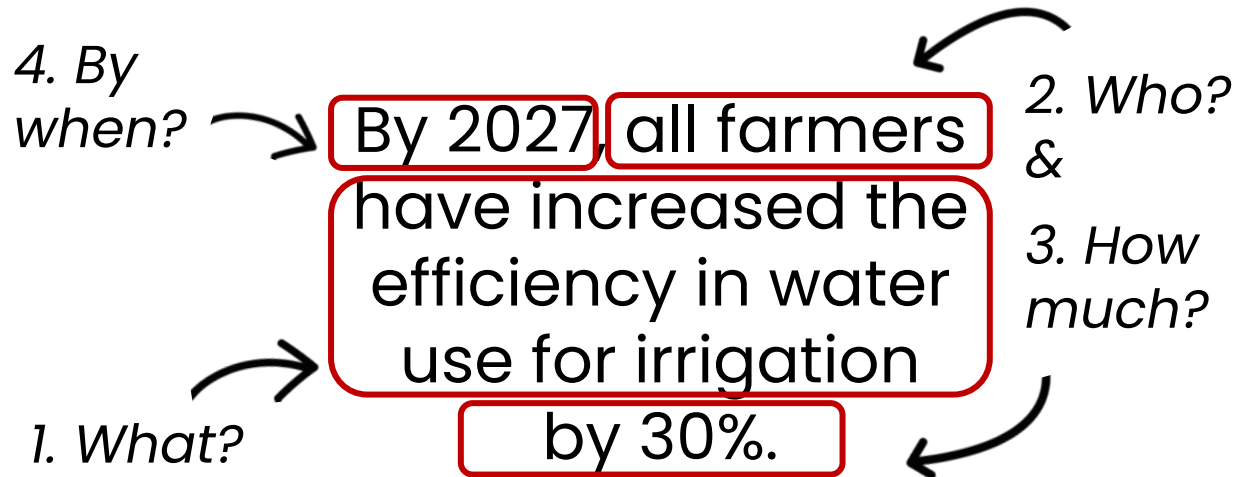
The indicator(s) needs to:

a) measure if **company farmers and external growers** improved their efficiency in water used for irrigation.

b) **inform** due diligence and certification **requirements**.

Example (continued)

Company's output:

4. By when?

2. Who? &

By 2027, all farmers have increased the efficiency in water use for irrigation by 30%.

3. How much?

1. What?

Indicators:

1. Number of farmers with high-water efficiency irrigation systems and/or using good water management practices

   → *Measures quantity of farmers*

2. Water used for irrigation per hectare

   → *Quantifies water used (aligned with certification requirements)*

Step 5. Select the MEL tools and collect data

Instruments to generate data to measure indicators.
- Surveys, lab tests, reports, check lists, interviews, geospatial information, etc.

How to select them?

✓ Identify the **type and size** of the implemented activity (e.g. individual, plot, watershed).

✓ Define the **complexity and accuracy** of information required.

✓ Set a **budget.**

✓ **Focus on the actual data needs of the business!**

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Step 6. Analyse the data

Why analyse data?

To get insights on **what has worked** and what has not worked in the strategy

To **facilitate learning** and enable strategy and operational adjustments.

To **guide decision-making**, including investment decisions.

… without a proper analysis of the results, the time and resources devoted to developing the strategy and collecting data will be wasted.

Step 7. Report on the results and make decisions

Focus on:

✅ **Identifying and communicating what worked well** according to the strategy and commitments (e.g. certifications, pledges to comply with international standards).

❌ **Highlighting the bottlenecks** encountered and **specify areas needing improvement** to enhance the sustainability and resilience.

⚠️ **Important:**

- **It needs to be done in good faith**; ensure transparency, accuracy, consistency and completeness, and avoid greenwashing.
- **Full data disclosure isn't mandatory** if it threatens commercial confidentiality or security.

Step 7. Report on the results and make decisions (continued)

Resources to structure a sustainability report in the context of sustainability and RBC:

- **The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) 13:** Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fishing Sectors standards.

- The **European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive** (CSRD) guidance to report on social and environmental information.

- **European Sustainability Reporting Standards** (ESRS).

- **UN Global Compact's Communication** on progress guidebook.

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Step 7. Report on the results and make decisions (continued)

- The **Carbon Disclosure Project** for climate change, forests and water security impacts.

- The **Sustainability Disclosure Standards**.

- The **Accountability Framework Initiative's** Operational Guidance on Reporting, Disclosure and Claims.

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Thank you!

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