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CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL SAFETY ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE SÉCURITÉ AGRICOLE

Relevance of Agricultural Health & Safety in Sustainability

Executive Summary

Tatonga

CONSULTING GROUP



**Sustainable Canadian
Agricultural Partnership**

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Canada 

Executive Summary

The Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) conducted initial research to determine the relevance of agricultural health and safety in sustainability initiatives. CASA would like to develop a position on health and safety inclusion in sustainability initiatives (standards) that impact grassroot suppliers, producers, and farmers across many sectors.

Sustainability includes Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practices. “People sustainability” refers to the practice of nurturing and maintaining the well-being, engagement, and development of individuals within an organization, including their health and safety. Organizations cannot be sustainable without protecting the safety, health, and welfare of their most vital resource: **people**.

Research completed for Phase I of this project indicates that several organizations and businesses have started down the path of compliance to global sustainability reporting standards. In Canadian agriculture, the sustainability programs mainly prioritize environmental practices, with little, to no information related to people or occupational health and safety.

The agriculture industry stakeholders highly value the health and safety of people, but health and safety programming does not always get to the top of the priority list. Initial indicators suggest that agricultural organizations are interested in standardizing health and safety measurements across Canada, as part of their sustainability programming, with caveats. Including health and safety measurements in sustainability standards needs to be easy, needs to harmonize with existing protocols and should not escalate the reporting requirements. Additionally, stakeholders want to be consulted in the development phase of the standard requirements.

CASA is in a unique position to bring Canadian agricultural segments together to agree on minimum requirements, to develop standardized measurements and to pace implementation. Standardized health and safety sustainability measurements will harmonize requirements, reduce redundancy and will promote the adoption of health and safety practices and standards across Canada to help protect the sustainability of our social commitment on the world stage.

Standard Research Inclusion

- Two global ESG organizations with established standards containing agricultural requirements were found during the research: Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). A new European Union standard and the Sustainable Beef Production Standard (SBPS) were also included in the research.
- Seven applicable SASB standards and two GRI standards were reviewed to identify requirements for all operational processes (upstream, midstream, and downstream) within the agricultural industry.
- Stakeholder groups involved in the survey included national commodity groups, Canadian Agricultural health and safety associations, and key companies and organizations in the Canadian agricultural industry.

Key Findings

- A total of thirteen requirements (six within the Agricultural Products Standard and seven within the Meat/Poultry/Dairy Standard) were identified during review of SASB standards. A total of forty-six health and safety requirements were identified during the review of GRI Standards. Three health and safety requirements were identified in the Sustainable Beef Production Standard.
- Publicly available ESG reports for nine stakeholders were reviewed for alignment with SASB and GRI sustainability standards. All nine companies met less than 50% of the health and safety requirements for both SASB and GRI.

National Commodity Group Key Findings

- Six national commodity groups representing multiple segments within the agriculture industry, participated in this research project.
- Some commodity groups have developed ESG standards and/or occupational health and safety requirements for members of their association.
- Any current occupational health and safety requirements provide little insight into how health and safety management systems are being implemented and measured internally.
- Requirements are not aligned with international occupational health and safety sustainability standards.
- A common challenge observed by commodity groups is securing farmer support and buy-in for sustainability, health and safety programming. Producers of some agricultural commodities already have multiple standards, requirements and

paperwork to comply with and may, therefore, be reluctant to add any more requirements or paperwork.

- Commodity groups are cautiously interested in the concept of including health and safety in sustainability standards if it does not add reporting burden to their members.
- 100% of the participants within the national commodity groups are interested in participating in future phases of the CASA sustainability project.

Agricultural Health and Safety Association Key findings:

- Four key agricultural health and safety associations participated in the market research activity for this project.
- Each association supports farmers using their own version of health and safety objectives/goals/intentions.
- Agricultural health and safety associations face challenges getting buy-in from farmers for health and safety programs.
- Associations supported the concept of managing and measuring health and safety to a commodity-inclusive, Canadian industry standard.
- 100% of participants within the agricultural health and safety association group expressed interest in participating in future phases of the CASA sustainability project.

Key Company/Organization Key Findings:

- Seven key agricultural companies participated in the market research survey.
- 66% of the companies that participated demonstrated some alignment between their ESG/ Sustainability /Corporate reporting, and occupational health and safety requirements in international sustainability standards.
- All interviews articulated a strong focus on environmental initiatives for sustainability but indicated there are no mandated requirements to include occupational health and safety requirements within their sustainability/ESG/corporate reporting.
- Challenges were identified from global definitions not aligning with Canadian operations, causing reporting issues. Sustainability requirements need to be driven by financial stakeholders with consideration for Canadian business environments.
- 100% of the participants within the company/organization are interested in participating in future phases of the CASA sustainability project.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of Phase I of the Relevance of Agricultural Health and Safety in Sustainability research project, the following recommendations are presented:

1. Phase II Project Components

- Implement the next phases of the CASA Sustainability Project, completing further evaluation of sustainability standards and initiated sustainability programs in the agriculture sector within the Canadian context.
- Facilitate wide-spread, active participation across all segments during the development of health and safety sustainability measurement programs. Consult grass roots agriculture to establish unified sustainability assessment criteria.
- Harmonize health and safety sustainability reporting requirements/standards across Canada (and among programs) to help producers/agricultural companies avoid redundant requirements. Pave the way for seamless inclusion of health and safety in agricultural sustainability programming.
- Simplify and standardize the reporting process for health and safety sustainability measurement to encourage active participation.
- Promote the development of templates and standard forms that can be used as “starter documents” that will simplify the process for interested stakeholders.

2. Communication Messaging

- Establish CASA as the centre of excellence for the standardization of sustainability health and safety evaluation models for the Canadian agricultural industry. CASA will bring the stakeholders together and help facilitate the ease of including health and safety in agricultural sustainability.
- Educate on the rationalization for, and value of, including health and safety in sustainability. Explain how sustainability programs that include health and safety contribute to the success of Canadian agricultural operations in the global economy.
- Build interest and support at the farm/ranch/producer levels by explaining the benefits to their operation.
- Build awareness about the industry-led, industry-wide approach to standardizing sustainability reporting. Diverse and inclusive sustainability standard development will promote consistency across the industry, avoid redundancy and build buy-in.

For more information about the research and its findings, please refer to the full report.

