

# ProTerra Standard Contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



## Introduction

ProTerra Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation, whose mission is to be a global network of businesses supporting more sustainable agricultural practices, in the food and feed supply chains. ProTerra also supports the use of non-GM seeds and the full respect of workers' and communities' rights and dignity.

**The ProTerra Foundation owns the ProTerra Certification and Verification Standards, which are voluntary tools with a set of indicators associated with sustainability topics.**

ProTerra Standard indicators are the basis to help organisations develop, maintain and improve overtime their sustainable production practices. A list of ProTerra Principles can be found in Table 1.

For more information on ProTerra Foundation and ProTerra Standards, please visit our web page: [www.proterrafoundation.org](http://www.proterrafoundation.org).

**The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged from the United Nations (UN) Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The objective of the SDGs is to address environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world. A list of the SDGs can be found in Table 1.**

**ProTerra Foundation believes in the relevance of the SDGs as a way forward for achieving a sustainable society and understands that the ProTerra Standard has a role to play in supporting SDGs becoming a reality. In some cases, this supporting role goes beyond the common goal of sustainability, as there are relevant alignments between the requirements of the ProTerra Standard and several of the specific goals of the SDGs'.**



## Facts informed by the UN indicated that<sup>1</sup>:

- Agriculture is the world's largest single employer, providing a livelihood for 40 percent of the world's population today. It is the largest source of income and employment for poor rural households.
- Since the 1900s, some 75 percent of crop diversity has been lost from farmers' fields. Better use of agricultural biodiversity can contribute to more nutritious diets, improved livelihoods for farming communities and more resilient and sustainable agricultural systems.

<sup>1</sup> source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

With these figures in mind, it is easy to see the impact that sustainable agricultural practices such as those proposed by ProTerra can have in spreading environmental, social and health and safety awareness and practices, promoting agricultural biodiversity by rejecting the use of genetically modified organisms, and ultimately contributing to a more sustainable world.

**The aim of this booklet is to objectively discuss and detail the supporting role of ProTerra towards the SDGs and the specific relation that exists between these and the ProTerra Standard.**

While it is not possible to directly link ProTerra requirements to all SDGs, there are cases where the link is very relevant. Only those SDGs with a clear link to ProTerra are mentioned herein.



# ProTerra Standard Contribution

**2** ZERO  
HUNGER





There are several targets associated with this SDG, one of which is highlighted:

- *By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, help maintain ecosystems, strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and progressively improve land and soil quality.*

ProTerra Standard fosters sustainable food production from the farm level to the industrial processor (a discussion on the supply chain aspect of ProTerra is found ahead in this text). In addition, ProTerra has several indicators that are directly related to this SDG target, such as those listed under Principle 9- Adoption of Good Agricultural Practices. These include:





- *9.1.1 CORE - Certified organisations shall adopt agricultural good practices and adopt conservation systems such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Integrated Crop Management (ICP). As much as possible, organisations should adopt organic agricultural practices and ensure adequate and continuous monitoring of crop health and the implementation of measures to improve crop resilience.*
- *9.3.1 CORE - Certified organisations shall define a soil and crop management system to maintain and control soil quality (physical, chemical and biological), including monitoring soil quality and health, building soil, improving fertility and managing pests and diseases.*
- *9.3.4 CORE - Certified organisations shall minimise desertification, soil erosion and damage to soil structure caused by wind, water, human activities and the presence of farm animals.*

**Ensure healthy lives and promote  
well-being for all at all ages**

**3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING**





Many efforts are needed to eradicate diseases and to address different and emerging health issues. One important aspect relates to eating healthy food, free from unnecessary and unsafe pesticides and GMOs.

Agricultural practices and the reduction of chemical use in agricultural production, such as the requirements proposed in the ProTerra Standard, have a role to play in health. In addition to supporting healthy food production, the adequate handling, storage and ultimate reduction of chemical use contributes to minimise health risks to workers and communities as well as minimising environmental contamination and its subsequent impact on human health.

One of the targets associated with this SDG is:

- *By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.*

ProTerra Standard has several indicators that directly relate to this SDG target, such as those listed under Principle 9 - Adoption of Good Agricultural Practices and Principle 6 - Pollution and Waste Management. These include:





- *9.6.1 CORE - Certified organisations shall avoid or reduce the use of toxic or polluting materials whenever possible, and shall select inputs having the least possible toxicity and environmental impact for the required application. Agricultural practices are implemented to minimise diffuse and localised impacts on surface and groundwater quality from chemical residues, fertilisers and other potential sources.*
- *6.1.2 CORE - Certified organisations shall segregate, handle, store and dispose of pollutant materials properly, having appropriate facilities to prevent spills. Management of pollutant materials shall at least comply with national laws relevant to the location of the certified operation, as stated in Principle 1 of this Standard. Measures are taken to reduce or recycle waste as much as possible. In countries where there are no relevant local laws and/or regulations, organisations should apply World Bank and IFC guidelines.*

**Ensure access to water and sanitation for all**

**6 CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION**





UN webpage associated with this SDG indicated that<sup>2</sup> *“water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Approximately 70 percent of all water abstracted from rivers, lakes and aquifers is used for irrigation and more than 80 percent of wastewater resulting from human activities is discharged into rivers or sea without any pollution removal”*

There are several targets associated with this SDG, of which the following are highlighted:

- *By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.*
- *By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.*

<sup>2</sup> source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>





ProTerra Standard has several indicators that directly relate to this SDG target, such as those listed under Principle 7 - Water management. Some of these are:

- *7.1.1 CORE - Certified organisations shall conserve the quantity and quality of existing natural water resources, such as lakes, rivers, artificial lakes, dams, water tables and aquifers around their facilities including creating or aggravating water scarcity situations.*
- *7.1.2 CORE - Certified organisations shall not undertake new initiatives that reduce the availability of water for drinking, irrigation, or for traditional uses for neighbouring communities and businesses.*
- *7.1.3 In cases where activities carried out prior to the certification application have damaged water resources, certified organisations shall undertake mitigation actions based on a plan agreed upon with the local environmental authority.*

**Promote inclusive and sustainable  
economic growth, employment and  
decent work for all**

**8 DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH**





There are several targets associated with this SDG, some of which are highlighted:

- *Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.*
- *Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.*

Responsible business practices help ensure the rights and overall well-being of workers. ProTerra enforces ILO Conventions to ensure that certified organisations provide safe working environments and do not engage in the likes of forced labour, irresponsible recruitment practices or discriminatory behaviour. The absence of forced labour, child labour and forms of modern slavery are considered core aspects under the ProTerra Standard with Principle 2 - Human rights and responsible labour policies and practices – dedicated to this aspect.





Some relevant indicators in ProTerra that help achieve these specific SDG targets are:

- *2.1.1 CORE - Certified organisations shall not use slave or trafficked labour, forced labour, indentured servants, and their equivalents.*
- *2.1.4 CORE - Child and youngster labour, except in contexts permitted within national law and the ILO, shall not be used in certified organisations.*

Additionally, ProTerra Standard has a set of requirements to minimise the potential for modern slavery to occur, such as not requiring workers to surrender their identity papers to their employers, no illegal withholding of wages, no coercive disciplinary control methods, only voluntary overtime work and when living onsite workers must have appropriate, fairly priced, and safe food, water and housing.



**Ensure sustainable consumption  
and production patterns**

**12 RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION  
AND PRODUCTION**





UN indicates that<sup>3</sup> “since sustainable consumption and production aims at doing more and better with less, net welfare gains from economic activities can be increased by reducing resource use, degradation and pollution along the whole life cycle while increasing quality of life. There also needs to be a significant focus on **operating supply chains**, involving everyone from producer to final consumer. This includes educating consumers about sustainable consumption and lifestyles, **providing them with adequate information through standards and labels**, and engaging in sustainable public procurement, among others” (bold added by ProTerra).

The ProTerra Certification can apply to raw materials, ingredients, or multi-ingredient products. This may be accomplished using two basic approaches:

- *each actor in the food and feed supply chain can be certified in its own right against ProTerra Standard; or*
- *certified organisations that use inputs from actors that are not ProTerra certified shall implement a management system to control, support and monitor its supply chain(s) to ensure that the applicable ProTerra Standard indicators are met. In this case, the verification of this management system will be considered part of the organisation’s certification process by the Certification Body, involving visits to selected core suppliers.*

<sup>3</sup> source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>





ProTerra certification brings traceability requirements (Principle 10 - Traceability and Chain of Custody), that enable the market to have a full view over a product's journey through the supply chain. Meeting the indicators outlined in ProTerra Principle 10 qualifies companies to make sustainability claims on final products offered to consumers related to the non-GMO and sustainability aspects of the product. These claims are directly communicated to consumers and stakeholders through the use of the ProTerra seal.

Through certification under ProTerra Standard, the ProTerra Foundation aims to empower farms and businesses throughout the food/feed supply chain, to become vectors for environmentally and socially responsible business practices and to provide valuable information to consumers to help them make informed and sustainable choices about what they consume.

**Take urgent action to combat  
climate change and its impacts**

**13** CLIMATE  
ACTION





Climate change poses a major threat to the environment and to people's lives. It is one of the greatest global challenges that we face as a society, as it does not respect national borders or production sectors. Agriculture has a key role to play in mitigating climate change, as land-use change (conversion of areas with natural vegetation to agricultural fields, for example), is a relevant aspect of this equation.

ProTerra Principle 4 - Biodiversity conservation, effective environmental management and environmental services - imposes restrictions on land-use change. This principle excludes products from the ProTerra certification scheme products that originate from areas that have been cleared from high conservation value areas (including natural forest; native grasslands; wetlands; swamps; peatlands; savannahs, steep slopes; floodplains, and riparian vegetation), for agriculture after 31 December 2008 (Indicator 4.1.1).

ProTerra Principle 8 - Greenhouse gases and energy management, encourages organisations to minimise non-renewable energy usage in favour of renewable sources, to measure, reduce and compensate greenhouse gas emissions, to implement energy efficient operations and to increase their resilience and reduce the negative impacts of severe climate events on their operations (Indicators 8.1.1, 8.1.2, 8.2.1 and 8.2.2).

The two ProTerra principles mentioned, while not directly related to this SDG target, contribute to the achievement of this SDG.



**Sustainably manage forests, combat  
desertification, halt and reverse land  
degradation, halt biodiversity loss**

**15** LIFE  
ON LAND





In line with what the UN indicates, ProTerra understands that forests are key to combating climate change and protecting biodiversity. By protecting forests, we will also be able to strengthen natural resource management and increase land productivity<sup>4</sup>.

Some of the targets, associated with this SDG are:

- *By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.*
- *By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.*
- *By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species.*

<sup>4</sup> source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/>



By adhering to the ProTerra Standard organisations must meet the requirements below related to Principle 4- Biodiversity conservation, effective environmental management and environmental services and Principle 7 - Water management, which relate to the SGD targets mentioned above.

- *4.2.1 CORE - Certified organisations shall identify, maintain and protect with the involvement of external experts, valuable biodiversity areas, riparian vegetation, vegetation around flood plains, steep slopes, hills and wetlands as well as maintain any legally preserved areas within their perimeter. If necessary, certified organisations shall restore such areas. A biodiversity management plan shall be prepared.*
- *4.2.3 CORE - The introduction of invasive species and new pests shall be avoided, and past introductions (prior to first certification), shall be controlled and monitored. Any relevant pest outbreak shall be reported to the authorities*
- *7.2.1 CORE - Certified organisations shall implement best practices for water conservation and avoidance of contamination of surface and groundwater. When irrigation is used, effective measures shall be implemented to ensure efficient irrigation and compliance with relevant regulations. The use of irrigation water shall be controlled in order to avoid soil salinisation.*
- *7.2.2 CORE - Any evidence of contamination of ground or surface water shall be reported to the local environmental authority and mitigated based on a plan agreed with such authority if necessary.*



**Promote just, peaceful and  
inclusive societies**

**16** **PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS**





Addressing the challenges associated with violence requires a range of actions involving governments as well as private organisations. The targets associated with this SGD cover several distinct topics, including ending the abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children<sup>5</sup>. In this respect ProTerra Standard has core requirements against child labour and modern slavery, as mentioned earlier in this text.

An important aspect of justice and peace is the resolution of land conflicts. ProTerra Principle 3 - Responsible relations with workers and community, includes requirements associated to the application of the UN Principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in any land rights disputes that may exist. ProTerra Foundation believes that this approach contributes to building more peaceful and inclusive societies by encouraging the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

To be eligible for ProTerra certification, an organisation must not be in dispute over land rights.

<sup>5</sup> source: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>

## Conclusions

**The ProTerra Foundation believes that the ProTerra Standard has a role to play in supporting SDGs becoming a reality. This supporting role is in some cases, more general, while in others there is a very direct synergy with some of the specific SDG targets and ProTerra requirements.**

We would particularly like to highlight the important contribution of the ProTerra Standard to Goal 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, as certification schemes pave the road for environmentally and socially responsible production practices and support consumers, through labels, to make informed and sustainable choices about the products they buy.

Table 1 provides a summary of the direct and indirect relations that have been identified between the SDGs and ProTerra requirements, when considering the contributions that can be made by ProTerra certified organisations in supporting the SDGs.



# United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



# ProTerra Principles



## **PRINCIPLE 1**

Management system, compliance with laws, international conventions and the ProTerra Standard

## **PRINCIPLE 2**

Human rights and responsible labour policies and practices

## **PRINCIPLE 3**

Responsible relations with workers and community

## **PRINCIPLE 4**

Biodiversity conservation, effective environmental management and environmental services

## **PRINCIPLE 5**

No use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

## **PRINCIPLE 6**

Pollution and waste management

## **PRINCIPLE 7**

Water Management

## **PRINCIPLE 8**

Greenhouse gases and energy management

## **PRINCIPLE 9**

Adoption of good agricultural practices

## **PRINCIPLE 10**

Traceability and Chain of Custody

### Table 1 - Relation between ProTerra Standard v5.0 and the SDGs

## Understanding the table

Dark blue indicates the existence of synergies in the intend of the SDGs and ProTerra, therefore with an indirect contribution of ProTerra with the SDGs. Green indicates a direct relation between SDGs and ProTerra, therefore with a direct contribution. Where no colour exists, no immediate relation was identified.

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