The Roles and Benefits of Sustainability Standards and Certification

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About ISEAL

ISEAL is the global membership organisation for ambitious, collaborative and transparent sustainability systems. We're driving collective efforts to tackle the most pressing sustainability issues and create a world where markets are a force for good.

› Membership organisation

› Founded 2002

› UK registered charity

› Based in London

› 35+ staff Secretariat

Sectors covered by ISEAL members

› Agriculture

› **Fisheries and aquaculture**

› Textiles

› Climate and carbon

› Forestry

› Water stewardship

› Infrastructure

› Biomaterials

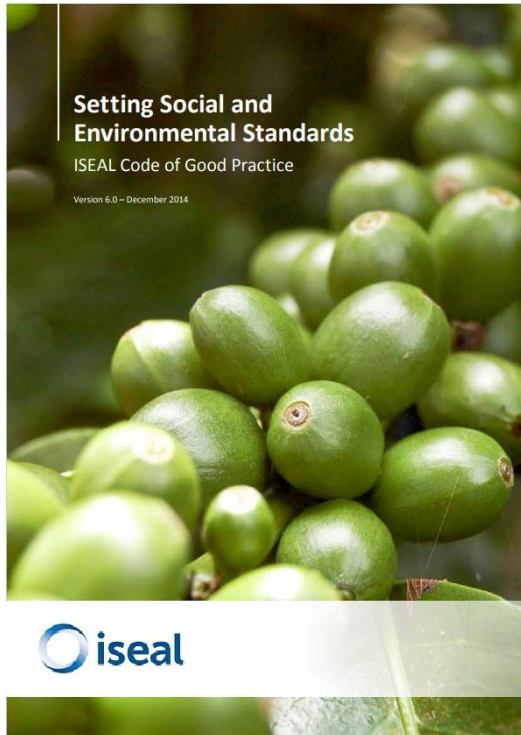› Extractives (minerals and metals) and jewellery

› Tourism and sport

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Sustainability standards and similar systems

Assess
implementation of these
practices or performance
against these levels

Communicate
and ensure integrity
of claims and
communications

Define
responsible practices
or sustainability
performance levels

Measure
performance
improvements and
impacts over time

Learn
from results to
improve the system
and its impacts

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ISEAL Credibility Principles

Continual improvement — A credible sustainability system keeps improving.

Sustainability impacts — A credible sustainability system makes a difference where it matters.

Truthfulness — A credible sustainability system's claims and communications can be trusted.

Collaboration — A credible sustainability system works with others to create change.

Reliability — A credible sustainability system provides trustworthy assessments of users' performance.

Value creation — A credible sustainability system adds value.

Impartiality — A credible sustainability system is impartial.

Measurable progress — A credible sustainability system can demonstrate the difference it is making.

Transparency — A credible sustainability system earns trust by being open and honest.

Stakeholder engagement — A credible sustainability system listens and learns.

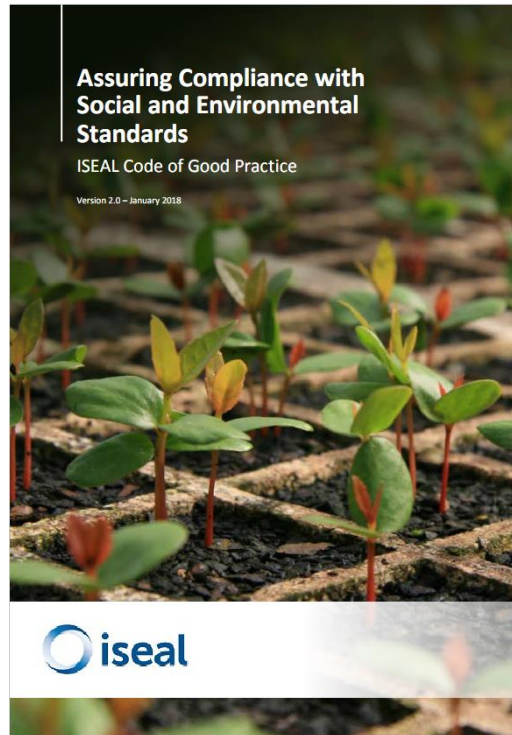# ISEAL Codes of Good Practice

Standard-Setting Code

promotes meaningful participation and local relevance of the standard
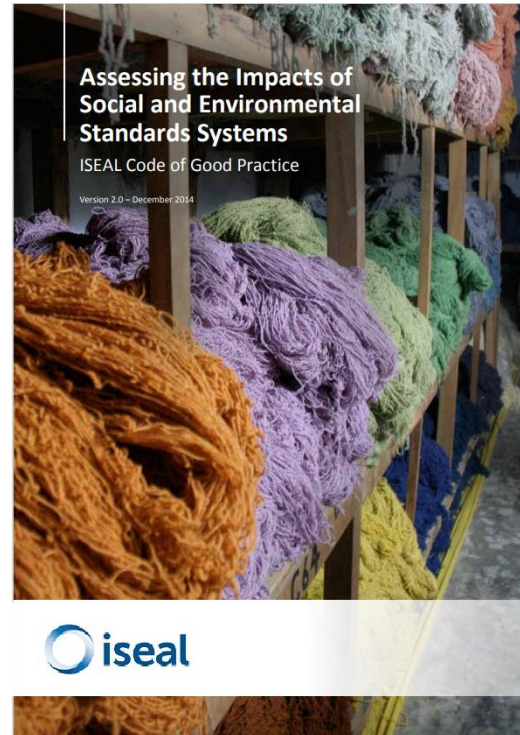
Impacts Code

helps standards systems define and measure their impacts and improve their practices

Assurance Code

supports rigorous and consistent assessments of compliance using different models

We are revising and integrating the ISEAL Impacts, Standard-Setting and Assurance Codes of Good Practice.

Take part in our Code of Good Practice public consultation:

www.iseal.org/iseal-code-consultation

ISEAL's membership structure

ISEAL Community Member
Open to sustainability systems that meet eligibility criteria and demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement. All members belong to this category.

ISEAL Code Compliant
ISEAL Community Members who adhere to all three of ISEAL's Codes by meeting independent evaluation requirements *also* belong to this category.

ISEAL Community Members

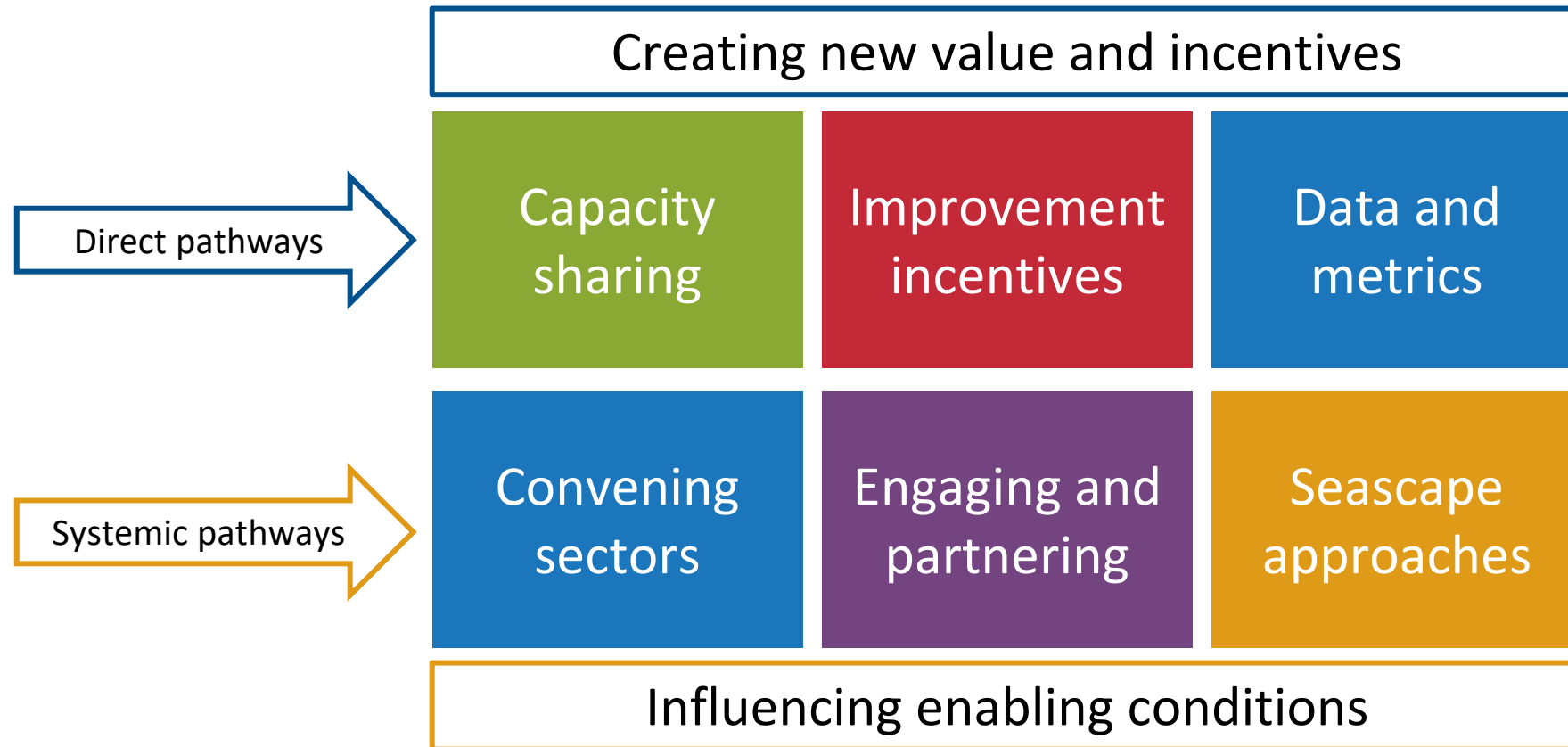ISEAL Code Compliant Members

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History of sustainability standards

› **Why did international sustainability standards emerge?**

› Consistent international standards

› Going beyond boycotts

› International trade regulations

Why certification?

› Protects investment in sustainability

› High level of trust

› Internationally recognised

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Impacts of sustainability standards are key

Creating new value and incentives		
Capacity sharing	Improvement incentives	Data and metrics
Convening sectors	Engaging and partnering	Seascape approaches
Influencing enabling conditions		

Direct pathways →

Systemic pathways →

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Business benefits of using sustainability standards

About the research

This research report is authored by AidEnvironment and commissioned by ISEAL and a refresh of the 2016 review and synthesis of literature and evidence of the business benefits of adopting sustainability standards. In total 40 credible source documents, covering seven sectors, were reviewed. Businesses in the scope of this review included **upstream businesses and downstream businesses**. Full details are available in the main report. Read the full report.

Sectors covered by the research

AGRICULTURE   FISHERY & AQUACULTURE   FORESTRY   MINING & JEWELLERY   BIOMASS   TOURISM   CARBON

https://www.isealalliance.org/sustainability-news/how-do-businesses-benefit-adopting-sustainability-standards

Business benefits of using sustainability standards

Long term benefits
% refers to proportion of studies reporting a benefit

43%

⇄
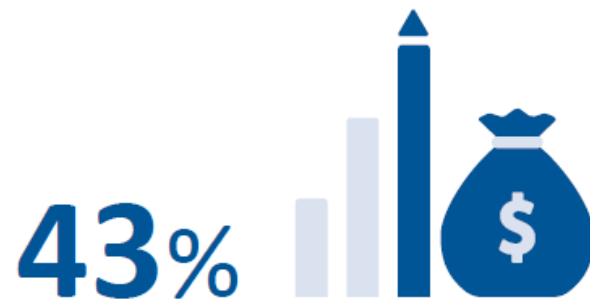
Growth in production or sales

33%

⇄

Improved reputation

63%

⇄

Sustainability impact

← **Upstream businesses** represent raw material extraction or product production, including large-scale producers, smallholder producer groups and primary processors in the country of origin.

→ **Downstream businesses** include importers, processors, manufacturers, brand and retail companies in manufacturing and consumer countries.

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Business benefits of using sustainability standards

Short term benefits
% refers to proportion of studies reporting a benefit

65%
Improved sustainability strategy

25%
Better supply chain coordination

60%
Operational efficiency & risk management

50%
Improved market access

33%
Better access to knowledge & support

23%
Improved sector alignment & coordination

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Sustainability standards and the SDGs

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

MSC, South Africa

Estimated **certification benefits** for South African **hake fishery**[2]

37.6%
of current **estimated net value**

Lallemand. P et al. (2016). Estimating the economic benefits of MSC certification for the South African hake trawl fishery. Fisheries Research.

Sustainability standards and the SDGs

Energy efficiency

The adoption of sustainability standards can significantly reduce the energy footprint of farming and fishing.

ASC, Vietnam

Certified pangasius farms have **lower emissions** and use **fewer resources** than non-certified farms[4]
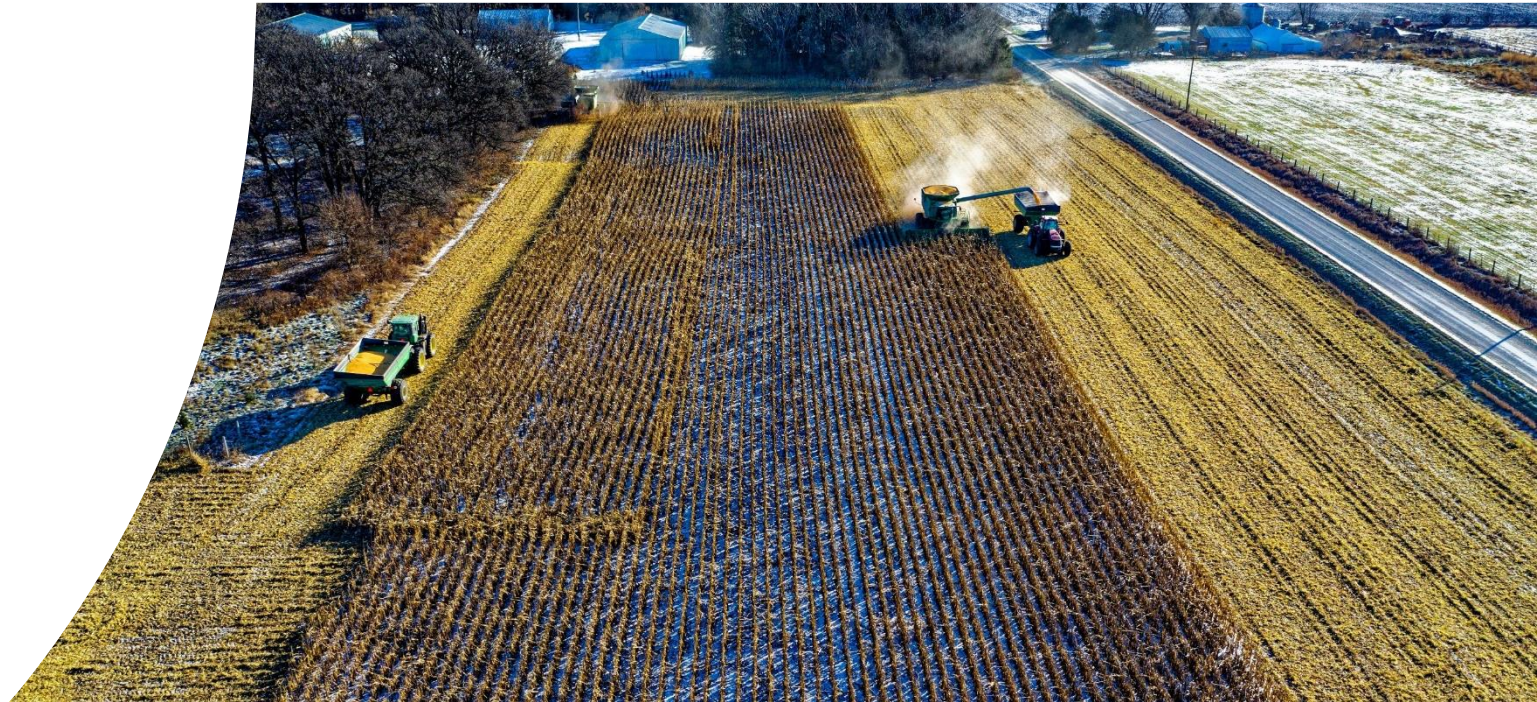
lower
nitrogenous
discharges

lower
fish-derived
ingredients

Nhu Trang T. et al (2016). Environment impact of non-certified vs certified (ASC) intensive pangasius aquaculture in Vietnam.

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The Evidensia knowledge platform

www.evidensia.eco

evidensia®

informing action
for a sustainable future

Key features: Visual Summaries

Evidensia's [Visual Summaries](#) plot data from systematic research reviews we've conducted and help users make sense of what the available evidence says on key research questions.
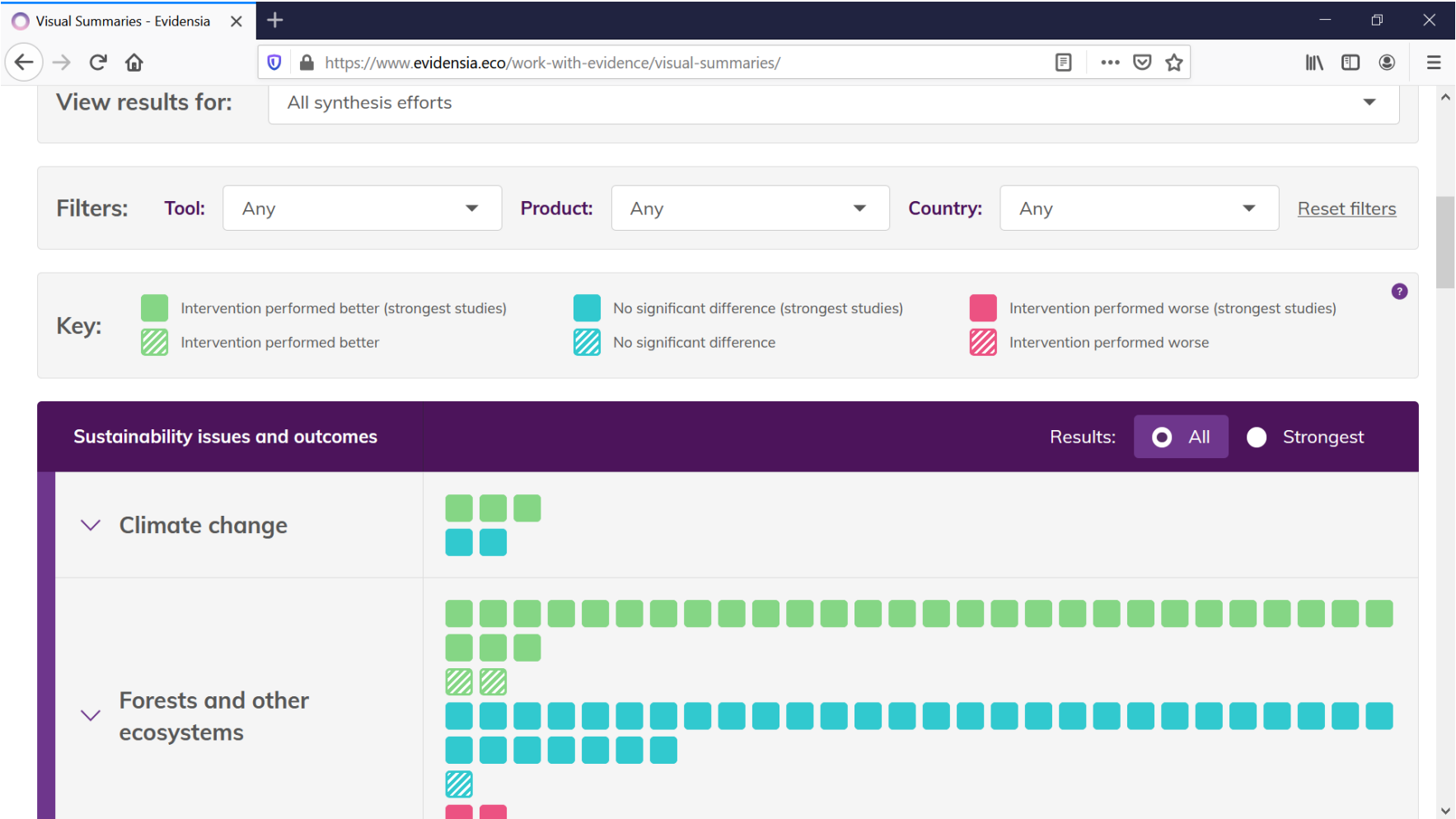
Evidensia is an ambitious effort to inform sustainability action and policy with credible evidence.
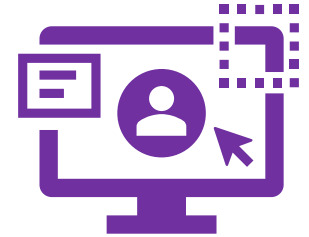
Global

Growing

Trusted

Research-led

User-friendly

- Users from across 170 countries

- 23000+ users in the last 18 months with 20% return users

- 950+ resources sharing credible evidence on impacts of market-based sustainability approaches

- Trusted by researchers and users

- 8 / 10 users say Evidensia meets all their needs

- 9/10 users say they recommend Evidensia to their networks

Benchmarking overview

› *to benchmark*: the act of determining alignment between systems

› Types of benchmarking:

- One-off benchmarking exercises
- Benchmarking Programmes
  - » Example: Farm Sustainability Assessment→
  - » Example: policies like EU Renewable Energy Directive

› Format dependent on objective and stakeholders

fsa — Farm Sustainability Assessment BY SAI PLATFORM

100+
sustainability schemes
benchmarked against the FSA

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Goals of benchmarking

› Recognise **impacts**

› Promote **consistency and alignment** between benchmarked entities (i.e., interoperability)

› Build **awareness** (through transparency)

› Drive **improvement**

› Indication of **good practice**

Sustainability Benchmarking
Good Practice Guide

Version 1.0 | July 2019
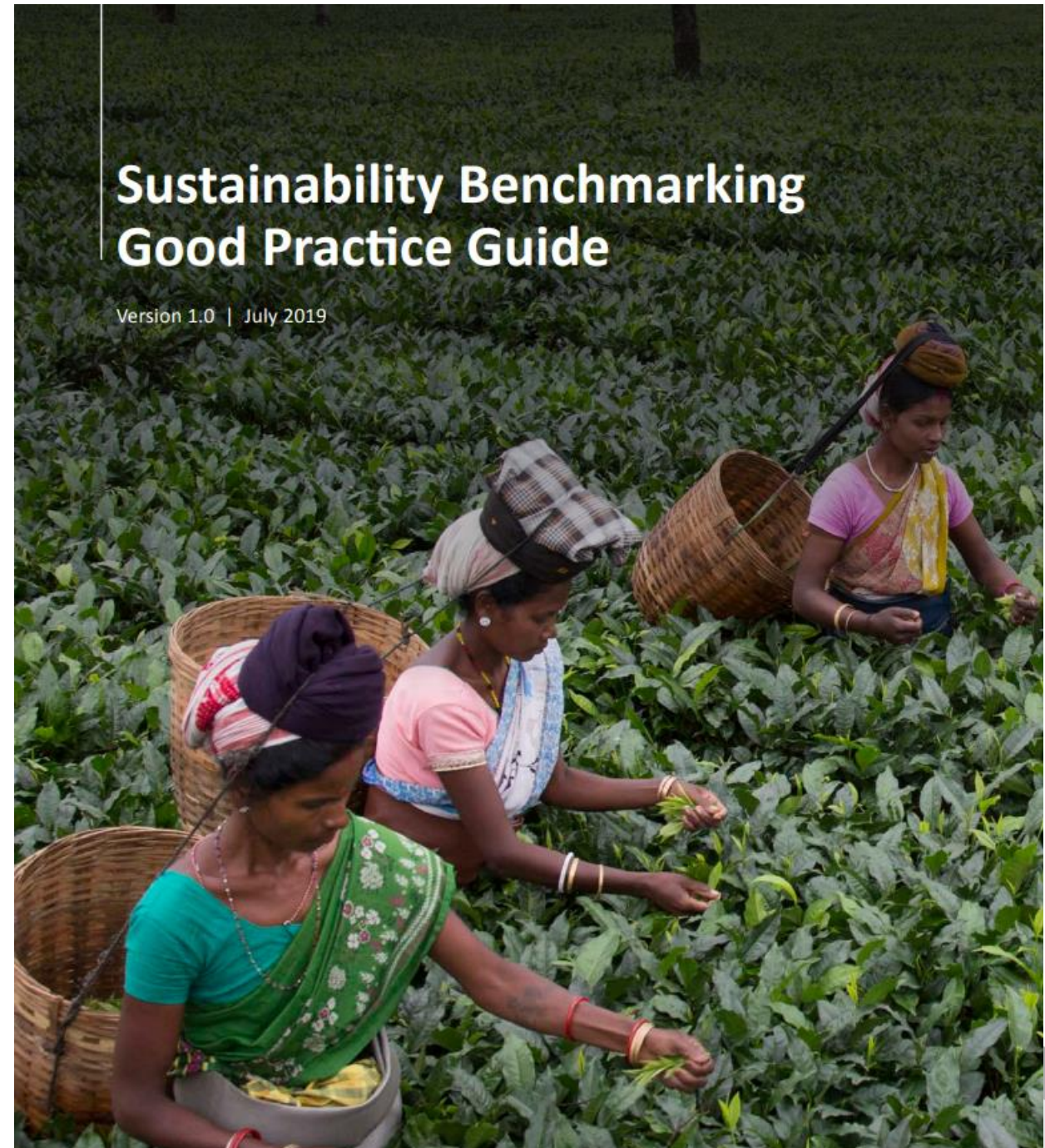
Benchmarking models

› <u>Threshold</u>: entity meets or exceeds threshold. Often used in recognition

› <u>Ranking</u>: compares performance of similar systems

› <u>Peer comparison</u>: internal comparison of a system's performance against its peers

› <u>Improvement</u>: encourages improved practice by showing progress
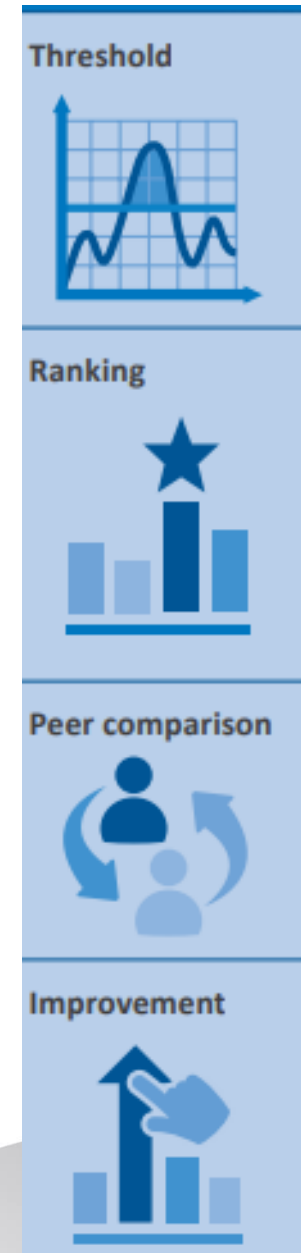
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Thank you!

Get involved

www.iseal.org/iseal-code-consultation

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