

Project Summary

‘Environmental Sustainability Accreditation Decision Tool’ Project

KEY POINTS

- Environmental sustainability is crucial for international supply chains and consumers, but there is no unified global accreditation system for the SA food and beverage industry.
- The project developed a decision-making tool, AskSASI, to help businesses identify relevant sustainability indicators and accreditations for specific markets and categories.
- Key outcomes included creating a user-friendly interface, launching the tool on the Food South Australia website, gathering early adopter feedback, and conducting a SWOT analysis for future improvements.
- AskSASI, launched in June 2024, uses AI technology to provide tailored information, making it easier for South Australian food producers to navigate international sustainability standards and enhance market access.
- The tool aims to reduce compliance costs and boost the competitive edge of businesses by aligning their products with global sustainability accreditations.

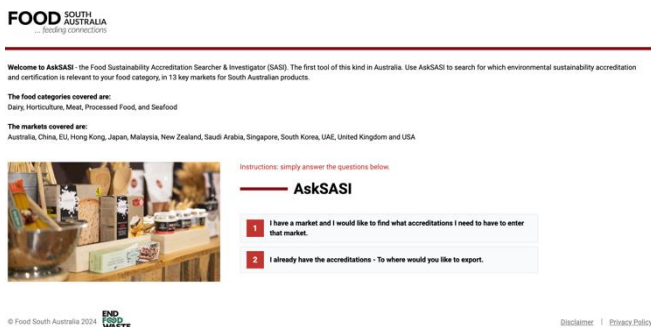


Figure 1: AskSASI Homepage <https://asksasi.com.au/home>

THE CHALLENGE

The increasing challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation highlight the need for sustainable

food systems to protect both human and planetary health. Unsustainable consumption and production practices threaten global food systems, prompting businesses and consumers to seek sustainability indicators, such as those related to water, land, energy use, and greenhouse gas emissions, to assess environmental sustainability. These indicators, alongside social and economic sustainability metrics, are crucial for driving more sustainable food choices. However, the lack of a standard global definition for sustainability claims and the existence of numerous labels, like 'organic' or 'fair-trade', create confusion and difficulty in evaluating the true sustainability of products. South Australian businesses, responding to evolving consumer demands for sustainable food categories, packaging, and shelf life, face challenges in navigating this complex landscape.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Understanding sustainability labels is crucial for food producers because these labels help communicate the environmental and social attributes of their products to consumers. Knowing which labels are relevant for their products enables producers to align with consumer preferences, potentially justifying higher prices and enhancing market competitiveness. Additionally, it involves adapting production practices to meet sustainability standards, which can lead to long-term benefits such as resource efficiency and positive brand perception. In a market where consumers increasingly prioritise sustainable choices, clear and accurate labelling is essential for attracting and retaining customers.

An opportunity exists to develop a tool, designed specifically to help businesses identify relevant indicators, credentials, or accreditations that were relevant for their category in their target markets, delivering business efficiencies, highlighting the opportunity to reduce food waste, meeting increased customer and consumer demand for sustainable options, and significantly reducing the environmental impact.

OUR RESEARCH

The next phase involved creating and testing a decision-making tool designed to assist businesses in identifying relevant indicators, credentials, or accreditations for specific markets and categories. Initially made available to members

of Food South Australia, this tool now has the potential to be offered as an open-source resource to all Australian food producers through the Food SA website. The online decision support tool, which concentrates on sustainability accreditations for export markets, can provide significant benefits to both the food industry and society. For the industry, the tool serves as a comprehensive guide, simplifying the complex landscape of international sustainability standards, regulations, and accreditations. This simplification improves market access by enabling producers to align their products with various global accreditations, thereby enhancing their competitive advantage and reducing compliance-related costs.

The project's objective was to create and pilot a business decision-making tool that utilizes data from the review of environmental sustainability accreditations. This tool is intended to help businesses identify relevant indicators, credentials, or accreditations pertinent to their categories in target markets, leading to business efficiencies, opportunities to reduce food waste, meet growing customer and consumer demand for sustainable options, and significantly lower environmental impact.

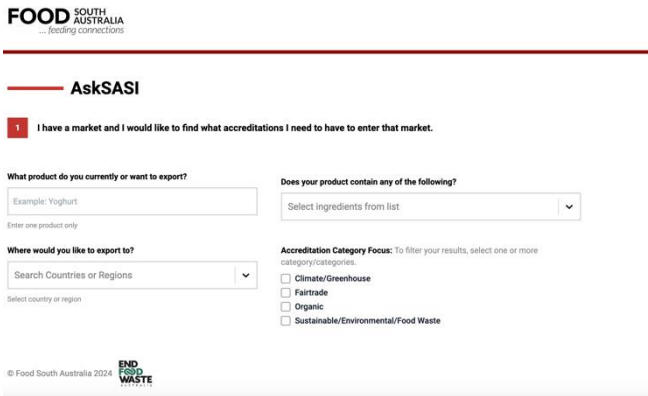


Figure 2: AskSASI in action

OUTCOMES

AskSASI was introduced in June 2024. The launch of AskSASI represents a significant advancement in supporting food and beverage producers with environmental sustainability accreditations. This innovative web-based tool was developed through a collaboration between the University

of Adelaide's Adelaide Business School, Hydra Consulting, Web Design Café, and Food South Australia.

AskSASI—standing for South Australian Environmental Sustainability Accreditation Searcher and Investigator—employs artificial intelligence to search the Food South Australia Sustainability Matrix. It provides precise and comprehensible information on environmental, sustainability, and governance (ESG) accreditations. This tool builds upon earlier research funded by the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, aiming to resolve the challenges posed by a fragmented global accreditation system by aiding businesses in identifying the pertinent accreditations for international markets.

The tool's user-centric design and customizable search features facilitate the efficient retrieval of critical information, thereby supporting the development of effective export strategies. Early feedback from trial participants, including Golden North Ice Cream, underscores the tool's practicality and the valuable insights it delivers for export planning. As AskSASI progresses, it is expected to become a key resource for South Australian businesses striving to enhance their global presence while adhering to sustainability standards.



Figure 3: AskSASI Project Team with End Food Waste SA Innovation Manager and Golden North Ice Cream Team

IMPACT

The AskSASI project is set to significantly enhance sustainability and industry performance across seven CRC impact areas. It aims to boost industry profitability by simplifying access to sustainability accreditations, which can open new markets and increase sales. The project also

supports greenhouse gas emission reductions by promoting environmentally friendly practices.

NEXT STEPS

The next steps of the project include a dissemination of the tool among South Australian food & beverage manufacturers. This includes a series of training sessions to demonstrate how to use the tool and conduct regular surveys and feedback to improve its usability. It is recommended to develop case studies and reports to document successes and challenges with AskSASI. It is also important to maintain regular communication with stakeholders to keep AskSASI up-to-date both in terms of content and technological platform. These measures will ensure that AskSASI achieves its full potential, whilst adapting to emerging sustainability challenges in the food and beverage industry.

PROJECT TEAM

Associate Professor Rebecca Dolan (Adelaide Business School, University of Adelaide)

Associate Professor Armando Corsi (Adelaide Business School, University of Adelaide)

Dr. Darren Oemcke (Hydra Consulting and Adelaide Business School, University of Adelaide)

Dr. Nathan Gray (Adelaide Business School, University of Adelaide)

Mrs. Annabel Mugford (Food South Australia)

PROJECT REPORTS/PUBLICATIONS

n/a

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS



FFW CRC Publication 2024/057