

PRESS RELEASE

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Harmonised food ecolabelling one step closer as Europe's leading experts join forces under new Foundation Earth method

- **Milestone for ecolabelling hailed by Europe's leading food scientists and brands as significant moment for "health of our planet"**
- **New method proposes an improved version of the European Commission's Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) following intensive R&D programme**
- **Food industry responsible for one-third of global emissions – with consensus building behind harmonised ecolabelling scheme being route to drive down environmental impacts**

Foundation Earth today publishes a trailblazing [new method](#) to assess the environmental impact of food and drink products following an intensive year-long research and development programme.

The methodology proposes an improved version of the European Commission's Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) – the closest yet to an agreed standard.

The publication marks a huge milestone in the world of ecolabelling and brings an optimum, harmonised system that can be used across the European continent one step closer.

The work has been welcomed by two of Europe's leading food scientists and some of the globe's largest and most recognisable food brands, some of which have been involved in testing and piloting the method over recent months.

Professor Chris Elliott OBE, the leading food scientist who chaired the UK Government's investigation into the horse meat scandal, hailed the progress as a "win for the health of our planet".

Koen Boone from Wageningen University, who has been instrumental in the work of the Dutch government to deliver an ecolabelling system for food, says "*Foundation Earth's harmonised method is of great importance*" as Europe seeks to find an optimum system to use across the continent.

Nestlé's Johannes Weber hailed Foundation Earth as “leading very robust scientific groundwork which needs to inform the technical and political discussions in Europe” towards developing the final system.

The new Life Cycle Assessment-based method published by Foundation Earth, which is going open source to increase transparency and allow for large uptake globally, proposes a robust and data-driven environmental scoring system which allows for the comparison between different food chains producing the same type of food.

The new system will enable businesses to transform their food systems to reach sustainability targets, whilst providing consumers with the clear and credible information needed to make more sustainable buying choices through ecolabels.

The Foundation remains committed to continued innovation and improvement of the system in the months ahead. It has undergone widespread consultation with all sectors and many European governments and will continue to engage in this process.

This work is the continuation of Foundation Earth's mission to build more sustainable food systems by [gathering critical mass and support](#) under a single ecolabelling scheme from experts, scientists, major industry players, tech giants and consumer research organisations. Over 20 brands have already scored 350+ products with Foundation Earth, demonstrating commitment from the sector to join the environmental movement under this initiative.

Foundation Earth launched in 2021 and has been supported, among others, by the European Union's food innovation initiative - EIT Food, as well as the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Foundation Earth contributes to a level-playing field across the EU and UK so that claims on the environmental performance of companies and products are reliable, comparable and verifiable. This harmonised method is a particular breakthrough when it comes to ensuring that green claims can be substantiated against the European Green Deal and Circular Economy Action Plan of 2020.

It will enable businesses to prepare for EU and UK policy aiming to increase environmental transparency, in line with the objectives of the EU's Initiative on substantiating green claims and the UK's Food Data Transparency Partnership.

Environmental transparency is increasingly key to achieving sustainable food systems and with the agri-food sector representing one-third of emissions, urgent action is needed. Some of the main challenges in assessing and communicating the environmental impact of food are:

- The need for a harmonised assessment method that is accessible and understandable by all.
- A solid scientific method to assess products that is as accurate as possible using high-quality data.
- An independent verification system that ensures credibility.

Improving the current European Product Environmental Footprint method (PEF)

Although widely accepted, the existing PEF system has been associated with some challenges, the two main barriers being its inability to accept primary data from specific supply chains - meaning that different food chains producing the same food cannot be compared. Secondly, much of the PEF process has not been specifically defined. This means that two PEF analyses from different companies could end up with varying results due to different interpretations of the rules.

The Foundation Earth method addresses these weaknesses and offers substantially improved levels of information over the previous PEF system, providing clear guidance for the delivery of standardised PEF assessments and, through the inclusion of primary data, enabling the comparison of different supply chains producing the same product.

The updated method allows for the assessment of the 16 environmental impact indicators under PEF including: Climate change, Ozone depletion, Human toxicity (cancer), Human toxicity (non-cancer), Particulate matter, Ionising radiation, Photochemical ozone formation, Acidification, Eutrophication (terrestrial), Eutrophication (freshwater), Ecotoxicity (freshwater), Eutrophication (marine), Land use, Water use, Resource use (minerals, metals), Resource use (fossils).

The methodology:

- Proposes a harmonised PEF-friendly LCA methodology to calculate the environmental footprint of food products.
- Builds on existing developments, PEFCRs, PEF Guidance, Food Drink Europe guidance.
- Designed to allow for the comparison of grades between different food categories and within the same category.
- Provides guidance on primary data sources required to run the LCA based on the type of food producer.
- Provides guidance on preferred secondary data sources.
- Proposes a simplified approach to the PEF data quality assessment to allow for widespread use.

The methodology was developed in collaboration with Blonk Consultants, DIL German Institute of Food Technologies (Deutsches Institut für Lebensmitteltechnik e.V.) and supported by EIT Food.

Professor Chris Elliott OBE, chairman of the Foundation Earth scientific committee and one of the UK's leading food scientists, said:

"As the Chair of the independent Scientific Committee of Foundation Earth I am delighted that a crucial stage in the development of a harmonised approach to the ecolabelling for the food we consume has been reached.

"Foundation Earth has provided the inspiration, innovation and leadership to reach this juncture. The approach of seeking detailed and transparent engagement with many stakeholders has been crucial. The alignment with the multi-criteria approach of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) is



something I wholeheartedly support, as consumers need a scheme that is robust and based on the same criteria as many other products and services that are available throughout Europe.

“While other schemes may be available for ecolabelling, I am very proud that one of the founding principles of Foundation Earth to use high quality data to generate scores has been maintained despite a range of obstacles and pressures. The winner in this step forward will be the health of our planet.”

Johannes Weber, European Affairs Manager at Nestlé, said:

“We want to support consumers in making informed, sustainable choices. For Nestlé, having an EU-wide harmonised system to measure the environmental footprint of our products is crucial.

“Policymakers across Europe should swiftly agree on such an approach to avoid further confusion. Foundation Earth is leading very robust scientific groundwork which needs to inform the technical and political discussions in Europe. Nestlé actively supports these open and collaborative efforts.”

Koen Boone, Director Europe of the Sustainability Consortium at Wageningen University, said:

“The European Commission made an important contribution with the development of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF), but it was not yet ready to enable comparisons between all food categories. The launch of Foundation Earth’s harmonised method is of great importance to take the next steps forward.”

Dominik Ferrara, Head of Blockchain UK & Ireland at Fujitsu, said:

“Fujitsu and the Track & Trace Solution Centre are excited to be working with Foundation Earth on this initiative, and are honoured to have been selected to be part of this ecosystem. It very much supports our UVANCE focus and drive where we are connecting people, ideas, and technology to create a more sustainable world. What Foundation Earth are doing, as market leaders in the ecolabeling space for the food industry, in terms of building and cultivating an ecosystem is exactly how initiatives like this will not only take off, but become the norm in years to come. The collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach is at the core of what Foundation Earth do and we embrace and promote it. The fact that they are a not-for-profit organisation and that they act for both the public and social benefit only means that their intentions are only focused for the greater good of this world and a better tomorrow. Over the past few months, working with Foundation Earth, we have realised the importance of aligning with PEF and are supportive of this approach, and are excited for the outcomes of 2023 and our partnership, which focuses on increasing data transparency in the agri-food sector and facilitating the scaling and automation of environmental impact assessment of food products.”

Pippa Brown, Global Brand Manager at Meatless Farm, said:

“In line with our mission to encourage consumers to make more sustainable choices that help improve the health of the planet, Meatless Farm embraces Foundation Earth’s collaborative and data-driven approach to food ecolabelling. The publication of this method is one step closer to a harmonised standard that will help avoid confusion with businesses and consumers alike, and incentivises companies to do better by providing tangible insights on the environmental impact of a specific value chain.”





Lise Colyer, Foundation and Executive Director at OminAction, said:

OmniAction's science-led community of 600+ strongly supports alignment with Foundation Earth. Never has so much attention, and committed funding, been directed at sustainability in food systems. Yet, the OmniAction community, made up largely of sustainability professionals, has only seen environmental wellbeing, human rights and quality of diet decline - thanks to poor data collection. Alignment with Foundation Earth's approach to European PEF is a starting point for OmniAction in its Environment category. And OmniAction continues to drive forward improvements to overcome European PEF's limitations. A collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach is essential in order to deliver the system-wide transformation needed to address the global environmental damage, poverty, dispossession, illness and poor health which the food system is responsible for. Only product-level, mainly primary data, collected at method-of-production stage, can provide the accurate detail needed for improvements in the food system. Moreover, consumers overwhelmingly state that they seek to avoid complicity in environmental damage. They have the right to participate in environmental justice. Only multi-criteria, mainly primary data can deliver the information they need in order to make accurate judgements."

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About Foundation Earth

Foundation Earth is an independent, non-profit organisation established to issue front-of-pack environmental scores on food products, enabling consumers to make more sustainable buying choices and providing industry with the data needed to improve the sustainability of their value chains. We bring together expert scientists and leading figures from food production and retailing across the UK and EU who all share a vision of a future food industry that doesn't destroy the planet.

For more information visit <https://www.foundation-earth.org/>

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