

**MINUTES  
GLOBAL ROUNDTABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE BEEF  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING  
APRIL 17, 2024**

The Executive Committee meeting of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef was called to order at 3:00 p.m. Central U.S. / Canada time.

Members Present: Bob Lowe, Justin Sherrard, Shari Westerfeld, Matthew Cleveland, Brian Lindsay, Ian McConnel

Staff/Others Present: Hillary Fenrich, Ruairaidh Petre, Josefina Eisele, Scott Stuart, Katie Ambrose, Julie James

**Approval of Minutes**

It was moved by Sherrard and seconded by McConnel that the minutes of the March 13, 2024 Executive Committee meeting be approved as presented. Motion carried.

**Executive Director Report**

**Board Strategy Session**

The committee had follow-up discussions from the Board Strategy Session in Italy, primarily about two topics: Communications and Deforestation.

**Communications**

Communications is a common and strong need for GRSB, its members and roundtables and equipping them with the tools is essential. Communication plans may vary by topic, as applicable by regions.

Science and data collection are needed as proof points; however, it is more important to lead with targeted messaging rather than science which is typically overshadowed by the emotional arguments.

The Dairy Sustainability Framework (DSF) has overarching data from its members that helps demonstrate continuous improvement, and the science sits behind the actions that go into generating that data. This minimizes reliance on the science and puts more emphasis on working towards achieving solutions with the data. Brian Lindsay referenced DSF's annual report linked on their website <https://www.dairysustainabilityframework.org/> which helps them to build a narrative.

We need to identify what is GRSB's role and target audiences, and the best approaches to support these audiences.

DSF is gradually growing their reporting framework, i.e. last year, they started reporting on gender in the dairy value chain. This broadens the debate away from purely environmental issues.

McConnel agreed that science works for certain audiences but once into discussion, the data also matters. The science needs to be communicated in a way that resonates with people which often comes through the storyteller and GRSB has the right voices to do that.

GRSB is able to serve as both the voice, as well as providing members with useful communications tools.

External communications of importance: How to engage and align with industry partners with a common message. Lowe had a positive meeting with leaders of FAO's Livestock committee following the Board meeting in Italy and a workplan for collaboration is forthcoming. GRSB is still waiting to hear back from the application submitted several months ago to be an Observer of their Subcommittee on Livestock.

Lowe recommends that GRSB identify 1-3 relevant sustainability forums to target engagement with, and offered to share how this was outlined in Canada. It was also suggested that Amie Peck (Communications Council Chair) lead this discussion on the May or June Board call.

Sherrard added that much has changed since the completion of the initial communications strategy several years ago. At that time, GRSB had more of a defensive and cautious position binding to the science for credibility. There was also a lot of fear around the growth of alternative proteins, plant-based meat substitutes, etc. which is no longer believed to be the solution. Policy makers now understand that improving sustainability in livestock can only be done through traditional livestock systems, and not with alternative replacements. Now that the data is compiled, GRSB has more of a story.

It would be good to involve the Comms Council on this. Maybe it's time to more proactively engaged with policy makers and some alternative mainstream media forums.

Stuart recommended a review of the previous communications strategies conducted which was initially done with Swanson Russell and more recently with MHP. It would be good to do with the Communications Council chairs and possibly update where needed.

### Data Reporting

A simple format of initial reporting was provided in the 2023 Annual Report. SureHarvest is working on a more informative and graphical representation for our next sustainability report, which will be available for Uruguay.

For the National Roundtables that have not yet set goals, can GRSB help them get a plan so they could report the data needed beyond just their activities?

## **Regional Director Report**

### GRSB Deforestation Position Draft *(attached in meeting binder)*

Eisele shared that when GRSB began, stopping deforestation was one of the main priorities and it was included in our Principle and Criteria in Natural Resources. The national roundtables since developed their own indicators and priorities, which included deforestation, but in some cases, only to stop illegal deforestation. Deforestation is not relevant to all geographies in the same way, and there has been a great deal of global reaction with many that are against deforestation. GRSB having a formal deforestation position does pose a risk of potential fallout with some members.

Hillary Fenrich added that many GRSB members do have commitments or targets around deforestation, which are stronger than GRSB's draft statement as they include dates, geographies and clear action steps.

It is perceived by some members that GRSB is not ambitious in this area and now is the time to establish a formal position and voice which would support GRSB's legitimacy and reputation.

What could we ask of our members? Do they have to have a commitment? Is it an opt-in statement? Is it just directional with GRSB providing guidance? Should any of this be required for GRSB membership?

McConnel expressed concern with mandating particular engagement on deforestation within Nature Positive, as it should be done the same for all topics, i.e., climate and human rights, etc. McConnel suggested some wordsmithing in that paragraph, and add what GRSB is doing, and what are we calling on our members to do. GRSB can provide guidance around what is needed in a due diligence system, and help develop more of an action plan rather than a compliance statement which would be more attractive to members.

Sherrard agrees that whatever requirements are decided, they should be for all goal areas verses singling out one.

As a stepping stone towards a more robust metrics or action plan, Lindsay suggested GRSB determine what success would look like for the beef industry as it pertains to deforestation. That would help determine the requirements of members to consider and demonstrate.

Without a formal position on deforestation, it may be difficult to engage in some of these conversations with organizations like the EU or FAO. Without this formality, GRSB could be seen as industry lobbyist who's trying to water things down.

With limited resources, what is the best use of time for the NPP group? Is it a position statement, a new goal or an addendum to the goal or the Principles and Criteria? Is it

focusing on Nature Positive and supporting National Roundtables? Is it doing something under Principles and Criteria?

It is important to not over complicate this, but rather focus on identifying GRSB's position on deforestation, with clarity, and be able to communicate that in a way which helps to advance the mission, remembering this is about overall beef sustainability and livelihoods, and not a single issue.

A Deforestation statement would be different than the Regenerative Agriculture statement as that was only to serve as an internal document for the purpose of clarity and understanding amongst GRSB/membership and not intended for external use.

There was consensus that GRSB have a clear deforestation position statement but not as criteria for membership.

The Nature Positive Production working group is tasked with developing a definition for deforestation.

### Uruguayan Roundtable Strategy Session Outcomes

Josefina reported on the Uruguayan' Roundtables first strategic session led by a producer association called, CREA. This was widely attended, particularly, by slaughter houses. They discussed the validation of the roundtable's existence and purpose, as well as any gaps the roundtable could cover that is not being covered by other organizations such INAC and the Research Institute. There will be 2-3 additional sessions, and a materiality analysis. They are also looking to glean from others such as the U.S. Strategy Session. The roundtable is also working on a report to present at the global conference in Uruguay.

### Upcoming Engagements

Beyond the global conference in Uruguay, the board discussed future in-person meetings.

- Spring Board Meeting, Tucson, Arizona.
- Communicators Summit, end of the third quarter – possibly China.
- 2026 Global Conference, Australia

There was also discussion on working in conjunction with FDA and the Communicators Summit, or should it be a stand-alone meeting to ease the time constraints from having other additional meetings (working groups, roundtables, Board and Executive Committee, and a tour(s)). With communications also being a priority for all of the National Roundtables, the idea was raised to possibly partner with other like-minded groups from other sectors such as dairy or leather and glean and align communication strategies for a broader and more effective reach.

Westerfeld voted to keep the Comms Summit with the other meetings to help minimize challenges with priorities. And with bringing in outside speakers, we could weave in those messages into the broader meetings and use those key influencers in other ways for the rest of the meeting.

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Lindsay will find out when DSF's next Communications Summit will be, and the possibility for a joint summit with GRSB.

As there was no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

The next Executive Committee Meeting will be on **Wednesday, May 8, 2024, 3:00 p.m. - 4:30p.m. Central US / Canada.**