My Farm Shop Sustainability Policy

This policy statement states our goals, objectives, principles and how we enact them. We use it to guide our decisions and to help our customers and our producers come to their own point of view and to collaborate with us. It will also help our supply chain and other members of the community explore the issues and arguments and adjust their businesses in line with new information.

Goal: Sustainable Civilisation

My Farm Shop works towards a future of Sustainable Civilisation. We think that in order to provide satisfactory quality of life forever, a sustainable civilisation must be based on totally renewable goods and services and peaceful peoples.

Achieving this future means investment in knowledge and ecological function to replace the non-renewable goods and services we are currently dependent on. To help us make decisions towards this future, we follow the principles listed below (adapted from the works of a number of our sustainability heroes)[i]:

1. ***Intergenerational equity:*** *we favour present options and actions that are most likely to preserve or enhance the opportunities and capabilities of future generations to live sustainably.*
2. ***Intragenerational equity:*** *our choices are pursued in ways that avoid the development of dangerous gaps in sufficiency and opportunity (and health, security, social recognition, political influence, etc.) between groups of people.*
3. ***Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity:*** *Ensure that everyone we are directly responsible for has enough for a decent life and that everyone has opportunities to seek improvements in ways that do not compromise other people and future generations' possibilities for sufficiency and opportunity.*
4. ***Cooperation[ii] with nature:*** *We are responsible for making sure that the natural capital in agriculture we manage directly or are otherwise dependent on are able to produce and regenerate a range of resources of different kinds at different times. When we build human-nature relationships, we design them to establish and maintain the long-term performance of the people and the natural functions they manage. The people and the natural capital must have the resources and conditions they need to produce goods and services for trade as well as regenerate the natural and human capital principals, reduce their vulnerability to shocks and increase their adaptive capacity.*
   We do this in order to protect the irreplaceable life support functions provided by these relationships.
5. ***Sustainability Leadership:*** *Our actions and relationships build the capacity, motivation and habitual inclination of individuals, communities and other collective decision-making bodies to make decisions towards sustainability. We do this through open and informed deliberations, paying attention to fostering reciprocal awareness and collective responsibility. We demonstrate our agreement with these principles through our business, community & personal decision-making practices.*
6. ***Precaution and adaptation*** *We respect uncertainty and accept that we will inadvertently make decisions that could move us away from our goal. We monitor the results of our actions in order to take corrective action early and appropriately. My Farm Shop and its producers and distributors "plan to learn, design for surprise, and manage for adaptation" (R. Gibson – Beyond the Pillars).*
7. ***Design for the desired future:*** *Enterprises and endeavours must be designed to be sustainable by considering all these principles independently and together.*

The role of agriculture in society

Agriculture is a vital part of our society. It provides life-support services such as food and fibre, clean water. In the future, it might also need to provide much of our fuel.

Sustainable agriculture in the long run (thousands of years) will need to be based on renewable fuels and nutrients and in fact will need to be capable of producing much of these.

The following paragraphs explain the operational use of the sustainable principles for agriculture.

Operational purpose

Agriculture produces our life-supporting goods and services from natural capital[1] (soils, plant & animal genetics, water and stable climates) and human capital[2] (farmers and rural towns). It does this with the assistance of technology and machinery. Capital can be renewable as long as the capital base that yields the flow of goods and services is sufficiently whole and healthy enough to allow their regeneration. In nature, keeping the capital base whole and healthy means reinvesting some of the natural and human resources produced back into regeneration of the capital base.

Currently, agriculture is highly dependent on non-renewable natural capital such as fossil fuels and agricultural inputs such as lime. (The production of these molecules takes so long that these substances can be considered non-renewable.) The dominant agricultural practices are cropping and grazing based on annual monocultures and increasingly, factory-intensification of livestock. Although they create financial capital, these practices do not provide the resources and conditions needed to produce and regenerate functional complexity and diversity in an ecosystem. As a result, they systemically reduce the range of resources, functions and through this, the goods and services provided by the agricultural ecosystem.

As a result of this, (despite large improvements in the last 50 years) Agriculture is regarded as being highly exposed to threats related to decline of environmental performance and natural capital. It is increasingly under pressure to improve its environmental credentials and its record with respect to animal welfare and livelihood sufficiency for farmers.

Examination of the improvements to Agricultural practice shows they have been focused on achieving significant reductions in consumption of fossil fuels and finite nutrients and the degradation of soils and biodiversity. Slowing degradation and consumption only means we are slowing progress towards the inevitable threshold of collapse. On the human front, the social performance of agriculture appears to be rapidly declining. There are increasing numbers of farmers leaving the land and increasing evidence of financial hardship. Sustainability in agriculture (and therefore human civilisation) requires a new trajectory for both farmers and agricultural ecosystems. This new trajectory is one which increases functional complexity and diversity of human and natural capability. As we progress along the new trajectory we should increase the quality, range and reliability of production of resources from agriculture.

[1] **Natural capital** is the stock of capital derived from natural resources such as biological diversity and ecosystems, in addition to geological resources such as fossil fuels and mineral deposits. It provides the ecosystem products and services that underpin our economy and provide inputs or indirect benefits to business (ACCA). **Renewable natural capital** is the composition and structure (stocks) of natural, self-organizing ecological systems that, through their functioning, yield a flow (or natural income) of goods and services. These flows are essential to life in general and are extremely useful to humans and all other species.

[2] **Human capital** is the stock of competencies, knowledge, social and personality attributes, including creativity, embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce economic value. (Wikipedia)

Moving onto the new trajectory towards sustainable agriculture requires supply contracts and customers relationships that result in increased investment in human and natural capital. The characteristics of these are described in the next paragraphs.

People

Creation of the conditions for investment in and regeneration of human capital in agriculture requires the attainment of livelihood sufficiency and the establishment of cooperative relationships between humans and nature on the farm. This is accomplished through appropriate metrics, management processes and incentives. Metrics that will help to achieve sustainable agriculture must:

- *influence the management and performance of natural and human capital*
- *be defined with the involvement and commitment of the people who will be the leaders of change, practice and continuous improvement.*
  (If this involvement and commitment is not obtained, capacity to achieve the metrics is not built, implementation of changed practice is delayed and adverse outcomes are risked. Leading indicators are required to enable the early (and inexpensive) adjustment of tactics where necessary.)
- *be developed from a clear understanding of:*
  - *the benefits to the individuals,*
  - *the relevance and significance to achievement of the goal*
  - *the causal pathway to achieve them*
- *be informative enough to enable influence of the operating environment (through knowledge, skills and resources) to follow the causal pathway.*

Specifically because of the dynamic nature and uncertainties of sustainability and agriculture, learning and continuous improvement must be built in to the metrics and the local capacity. This will enable us to keep testing and improving goals and strategies and keep refining key management practices and competencies.

Satisfaction of Intergenerational equity principles means making sure that future generations of citizens have a healthy population of knowledgeable, adaptive, skilled and conscientious agricultural professionals. Civil society is responsible for making sure that these people are able to produce and regenerate a range of renewable resources of different kinds at different times. They must have the resources and conditions they need to produce and regenerate this capacity.

Production systems

Intergenerational and Intragenerational equity is assured by appropriate management of the relationship of people to natural systems. These relationships must provide the resources and conditions needed to produce and regenerate functional complexity and diversity in an agricultural ecosystem because these increase the quality, range and reliability of production of resources from agriculture.

Functional complexity and diversity is reflected in high Landscape Function Analysis scores (LFA) and dense perennial grasslands with high biodiversity. Investment in creation of these agro-ecosystems offers very satisfactory returns; reduced cost and risk, creation of opportunities for diversification of income and improved animal performance.

Decreased cost and risk: *In addition to providing fodder for livestock, dense perennial grasslands (and grassy woodlands) also generate returns such as increased ecological function and resilience as well as decreased vulnerability to bad weather and other disturbances. The enhanced natural capital increases adaptive capacity to capture opportunities for alternative products and services. (Examples include payments for ecosystem*

services, wild foods, fibre from trees and biofuel production.) Investment in development of these ecosystems is low cost; they are largely self-organising and have minimal dependence on external inputs and fuels for machinery.

Minimal dependence on external inputs and fuels for machinery is necessary in order to bring the requirements for them to within the production capacity of renewable resources.

Improved animal performance: *Plants contain a wide range of primary and secondary compounds. The ingestion of these compounds needs to be in the right quantities and in the right sequence to meet the nutritional requirements of individuals. Nutrition requirements are unique to each individual and requirements change constantly. Diversity of tree, shrub, grass, forb and herb species in pastures improves animal performance. Enabling animals to meet their nutritional requirements improves animal performance and through this, the nutritional qualities of the meat.*

Intragenerational equity: *Evidence is emerging that meat produced using healthy ecosystems is much better for human consumption and may result in reduced disease and ill-health.*

Supply & distribution systems

The supply and distribution systems need to be able to:

- *operate within the energy supply capacity of renewable systems*
- *be resilient to bad weather (fires, floods, storms etc)*
- *integrate with the production system to ensure natural capital is preserved, livelihood sufficiency and opportunity for people involved and animal welfare is impeccable.*

Community leadership

Changing our current unsustainable trajectory means building capacity and motivation to act in different ways that in the past. Building this capacity and motivation requires civil society to form a shared vision of a sustainable future, form a conceptual framework to map the journey towards it and develop the operating theories and practices that will move them to the goal. This entails:

1. *Coming to a common sense of what is happening and why*
2. *Developing a shared vision of a better future*
3. *Development of performance metrics for sustainable agriculture and capacity to achieve them*
4. *Establishing a culture of adaptive management; continual learning and improvement.*

Elements of Sustainability diagram[iii]

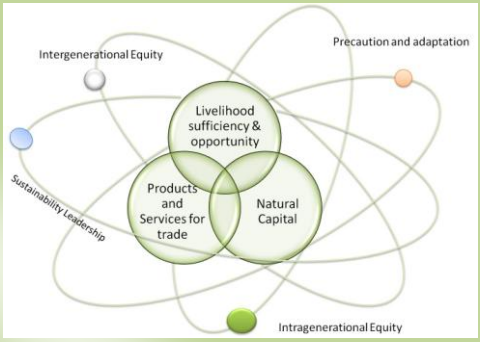

Diagram: Elements of sustainability

My Farm Shop is dedicated to sustainable agriculture

My Farm Shop demonstrates current sustainable agriculture best practice. We do this to help society develop knowledge and motivation to increase the use of sustainable agricultural industries. A critical role we play is the provision of a meat retail model that allows citizens to explicitly choose the food system they participate in. My Farm Shop supports:

- *The development and use of agricultural practices that can operate successfully on renewable fuels and nutrients*
- *Returns of enough of the proceeds of the ecosystem to enhance and preserve natural capital and ecological function for current and future generations*
- *Development of the capacity to produce the renewable materials and fuel we need,*
- *The general principle that everyone should have the opportunity for a sufficient livelihood*
- *Efforts to collaborate to reduce our society's vulnerability to threats and increase its adaptive capacity.*

People

My Farm Shop is directly responsible for the pricing, performance metrics and processes that affect its employees, supply chain, producers and customers. We make sure that our arrangements mean that:

- *The hourly rate for work is sufficient to allow people to afford civilised lifestyles; comfortable accommodation, good food, health services, school fees, leisure time, further education and entertainment.*
- *The performance metrics and management culture encourages continuous learning and adaptive management towards our shared goal.*

Production systems

We ensure that the agricultural ecosystems being managed by My Farm Shop producers are being enhanced or maintained. We measure this, looking for:

- *High levels of soil stability, water infiltration and nutrient cycling (using Landscape Function Analysis[iv])*
- *Dense perennial grasslands (including grassy woodlands) with high diversity of grass, forb and herb species with a healthy age distribution*
- *Stable or improving soil health (structure, chemistry)*
- *Significant and connected areas of diverse trees, shrubs and sedges*
- *Locally adapted genetics of plants and livestock*
- *Highly functional ecosystems through management of plant and livestock to closely mimic nature.*

Supply & distribution systems

My Farm Shop designs the supply and distribution systems, locations and routes to minimise the amount of transport fuel and travel for animals.

- *My Farm Shop producers are located within four hours drive of the abattoir partner.*
- *Meat is transported by couriers already travelling the route from the abattoir to the storage location.*
- *Deliveries to customers are organised to reduce the use of transport fuels.*

- *Meat is supplied in quantities that will provide our customers for meals for several weeks per order. It is supplied already frozen to make this easier.*

Community leadership

My Farm Shop's actions and relationships make it possible for individuals who are unable to produce their own meat, to still act in accordance with the principle of human-ecological integrity through their relationship with producers who act on their behalf.

My Farm Shop provides information about sustainability decisions to help communities and other collective decision-making bodies to help them understand the principles of sustainability and to work with us towards goals that we share.

My Farm Shop supports our producers and suppliers in a community of practice that increases opportunities for learning and improvement of practices, relationships and status. Through this, it reduces vulnerability to threats and increases adaptive capacity.

We will promote the general concepts of sustainable agriculture and the alternative supply and distribution models that are necessary to enable it to happen.

End Notes

[i] *My Farm Shop sustainability principles are built from; Robert Gibson: Beyond the Pillars, Allan Savory: Holistic Management, Karl-Henrik Robert: Natural Step, Graeme Hand: through personal mentoring.*

[ii] *Cooperation: Working together to the same end. We need a word or phrase that properly describes a relationship that respects the laws of nature and works with them to create and regenerate a prosperous relationship between people and ecosystems.*

[iii] *The diagram 'Elements of Sustainability' depicts the conceptual framework for sustainability. The large circles in the 'nucleus' of the diagram are the elements required by each person and for which each of us is personally responsible, even if we 'outsource' the direct management (to a farmer). The small circles orbiting the nucleus represent the other considerations necessary to satisfy the sustainability principles. These elements must be considered when decisions about elements of the nucleus are taken. The diagram is deliberately non-linear and dynamic because nature (including humans) is non-linear and dynamic.*

[iv] *Landscape Function Analysis (LFA): David Tongway and Norman Hindley*