



## Frequently Asked Questions – *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*

**Mission:** to drive the advancement and recognition of beef sustainability in Canada through a world class operation-level certification program.

### About the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*

#### What is the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*?

The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* certifies farms, ranches and processing facilities against sustainability standards, enabling consumers to source beef from certified operations.

The Framework supports producers and processors in demonstrating the sustainability of their operations while at the same time assisting the retail and food service industry in their sustainable beef sourcing efforts. The Framework also provides guidelines for credible and transparent messaging for communication with consumers via marketing and product labels.

#### Who developed the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*?

The multi-stakeholder membership of the [Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef](#) (CRSB) developed the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*. Membership in the CRSB includes stakeholders from environmental and animal care organizations, beef producers, processors, academics, retail and food service, agriculture and food businesses and observers. The development of the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* also included public consultations.

#### Why did the CRSB develop a certification program?

The CRSB membership recognized that a multitude of tools are needed to holistically support and recognize the advancement of beef sustainability in Canada. The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is one of these tools that, through an on-site certification process, recognizes sustainable practices, identifies areas for improvement, and satisfies consumer demand for assurances of responsible beef production.

The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is one of the three pillars in the CRSB's mandate of work, which also includes [National Sustainability Benchmarking](#) and [Sustainability Projects](#).

#### What are the goals of the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*?

The goals of the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* include:

- Advancing beef sustainability in Canada
- Recognizing leadership and best practices with the Canadian beef industry
- Ensuring a consistent, robust and meaningful definition of sustainable beef production in Canada
- Avoiding duplication efforts to define and verify sustainable operations
- Supporting supply chains interested in making meaningful sustainable sourcing commitments and subsequent communications
- Enabling consumers to purchase sustainably sourced products, and
- Supporting the understanding of sustainable beef production



### How is sustainability measured?

Sustainability is measured for beef production and primary processing operations across five principles of sustainable beef – Natural Resources, People & the Community, Animal Health & Welfare, Food, and Efficiency and Innovation. This is done through a series of outcome-based indicators, goals and requirements in the [Sustainable Beef Production Standard](#) and the [Sustainable Beef Processing Standard](#), which collectively define sustainability in the Canadian beef industry. Achievement level is required in all scored indicators for certification.

### How will this framework contribute to improved sustainability in the Canadian beef industry?

The primary goal of the CRSB is to drive continuous improvement in the Canadian beef industry. The Standards that form the basis of the framework, address the outcomes that contribute to beef sustainability in Canada. The framework will facilitate recognition of responsible practices, and assist in identifying areas for improvement, both in individual operations, and for industry as a whole. Achievement levels within the indicators will be tracked and reported regularly by CRSB to show improvement. This data will be coupled with future *National Beef Sustainability Assessments* to set improvement goals.

### Is it a government program?

NO. A collaborative, multi-stakeholder community developed the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*, including producer and processor associations, agri-businesses, NGOs, processors, and retail and foodservice companies, with guidance from subject matter experts. The Standards were subject to two rounds of public consultation each, where considerable engagement and constructive feedback was obtained to improve the Standards throughout the development process.

### How does the CRSB's *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* align with programs in other commodities and other countries?

The CRSB *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is the first of its kind for the beef industry globally. There are similar programs in other commodities, such as seafood, forest and paper products, sugar, coffee, etc., upon which the CRSB has drawn from lessons learned. Most of these programs are internationally-based. There are similar organizations and Roundtables for Sustainable Beef in other countries such as the United States, Brazil, Australia, Columbia and others; however, Canada is the first to build such a robust certification framework with chain of custody requirements and claims to support its Standards. Other countries are following the leadership position the CRSB is taking with keen interest.

### Are 100% of Canadian cattle producers certified?

The CRSB's *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is voluntary, and producers will determine if participation is right for them. It is a great way for producers and processors to demonstrate their commitment to the sustainability of their operation. Participation in the framework also assists participating producers and processes in identifying areas for improvement that will benefit their business.

## For beef producers:

### Why should I get certified? What are the benefits?

Participation in the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is voluntary. Producers who participate in the framework may see the following benefits.

- The opportunity to participate in sustainable value chains
- Identification of areas of achievement, and areas for improvement regarding sustainable production
- Ability to better communicate/market on sustainable and responsible production practices

### Is participation mandatory for Canadian beef producers?

NO. Participation is voluntary.

### How do I get certified?

Certification is done through an audit process to the applicable Standard. Approved [Certification Bodies](#) (CB) will carry out audits on behalf of the CRSB. Certification is achieved after a successful on-site audit and maintained through annual assessments. Visit the [Certified Sustainable Beef website](#) to select a Certification Body – there may be an opportunity to use the same Certification Body as other industry programs you already participate in. [Verified Beef Production Plus \(VBP+\)](#) and [Where Food Comes From, Inc.](#) are currently approved Certification Bodies.

### What kinds of records are required?

The Standards outline guidelines for demonstrating achievement for each indicator; in many cases, a number of different options to demonstrate sustainability in each indicator are provided. The Certification Body will provide additional information as you prepare for a certification audit.

### What happens if I don't pass my certification audit?

The role of the CRSB is to drive continuous improvement. You will receive a detailed report following your audit; if there are specific areas that require improvement, corrective actions and a follow-up audit may be conducted once these are addressed.

### Will I get feedback after the audit?

YES. Following the audit, you will receive a report from your Certification Body. This can be used as a tool to highlight the areas where you are doing well and identify areas for improvement.

### I am already enrolled in several other industry programs. Will I get credit for these in the certification process?

MAYBE. This was an important component of development – ensuring alignment with other industry programs. CRSB is working to establish equivalencies with other programs that align with the Standards to minimize duplication of efforts. As this equivalency work is completed, information will be provided on the [Certified Sustainable Beef website](#).

### Do I have to be enrolled in Beef InfoXChange System (BIXS) to participate?

NO, but you do need to share certification status somehow. Data sharing is required to participate in a beef supply chain that is sourcing product from certified operations, according to Chain of Custody Requirements. BIXS is one option; you should work with your supply chain to determine the options available to you.



### **Where does my data go?**

Your Certification Body must keep your information confidential unless you give permission to share; ask your Certification Body their procedures for confidentiality. CRSB will collect aggregate information from their Certification Bodies for impact reporting.

### **Will I be paid for being a Certified Operation when I market my cattle?**

Cattle prices fluctuate and are determined by the market. We recommend that you communicate your status as a Certified Operation when marketing your cattle.

Currently, the Canadian Beef Sustainability Acceleration Pilot project is providing credits to participating producers to help build supply chains interested in sourcing from Certified Operations.

### **What is the time commitment to participate?**

The time commitment for a Certified Operation will likely vary depending on the operation, how much preparation is required for certification, and what systems are in place to track and record production practices.

### **What is the cost to participate?**

Contact a Certification Body to learn more about costs.

### **How can I ensure that my cattle are marketed to a certified operation to maintain “sustainable” identity?**

Work with your supply chain to facilitate effective cattle marketing with the beef value chain.

## For Beef Supply Chain Partners:

### What are the requirements to use the *Certified Sustainable Beef* logo and make a claim?

The CRSB Communications, Claims and Labelling Guide outlines all of the requirements for using CRSB Marks and making CRSB Claims. Allowable claims will vary depending on your role in the value chain, and which chain of custody model (identity preservation, segregation or mass balance) you employ within your supply chain. Visit the [Logo Use page](#) on the [CRSB Certified website](#) for details.

### Is there a cost to use the *CRSB Certified* program logos?

YES. There will be program fees for some users associated with using the CRSB Marks. Visit the [Logo Use page](#) on the [CRSB Certified website](#) for details.

### Do I need an audit?

Yes, likely. If you are planning to make a claim, whether On-Product or Off-Product, the claim owner is required to have a Chain Of Custody Audit to demonstrate that cattle and beef have been traced through Certified Operations throughout the supply chain. If you are a producer or primary processor, you will be required to have a certification audit.

### Is there a specific tracking program I need to use for chain of custody?

NO. There are no specific programs required for Chain of Custody tracking. Whatever system you plan to use must comply with the [Chain of Custody Requirements](#).

### How can I be sure I am REALLY sourcing from Certified Operations?

The Assurance Protocols embedded in the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* are robust, and will demonstrate that all cattle can be traced to the point of origin through Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and Chain Of Custody Requirements via a valid data management system.

### We can't source enough product – can CRSB help us?

YES. The CRSB's role is to help facilitate the Canadian beef value chain to develop effective supply chains to source product through Certified Operations. If you would like assistance in developing a supply chain for your business, please [contact the CRSB](#).

### Are there quality standards associated with *Certified Sustainable Beef*?

NO. Quality and food safety standards are monitored by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Canada Beef Grading Agency, and are not addressed by the CRSB's Sustainability Standards.

### Can I charge a premium for products sourced through a certified sustainable supply chain?

Pricing for beef products is up to the discretion of the selling entity.

### How can I drive benefit from participating in the program?

Consumers are becoming more educated, and are thirsty for information about how their food is raised and where it comes from. The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* provides another tool to help you communicate about sustainable production practices in Canadian beef. The claims framework will provide robust messaging that will provide your customers with the information they seek, backed by the assurances of the Framework.



### Can I co-brand or use the CRSB logo in my own branded beef program?

YES! *CRSB Certified* is not meant to be its own branded beef program. It was developed with the intention of supporting sustainable and responsible production practices in the Canadian beef industry. We believe the real value will be driven by existing company and branded programs adding this to their arsenal of messaging. Visit the [website](#) to learn more about the guidelines for communicating about sourcing from Certified Operations in your supply chain.

## For Consumers and the Public

### How can you be sure this beef was raised responsibly?

The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* includes robust standards encompassing all five principles of sustainable beef that demonstrate sustainability and responsible production and processing practices; the certification component of the Framework provides assurances that certified operations are, and continue to be, raising beef responsibly.

### What does sustainability mean?

CRSB has adopted the [Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef](#)'s definition: Sustainable Beef is an environmentally sound, social responsible and economically viable product that prioritizes the **Planet**, **People**, **Animals** and **Progress**.

### How does the Framework address 'raised without the use of antibiotics and/or hormones', 'organic', 'certified humane', grass-fed, practices?

The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* may be applied to numerous types of production systems (eg. grass-fed, organic, no added hormones, antibiotic free, grain fed etc.). The Framework does not endorse any specific production system but rather recognizes responsible practices and outcomes within each production system.

- For example: There are production systems in Canada that utilize antibiotics to support animal health outcomes, while others are antibiotic-free. Both can be sustainable production systems if managed correctly. The CRSB certifies the outcome of good animal health and the responsible practices (eg. responsible antimicrobial use) that are utilized to ensure the animal health and care outcome.

### Who audits the operations participating in the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*?

All auditing is carried out by Certification Bodies approved by the CRSB. [NSF International](#) provides third party oversight for the Framework.

### Who developed the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*?

The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* was developed by the diverse membership community of the [Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef](#). Public consultations were executed throughout development of the standards to ensure that all perspectives were considered. The framework includes robust assurance protocols and conflict of interest policies to ensure the credibility of the program. The third party oversight and external Certification Bodies add an additional layer of independence.

### Does *Certified Sustainable Beef* taste better?

Taste is in the eye of the beholder! The CRSB's *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is based on production and processing standards, not on quality or grading standards.

### Does beef labelled as *CRSB Certified* cost more?

The cost of beef is determined by the market and the supply chain. The cost of beef labelled as *CRSB Certified* will depend on the perceived value and willingness of consumers to pay for it. *CRSB* is not involved in determining the cost of products.



### **Does this mean that farmers and ranchers who are not certified are not using sustainable practices?**

NO. The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is a voluntary program and only one of many tools that beef producers in Canada may use to demonstrate and advance their responsible production practices. The CRSB's [National Beef Sustainability Assessment](#) provides a national snapshot of the overall sustainability of the Canadian beef industry.

### **Are animals treated more humanely in this program than those from non-certified farms?**

The *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle* is the standard for animal care in Canada that applies to all beef producers. The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* provides an additional tool to certify that appropriate animal care practices are being followed, but by no means indicates that those who choose not to be certified according with this framework are less committed to animal care.

### **What is being checked for certification?**

The certification process evaluates production and processing operations according to the indicators outlined in the *Sustainable Beef Production Standard* and the *Sustainable Beef Processing Standard*, which encompass the five principles of sustainable beef: Natural Resources, People & Community, Animal Health & Welfare, Food, and Efficiency and Innovation.

### **What are the criteria for certification? Where can I get more information?**

Criteria for certification includes achievement to level 1 on ALL indicators outlined in the *Sustainable Beef Production Standard* or *Sustainable Beef Processing Standard*, depending on the type of operation being assessed. For more information, visit the [Certified Sustainable Beef Framework](#) website.

### **Why aren't all beef producers certified?**

The *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is a voluntary program and is just one of the tools that the Canadian beef industry uses to advance and demonstrate sustainable practices.