

WORKSHOP REPORT

Managing Beet for Healthy Rivers: A Water Stewardship Workshop for the Sugar Beet Supply Chain



Summary

On the 26th October 2016, WWF & Coca-Cola hosted a Water Stewardship workshop for the sugar beet supply chain to:

1. Set out evidence of the impact of sugar beet production on the environment;
2. Discuss a range of potential solutions across all levels of the supply chain;
3. Seek agreement and support from across the supply chain for solutions identified;
4. Seek agreement and support to deliver key solutions within our Water Stewardship catchments – the Cam-Ely-Ouse and/or Broadland Rivers.

The day included a series of presentations from across the supply chain and a facilitated session that:

1. Recognised that environmental impact was the responsibility of the entire supply chain and must be addressed collaboratively;
2. Highlighted the importance of demonstrating impact if the supply chain is to act;
3. Proposed a next step of setting out the measures that the sugar beet supply chain could implement within the CamEO and Broadland Rivers catchment for the supply chain to consider.

1. Background

Through WaterLIFE (waterlife.org.uk) WWF-UK is engaging with business within catchment management. In partnership with Coca-Cola, WWF-UK is working with partners within two catchments in East Anglia; the Broadland Rivers and Cam and Ely-Ouse (CamEO) to reduce the

impacts of diffuse water pollution from agriculture. The partnership funds two full time farm advisers in these catchments to support farmers to implement measures that reduce the impact of production, in particular pollution, on the water environment. The advisers are employed by Norfolk Rivers Trust and the Rivers Trust, but work closely with the Broadland and CamEO catchment partnerships established under Defra's Catchment Based Approach (CaBA).

This is critical to Coca-Cola as they aim to replenish equal volumes of water to the environment that is used in the production of their beverages. The partnership does this by supporting farmers to improve soil quality, reduce pollution and increase aquifer attenuation within the catchment. A core sustainability element of the partnership includes engaging with partners from across the CaBA in East Anglia and by sharing learning and bringing new partners on board.

However, because sugar beet is just one component of a crop rotation system our partnership does not focus solely on sugar beet production, instead we aim to work with farmers engaged in the production of all commodities, for example, onions, carrots, maize, potatoes and livestock in key sugar beet production areas. This means our work also mitigates the impact from other commodity supply chains.

2. Workshop Aims

The aim of the workshop was to explore how one supply chain – sugar beet – could work together to mitigate impact on the environment, and create a united voice for water stewardship approaches. Specifically, we wanted to:

- 1) Set out evidence of the impact of sugar beet production on the environment;
- 2) Discuss a range of potential solutions across all levels of the supply chain;
- 3) Seek agreement and support from across the supply chain for solutions identified;
- 4) Seek agreement and support to deliver key solutions within our Water Stewardship catchments – the CamEO and/or Broadland Rivers.

The workshop attendees were individually invited members of the sugar beet supply chain. Discussions on the day were mediated by an independent facilitator under Chatham House rules.

To this avail, this report will not include specific details of attendees and their contribution.

3. Workshop Design Process

Bringing the entire supply chain together was ambitious and risked certain sections of the supply chain receiving disproportionate attention. Therefore the workshop was co-designed with a small number of supply chain representatives to ensure a balanced format that could be supported by whole supply chain and reduce the potential of conflicting opinions. . A series of one-to-one discussions with all parts of the supply chain, including farmers and farming representatives, occurred throughout the design process and prior to the workshop itself.

These conversations highlighted concerns from different supply chain stakeholders that they would be held to blame for any pollution impacts resulting from sugar beet production (farmers, the buyer and retailers all highlighted this risk). Brands were less concerned about being blamed, but they were worried that they would be unable to act on decisions made on the day. The one to one conversations worked well in helping to understand the supply chain including their level of knowledge, level of interest, their needs to engage on the day and their level of ability to engage.

This engagement work took place over a six month period between May and October 2016.

4. The workshop itself

Twenty four delegates attended from across the supply chain:

Supply chain sector	Proportion of attendees
Retailer	5%
Brand	23%
Buyer	9%
Farmer	14%
Farming representative	9%
Business representative	5%
Experts (academics/agriculture)	14%
NGO (including farm advisers)	18%

Attendees were asked what they would like to get out of the day. Two themes emerged:

1) Collaboration

Nearly all stakeholders highlighted a desire to understand how to better work together and align as a wide supply chain and what their role could or should be. In particular the upper supply chain wanted to understand their role.

2) Understanding mitigation measures

A number of stakeholders wanted to understand the facts around beet production, its impact, and the measures that can be employed to overcome risk and what they can do about it. This included discussion of mitigating unintended consequences and understanding the impact of beet production and agriculture.

The workshop was split into two sessions. The morning session included presentations from across the supply chain including the producer, buyers and environmental representative. The afternoon session was a facilitated session to discuss and agree: What have we learnt? What solutions have we identified? What solutions can we implement?

Facilitated Session

A facilitated session was led by external facilitator Alex Inman. Attendees initially split into two groups before returning to plenary and asked to:

In groups:

1. Identify short, medium and long-term actions to reduce the impacts of sugar beet production on the environment.
2. Develop these ideas with consideration as to who should be responsible for implementing them, how and identifying any barriers to implementation
3. To rationalise and prioritise these measures as a list of supply chain actions that could be implemented within two, five and ten years;

In plenary:

4. To discuss the actions identified and seek agreement on how they could be implemented within the CamEO and/or Broadland catchment(s) and more widely.

5. Outcomes of Facilitated Session

In groups, attendees identified a large number of measures that could be implemented by all parts of the supply chain, for example:

- Bespoke on-farm measures supported by the entire supply chain;
- Alignment with private sector agronomists that already attend farms to include water sensitive farming asks.
- Better management of the beet supply chain (for example including prioritisation mapping that links environmental risk with timing of harvest);
- NGO's to champion supply chain and provide 'validation' of sustainable supply chains.
- Share best practice across the supply chain and with other supply chains.
- Government to provide a transparent balance between regulation and voluntary measures.

For details of the entire list of measures identified please see annex 1.

The groups were not able to assign clear timeframes to many of the ideas within the time available as it was felt that further conversations would be needed.

During the plenary session there was clear agreement that the whole supply chain had a collective responsibility to work together to be most effective at mitigating the environmental impact of sugar beet production. A synthesis of the key discussion points is as follows:

1. Unanimous agreement amongst attendees that the responsibility for mitigating adverse impacts of production lays across the entire supply chain.

2. That these solutions could and should be addressed through collective action.
3. Strengths of businesses taking collective action in conjunction with catchment partnerships e.g. the Cameo Water Stewardship Board was noted.
4. That the 'asks' of farmers need to be clear and outcome driven with changes or proposed standards to current practice aligned to a clear target for environmental improvement.
5. The upper supply chain invited a detailed proposal from NGO's with regards to taking this forward by identifying a specific area of the catchments for which such an approach could be delivered.

6. Next Steps

It was agreed that:

- The Rivers Trust, Norfolk Rivers Trust and British Sugar will work with Cameo and Broadland catchment partnerships together with WWF-UK to create a funding proposal for demonstrating how supply chain action can deliver environmental improvements – end of March 2017.
- The RT and NRT will investigate the potential for measures that can be demonstrated at a field scale.
- All businesses that were engaged with the workshop (including preparatory discussions) will receive workshop follow up notes and report.
- Consideration will be made about how to take the lessons learnt from this workshop to gain additional support from supply chain businesses producing other commodities.
- Additional supporting workshops to be taken forward within the supply chain with support from NGO's.

ANNEX 1: Facilitated Session

Breakout group 1

Exercise 1: Supply chain action

Consumers & People:

- Understanding of beet
- Help consumers understand what it is

Rivers:

- How to get something bad to good
- What are the easy wins
- Details of actions needed
- Rivers Trusts farm visits
- Simple actions
- Drill to detail beyond headlines
- Bespoke measures
- Share best practice with other commodities
- Retailers valuing soil quality (in-store?!)
- Think of unintended consequences of specification – i.e. carrots need immediate demand in store.

Exercise two: brainstorm of measures that can delivered by everyone across supply chain	
Actions for NGO's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support with evidence of impact - Support by championing good work
Actions for Farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location sensitive harvesting and delivery - On farm measures: silt traps, cover crops, minimum tillage – but where does funding and advice come from? - Ensure all crops in rotation to pull their weight
For buyers/beet experts/brands and retailers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plant breeding to promote cover more quickly - Plant breeding to promote beet that holds sugar for longer (i.e. not lost in clamp/store) - Improve national beet stock management in harvest period - Best practice demonstration farms and knowledge sharing (but this was also advised to be farmer led) - Champion best in class - Create narratives – farm to fridge, local stories - Supply chain communications about local river projects - Support bespoke on-farm advice/private sector grants for measures - Fund more farm advisers to give advice - Co-ordinate/align agronomists of private suppliers and ensure they talk about soil health and water - Long term advice is promoted to build relationships and trust - Align initiatives with certifications and others - Engage all growers in best practice - Speak to suppliers about efforts to conserve soil health – i.e. carrot harvesting every day. - Measure river quality and make transparent and publicise a league table that identifies actions to improvement. - Increased holding capacity at primary purchaser
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get the right balance between carrot and stick (regulation and voluntary)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carrots (economic benefit) and sticks (regulatory) – use more carrots to improve behaviour - Match funding for private sector grants - Better targeting of public sector funds for water quality - Ensure that existing payments are protected
Governance measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brands to share long terms plans with government - Supply chain to lobby for policies that support on farm interventions - Create 'real' supply chains - Working with others such as WRAP to influence Coultard water asks.
ALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmer-retailer-supplier relationships - Work with water companies who also want clean water – co-funding and advice both potential methods of collaboration - Make priorities clear across the value chain - Recognise that it's OK to profit from sustainability

Breakout group 2:

Exercise 1:

- Economics
- Communication
- Understand blockers – review – minimum standards - bespoke – accreditation – communicating to the hard to reach
- Cost/benefits (business case to government)
- Knowledge exchange – 121 – farmer-farmer – demo farmers
- Who pays – natural capital – pilot
- Best practice – what do we need to do?
- Supply chain transparency (sugar and rotation) – linkage and co-ordination needed

Immediate action	Medium action	Long-term action
Making the business case for sustainable production – farm – business and government level	Create a minimum standard to be expected from all producers (agreed by majority)	Financial incentives
Good practice guide and economics	Understand blockers to action	Unlocking cynicism
Business communications	Develop messages around 'what's in it for me'!	Private sector investment in natural capital – nat cap market for water – long term
Share pressures and business drivers up and down the supply chain	Less prescriptive blanket regulation and more holistic solutions/shared vision and actions	Long term soil organic bio-matter – targets (not regulatory but aspirational)
Land management grant scheme/agri-env scheme that is flexible but looks to long term and local priorities	On farm monitoring of success of water management	Advisory work Best practice & economics for championing Understand blockers
Events n partnership such as growers learning events, benchmarking and closed groups	LEAF marque certification, partnerships with other organisations found	Value food consumer choice
Land management grant scheme (moving to other schemes based on natural capital longer term)	LEAF sustainable farming review – IFM self-assessment sustainability review	

ANNEX 2: Workshop Evaluation

13 out of 26 attendees provided formal workshop feedback					
1. Did you find the workshop useful?	Yes, it was very useful 92%	It was a little useful 8%	No, it wasn't useful 0%		
2. How much more informed do you feel about the impact of sugar beet production and agriculture on the water environment?	I am significantly more informed about the impacts 38%	I have greater understanding of the impacts 46%	I am aware of the impacts 15%	Did not affect my understanding 0%	
3. As a result of the workshop, how much more aware are you of the potential solutions to managing the impacts across the supply chain?	I am significantly more aware of the solutions 38%	I have a greater understanding about the solutions 46%	Aware of some of the solutions 15%	Did not affect my understanding 0%	
4. Do you feel that workshop participants agreed on key solutions to tackle the impacts of sugar beet production?	Yes, there was strong consensus around some key solutions 8%	High degree of agreement around some key solutions 62%	Partial agreement around some key solutions 23%	No, participants couldn't come to an agreement 0%	No answer 4%
5. As a result of the workshop, are there any specific actions identified that you can now go and deliver	Yes 62%	No 31%			No answer 4%
	- Support supply chain proposal - Carry out internal discussion - Work to understand catchments and blockers to action - Continue the conversation - Support supply chain proposal with catchment level detail.	- Need supply chain invitations to proceed. - Conclusions were too broad and required significant further input from stakeholders before action on the ground can be seen. - Not yet there but keen to be involved in future conversations.			