

## Assessing Progress toward Sustainability

**Context:** There is widespread consensus about the need for assessing sustainability but little agreement about how to define or measure it.

**Objective:** A systematic assessment approach process for measuring progress toward landscape sustainability goals has been developed and tested.

**Method:** The approach was developed based on existing literature and experiences in applying the approach to support more sustainable agricultural landscapes. Examples applying this approach are summarized for case studies in the United States and Mexico.



**Results:** The approach has six steps: the scope and objectives of the assessment are determined based on the particular context; indicators that alert pending concerns are selected and prioritized based on utility and relevance; baselines and targets are established for each indicator, and scenarios for consideration are determined; the indicator values are obtained and evaluated; trends in and tradeoffs among indicator values are analyzed; and good practices are developed, applied, and assessed.

**Conclusions:** Applying this approach suggests that designing sustainable landscapes depends on stakeholder engagement, effective communication, transparency and trust, timely monitoring, and continual improvement. Iterative application of the assessment approach builds capacity and promotes continual improvements in management practices, thus enabling timely responses to changing conditions while progressing toward locally defined goals.

**Reference:** Dale VH, Kline KL, Parish ES, Eichler SE. 2019. Engaging stakeholders to assess landscape sustainability. *Landscape Ecology*. DOI: 10.1007/s10980-019-00848-1. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10980-019-00848-1>

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