



# Sector Sprint 2024: How to unlock nature-positive transformation in the food retail sector?

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## Reference

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## Guidance note for the report:

This report uses both footnotes and endnotes to ensure readability. Footnotes (as Roman numerals) have been added to provide explanations and description to support the main text of the report. On the other hand, endnotes (as Arabic numerals) have been added to indicate references that support the arguments made in the report.

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## Sector sprint key messages

**1.** To halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 requires transformational change and ambitious targets and actions across all sectors. **The food retail sector has a key role to play in the transformation of the food sector**, however challenges such as low understanding of businesses' impacts and dependencies on biodiversity persist.

**2.** **Major impacts and dependencies exist in the mid- and downstream of the food retail sector value-chain**, particularly around waste management and remediation.

**3.** While there is emerging guidance on how to measure nature-related impacts, dependencies, risks and opportunities, it is **primarily focused on food production and upstream value-chain activities, meaning specific guidance for food retailers is lacking.**

**4.** To reduce impacts linked to waste management and remediation, **food retailers can explore opportunities such as circular models for products and improving demand forecasting for produce.**

**The food retail sector also has a unique opportunity to educate consumers on sustainable choices**, although essential first steps include reducing information complexity and building trust in sustainability claims.

**Retailers can benefit from engaging with initiatives like the EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub, as well as the EU Business & Biodiversity Platform**, and national business and biodiversity platforms, which exist to address business-related challenges by providing a community of practice and guidance material.

**Businesses are at varying stages on their journey towards conducting business in a nature-positive way.** Recognising the high level of ambition required to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, those at a more advance stage, initiatives such as Science Based Targets Network (SBTN) can help them set more ambitious targets.

**Shareholders** (institutional investors) **could help corporate food retailers to transitions** towards nature positive outcomes through collaborative engagement such as Nature Action 100.

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<sup>i</sup> Sustainable is used here as 'nature positive' is not a commonly used term amongst consumers.

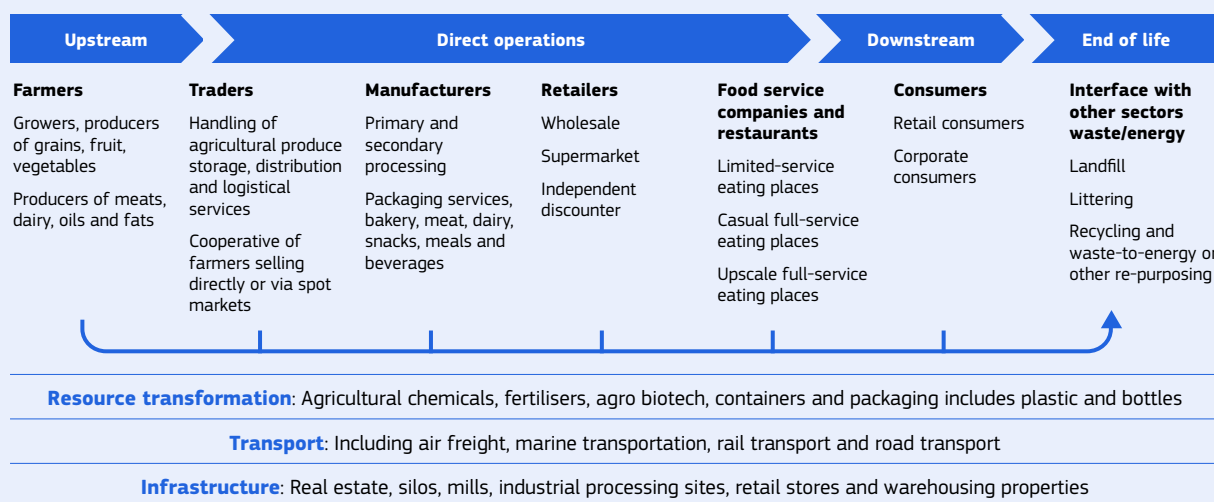
# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The significance of the retail sector in our food systems

With half of the world’s gross domestic product relying significantly or moderately on nature<sup>ii</sup>, biodiversity<sup>iii</sup> loss poses considerable risks to the global economy and demands urgent action. The Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) calls for a transition towards a nature-positive approach by 2030, and the World Economic Forum has highlighted that embracing nature-positive transitions in key socio-economic systems could unlock \$10.1 trillion in business opportunities by 2030.<sup>1</sup> Businesses must play a key role in this transition by, for example, implementing Targets 14 and 15 of the GBF, which requires them to assess, report, and reduce negative impacts on biodiversity while promoting sustainable production.<sup>2</sup>

The food sector plays a significant role in both the global and EU economies, providing food for almost the entire population, contributing 2% of the EU’s gross value added<sup>3</sup> and 8% of total EU employment.<sup>4</sup> It has supported a growing population and spurred economic development, but its resource demands have also made it a primary driver of biodiversity loss and a major contributor to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.<sup>5</sup> Food retailers in particular occupy a unique position within the food system as they ‘sit at the nexus of extensive value chains, connecting consumers to global producers’<sup>6</sup> (see Figure 1). This unique position allows food retailers to drive change throughout the value chain by influencing producers, consumers, financiers, and regulatory authorities<sup>7</sup> as a key driver of systemic transformation, and explores the challenges faced and levers for meaningful transformation within the sector.

**Figure 1.**  
Illustration of the food sector value chain, from TNFD additional sector guidance – Food and agriculture



<sup>ii</sup> The term ‘nature’ includes all life on Earth, together with the geology, water, climate and all other inanimate components that comprise our planet. From Convention on Biological Diversity. Available at: [www.cbd.int/ldb/activities/difference-biodiversity-nature.pdf](http://www.cbd.int/ldb/activities/difference-biodiversity-nature.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> ‘Biodiversity’ is the part of nature that is alive and includes every living thing on Earth. While biodiversity and nature are closely aligned, they are not quite the same. See footnote ii. From Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> According to SASB (*Food Retailers & Distributors, 2023*), the Food Retailers & Distributors industry consists of entities engaged in wholesale and retail sales of food, beverage and agricultural products. Store formats include retail supermarkets, convenience stores, warehouse supermarkets, liquor stores, bakeries, natural food stores, specialty food stores, seafood stores and distribution centres. Entities may specialise in one type of store format or have facilities that contain many formats. Products typically are sourced worldwide and include fresh meat and produce, prepared foods, processed foods, baked goods, frozen and canned foods, non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages, and a wide selection of household goods and personal care products. Food retailers also may produce or sell private-label products.

It is important to note that the food value chain is extensive and complex. Although [Figure 1](#) depicts farmers at the start of the value chain in relation to food as a commodity, they are dependent on various suppliers even further upstream, such as those providing seeds, fertilisers, and chemicals.

While the role of the food sector in halting biodiversity loss and moving towards a nature-positive approach has been the subject of multiple guidance and studies ([see Section 6, Further Reading](#)), these studies have primarily focused on food production processes, or the upstream part of the food retailers' value chain ([see Figure 1](#)). However, an assessment using the [ENCORE tool](#)<sup>v</sup> for this report also revealed significant impact drivers associated with waste collection, treatment, and disposal—essentially the direct operations and downstream value chain of food retailers.<sup>vi</sup> With fewer sectoral initiatives and guidance available for activities downstream of the retail sector, this report specifically explores the influence the food retail sector can have on activities occurring through direct operations and the downstream sectors of the value chain ([see Figure 1](#)).

## 1.2. Stakeholder engagement

This report is produced as part of the Workstream Mainstreaming of the EU Business & Biodiversity (B&B) Platform, which aims to accelerate nature-positive actions among businesses and provide

momentum towards achieving a 'critical mass' of businesses on their journey to contributing to a nature-positive world ([see Section 3](#)).

For the development of this report, the EU B&B Platform engaged with representatives from the food retail sector and their stakeholders, including academia, civil society, investors and policy makers to help identify transformative actions that can be taken at different levels to progress towards nature-positive models.

It is important to note that participation from food industry stakeholders in this sector sprint was limited. Due to the scarcity of input based on experience, the report primarily relies on existing publicly available materials and the compilation of general guidance.

Various engagement methods were employed, including interviews and presentations from industry leaders during a workshop run by EU B&B Platform at the [European conference on Biodiversity in Food Supply Chains](#). The workshop, conducted as a Breakout Session aimed to understand challenges faced by food retailers and barriers to nature-positive change. It featured presentations from industry stakeholders and small-group discussions. Semi-structured bilateral interviews with food retailers further explored challenges in achieving nature-positive change, supplementing the workshop findings.

<sup>v</sup> ENCORE (Exploring Natural Capital Opportunities, Risks and Exposure) is a free, online tool that helps organisations explore their exposure to nature-related risk and take the first steps to understand their dependencies and impacts on nature. Available at: <https://encorenature.org/en>

<sup>vi</sup> 'High' materiality related to: greenhouse gas emissions; and, disturbances like noise, light and odour pollution due to the operation of disposal facilities and waste transportation, that can disrupt or negatively affect species populations.

## 2. Understanding the risks created by the food retail sector dependencies and impacts on nature

Recognising the nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities (see Box 1) present in food retail businesses and broader food systems is essential for taking steps to incorporate nature into business models. The TNFD LEAP Framework helps organisations to understand and manage their nature-related risks<sup>8</sup> and the ENCORE tool developed by Global Canopy, UNEP FI and UNEP-WCMC is designed to provide an 'entry point' for businesses at various stages of nature-positive journey (see Section 3) who are aiming to understand their dependencies and impacts on nature in order to manage these risks.

### 2.1. How the sector impacts on biodiversity

For this report, an ENCORE analysis was conducted on the impacts of direct operations and downstream activities of the food retail sector, noting that upstream food production activities have already been covered more extensively than downstream activities (further reading available in Section 6). The objective was to pinpoint business operations that are likely to have the most significant negative impact on nature.

Completing an ENCORE assessment for a business to Evaluate its impacts and dependencies on nature forms part of the TNFD's LEAP Approach<sup>10</sup> and provides a foundation for assessing and disclosing material nature-related risks and opportunities.

The application of the ENCORE tool for the food retail sector revealed that within direct operations and downstream sectors,<sup>vii</sup> key impact drivers with High impacts on nature include:



#### BOX 1.

#### Nature-related issues: dependencies, impacts, risks & opportunities

There are four nature-related issues that need to be identified, assessed, managed and potentially disclosed to the primary users of general financial reports and other stakeholders:

- **Dependencies** – of the organisation on nature.
- **Impacts** – on nature caused, or contributed to, by the organisation.
- **Risks** – to the organisation stemming from their dependencies and impacts.
- **Opportunities** – for the organisation that benefit nature through positive impact or mitigation of negative impacts on nature.<sup>9</sup>

- Waste collection, including disposing of food waste by means of refuse bins. These activities drive high emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHGs), and highly material noise and light disturbances.
- Materials recovery including separating and sorting of recoverable materials such as plastic and paper or cans followed by, for example, sorting or pelleting of plastics or crushing, cleaning and sorting of glass. These activities drive high noise and light disturbances.
- Waste treatment and disposal including use of landfills, incineration or organic waste treatment. These activities create high levels

<sup>vii</sup> Sectors as defined by the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), the international reference classification of productive activities: Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Econ/isic#:~:text=The%20International%20Standard%20Industrial%20Classification,statistics%20according%20to%20such%20activities>

of pollution through emissions of air, soil and water pollutants, GHG emissions and noise and light disturbances. Another key impact driver is sewerage which has a highly material impact through soil and water pollution, and very high introduction of invasive species and noise and light disturbances, as well as a high impact on GHG emissions.

- Remediation activities including decontamination of soils and groundwater, including after accidental pollution. These activities drive high GHG emissions, noise and light disturbances.

## 2.2. How the sector depends on biodiversity

The application of the ENCORE tool for the food retail sector revealed that within direct operations and downstream sectors,<sup>viii</sup> key activities with High and Very High dependencies on biodiversity include:

- Both waste treatment and disposal and remediation activities other than waste management services ([see Section 2.1 for example](#)) have a very high dependency on the ecosystem service 'solid waste remediation services' to transform organic or inorganic substances through the mitigation of harmful effects provided by the action of micro-organisms, algae, plants and animals.
- Materials recovery ([see Section 2.1 for example](#)) also has a high dependency on solid waste remediation services to transform organic or inorganic substances, and facilitate processing of natural materials (e.g. food, beverage, tobacco waste) into secondary raw materials.

Stakeholder perspectives provided for this report indicate that there is a widespread lack of understanding within the sector regarding business

dependencies on nature. This is reflected by reports from the CDP and the World Benchmarking Alliance that despite an increase in reporting momentum, reporting on dependencies is one of the biggest challenges for businesses ([see Box 2](#)). The ultimate result of this is in an unclear business case for where action should be taken ([see Section 4.1 Understanding the Business Case for Biodiversity](#)).



### BOX 2.

#### Reporting on impact and dependencies

CDP's corporate nature dataset on biodiversity reporting reveals that in 2023, there has been a 20% increase in the number of companies assessing the impact of their value chains on biodiversity compared to 2022. However, fewer than 10% of companies assessed their dependencies on biodiversity in 2023.<sup>11</sup> These trends underscore growing momentum towards transparency, but a lag in businesses' understanding of the risks inherent in their reliance on biodiversity (as biodiversity rich ecosystems provide more services).

Another study, the 2023 Nature Benchmark by World Benchmarking Alliance, reveals that only 2% (9 out of 380) of the biggest companies in the food and agriculture sector globally disclose their environmental impacts, and none comprehensively address and disclose their dependencies on nature. Although some companies have started to assess their impacts and dependencies, they often only cover a fraction of their operations or neglect to publish the results.<sup>12</sup>

viii Sectors as defined by the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), the international reference classification of productive activities: Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Econ/isic#:~:text=The%20International%20Standard%20Industrial%20Classification,statistics%20according%20to%20such%20activities>

## 3. Nature-positive action

### 3.1. What is 'nature positive' for the food retail sector?

Transitioning to a nature positive world involves a fundamental transition from exploiting nature to using it sustainably in pursuit of achieving the objectives of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of reversing nature and biodiversity loss by 2030 and fully restoring nature and biodiversity by 2050. It will also ensure an indispensable contribution to food and water security and climate change mitigation and adaptation, all essential for business continuation. Nature-positive for the food retail sector involves integrating nature into business models to address nature-related risks, but it also involves harnessing nature-related opportunities. Businesses should prioritise their focus for nature-positive action according to sector, value chain and geography in accordance with the LEAP framework<sup>15</sup>, however the position and influence of food retailers provides a particular opportunity for influence change throughout the value chains<sup>16</sup>.

### 3.2. Transition plans for nature-positive action

The EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)<sup>ix</sup> is an EU regulation which requires large<sup>x</sup> and listed companies in priority sectors (including Food and Beverages) to monitor and report on their impact on people and the planet. It aims to drive accountability and transparency, while promoting sustainable practices and investments.<sup>17</sup> According to the original version of the CSRD, in scope



#### BOX 3.

#### What is meant by 'Nature Positive'?

According to the Nature Positive Initiative, nature positive is a global societal goal defined as '*Halt and Reverse Nature Loss by 2030 on a 2020 baseline and achieve full recovery by 2050*'. To put this more simply, it means ensuring more nature in the world in 2030 than in 2020 and continued recovery after that.<sup>13</sup>

The EU B&B Platform's 2022 [Thematic Report on Nature Positive](#) introduces 10 principles for Nature Positive, including that nature-positive action needs to be implemented '*in full compliance with the mitigation hierarchy (i.e. avoiding new negative impacts, reducing ongoing impacts, restoring what is destroyed by the company in the period 2020 – 2030, and offsetting if needed) and complemented with additional conservation/restoration measures which will contribute to achieving full nature recovery by 2050*'.<sup>14</sup>

businesses must disclose a nature transition plan along with their material nature-related information ([see Box 4](#))<sup>xi</sup>. This plan should outline goals, targets, actions, accountability mechanisms, and resources to address biodiversity loss, aiming for full recovery by 2050. It should focus on reducing negative impacts, protecting nature, transforming systems, and collaborating with stakeholders.<sup>18</sup>

ix CSRD was adopted in 2021 to support the EU's Green Deal and comes into force for those in scope in 2025.

x Large companies under CSRD are those which are large according to Article 3(7) of Directive 2013/34/EU i.e. a balance sheet total > EUR20 million, net turnover > EUR 40 million more than 500 employees, and , although the EU Omnibus 26 February 2025 includes a proposal to target only the largest EU companies with staff count >1000 and either a turnover >EUR50m or a balance sheet >EUR 25 million.

xi Following the Simplification omnibus I and II proposed by the European Commission on 26 February 2025, these requirements may change. The extent of these changes to the CSRD are however unknown at the time of writing this report.

**BOX 4.****What is a 'nature transition plan'?**

The European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) provide detailed reporting standards for implementing CSRD. ESRS4 Biodiversity and ecosystems, Disclosure requirement E4-1 **Transition plan on biodiversity and ecosystems** requires that 'The undertaking shall disclose its plan to ensure that its business model and strategy are compatible with the respect of planetary boundaries of the biosphere integrity and land-system change and relevant targets outlined in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of no net loss by 2030, net gain from 2030, full recovery by 2050, and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030'.<sup>19</sup>

According to the TNFD, which provides businesses with guidance and tools to meet voluntary and regulatory disclosure standards, 'a nature transition plan is an aspect of an organisation's overall business strategy that lays out the organisation's goals, targets, actions, accountability mechanisms and intended resources to respond and contribute to the transition implied by the Global Biodiversity Framework where biodiversity loss is halted and reversed by 2030 to put nature on a path to recovery by 2050. Actions in such plans should prioritise real economy changes and may include: avoiding and reducing negative impacts; protecting, conserving, regenerating and restoring nature; transforming underlying systems to address the drivers of nature loss; and collaborating and engaging with Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and stakeholders.'<sup>20</sup>

In order to complete a nature transition plan, businesses should already have completed a LEAP assessment to identify nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks, and opportunities throughout the business model and value chain (see Section 2). The transition plan should include the content shown in Figure 2, however as noted by the WWF, due to the interconnected nature of biodiversity and climate risks, businesses can first consider how nature can be built into existing

climate-related transition plans.<sup>21</sup> More guidance on transition plans can be found on the TNFD website.<sup>22</sup>

Although not in the food and drink industry, Decathlon in a retail business which provides an example of a business which is actively integrating biodiversity considerations into its business strategy, implementing initiatives and action plans aimed at promoting biodiversity and sustainability (see Box 5).

**Figure 2.**

**Illustration of the food sector value chain, from TNFD additional sector guidance – Food and agriculture**

	<b>Foundations</b>	<b>Implementation Strategy</b>	<b>Engagement Strategy</b>	<b>Metrics and Targets</b>	<b>Governance</b>
<b>1</b>	Transition plan framing, and scope	Activities and decision-making	Landscape, river basin and seascape engagement	Dependency and impact metrics and targets	Roles, responsibilities and remuneration
<b>2</b>	Business model and value chains	Policies and conditions	Value chain engagement	Transition plan delivery metrics and targets	Skills and culture
<b>3</b>	Transition financing strategies	Products and services	Industry engagement		
<b>4</b>	Plan priorities		Government, public sector and civil society engagement		

### 3.3. Influencing consumer behaviour towards nature positive

According to The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), *'as the last link in the chain and with direct contacts to the consumers, food retailers have a special responsibility. While they cannot tell the consumer what to buy, they can strongly communicate sustainability issues and raise awareness among consumers and influence their decisions. Many surveys and studies show that consumers' interest in biodiversity is slowly and steadily increasing'*.<sup>24</sup>

The Biodiversity Barometer 2024 reports that there is a high level of nature awareness among consumers, though country specific differences still prevail. For example, in Germany, 79% of consumers surveyed had heard of biodiversity in 2024, compared to 29% in 2009; in France 97% had heard of biodiversity in 2024 compared to 87% in 2009. In Germany and France, in 2024, 65% and 55% of consumers respectively reported that they completely agree that *'it is important that we not only stop biodiversity from disappearing but also regenerate it (build it back up)'*.<sup>25</sup> This consumer awareness, coupled with the unique position of food retailers in the value chain highlights an opportunity for food retailers to influence meaningful change.

The European Commission have presented a roadmap for future policy discussions, the Vision for Agriculture and Food. The Vision recognises that *'consumers have an important role to play in the transition towards more sustainable and resilient food systems'* and details plans for the Commission to hold a Food Dialogue with the food system's actors, including consumers, primary producers, industry, retailers, public authorities and civil society' in order to *'discuss and find solutions for critical issues such as investments, food affordability, diet and innovation in an inclusive manner'*.<sup>26</sup>



#### BOX 5.

#### CASE STUDY: Decathlon's Biodiversity-related initiatives

Decathlon is the world's largest EU-based sports retailer, operating in 72 countries with over 1,700 stores and net sales of €15.6 billion in 2023. Biodiversity considerations are integrated to its business strategy as follows:

- **2020-2026 Transition Plan:**  
Decathlon's current transition plan outlines sustainable development objectives related to people, nature, and sustainable value. The plan involves setting and monitoring strategic and operational efforts to track progress both internally and externally. This plan has provided confidence to shareholders and partners regarding Decathlon's evolving business model.
- **Assessment and target setting:**  
Since 2022, Decathlon has run an annual Biodiversity Footprint Assessment to identify the most impactful hot spots across the company's value chain regarding pressures and activities. In 2024, Decathlon conducted a biodiversity dependencies and risks assessment along their entire value chain, allowing the company to set specific priorities.
- **Advocacy and collaboration:**  
Decathlon places a strong emphasis on advocacy to drive sector and economy-wide transitions. The company works closely with governments, standard setters, and other stakeholders to advocate for ambitious policies on nature.<sup>23</sup>

Stakeholder discussions held for this report, however, revealed challenges related to complexity of information received by consumers as well as a consumer distrust of retailers and their sustainability claims. Hence a discord exists in which consumers expect nature-positive action but are 'price sensitive' and reluctant to pay more for their goods. Indeed, market trends show that rising costs of goods, energy, transport, and labour have led to a shift towards cheaper items and sparked tensions among retailers, manufacturers, producers, and governments over absorbing these costs.<sup>27</sup>

Stakeholders suggested that standardisation and alignment of food sustainability labels could not only help with comparability and consumer understanding but also improve consumer confidence in retailers and their nature-positive claims. Such labels and certification would also help shareholders in their active biodiversity engagement with food retailers.

### Practical tips for food retailers:



- Start with the facts first and build green claims around those to ensure claims are specific, evidence-based and can be properly substantiated.<sup>28</sup>
- Avoid high-risk red flag terms like 'eco', 'sustainable', 'green', and 'carbon neutral'.<sup>29</sup>
- Marketing teams should get legal advice on any proposed green claims as early as possible to avoid having to row back later.<sup>30</sup>
- Contribute to consumer education by informing consumers about the added value of biodiversity-friendly products e.g. create advertisement brochures that briefly explain standards and labels and explain how they can be identified in retail shops.<sup>31</sup>

## 3.4. Improving waste management impacts towards nature positive

Food waste reduction is a key feature of a sustainable food production system that could feed 10.2 billion people<sup>32</sup> within the planetary boundaries of biosphere integrity, land-system change, freshwater use and nitrogen flows. In the EU, most food waste occurs at the household level, with 54% of food waste in Europe generated at this stage.<sup>33</sup>

Food waste can occur at various stages of the value chain,<sup>34</sup> including:



**Storage:** Losses can occur during transport and storage due to factors such as pathogens, pests, and inadequate transport infrastructure. Additionally, poor forecasting of product demand and consumption volume may lead to product expiry. For example, the 'rule of one-third'<sup>35</sup> dictates that processed food should be kept in-store only within onethird of its shelf life and returned to producers if it surpasses this point.



**Process and Packaging:** Losses from product evaluation and quality checks, processing, and packaging, such as contamination and inadequate packaging technologies.



**Distribution:** Losses can occur in wholesale and retail markets due to poor storage (*see above*), over-production, returns of damaged goods, and handling issues.



**Consumption:** Losses at home occur due to over-purchasing and spoilage. Retailers discard imperfect but edible perishable food, and marketing strategies encourage buying more than needed, contributing to household waste.

Stakeholders were aware that both food waste and plastic packaging are key impact drivers for the retail sector, however there was a notable lack of discussion in stakeholder sessions held for this report around solutions such as circular economy principles.

Practitioners can refer to guidance on Waste Management by Business for Nature<sup>36</sup> for fundamentals for the development of a Nature Positive roadmap in the waste management sector - the guidance document provides insights on impact and dependencies, and outlines priority fields of action.

A recent EU agreement made in February 2025<sup>xii</sup> has seen member countries commit to setting binding targets to reduce food waste in the retail sector by 30 percent by 2030 compared to 2021-2023 levels. This portrays a context in which businesses will need to take measures to meet commensurate targets.



### Practical tips for food retailers:

- Redesigning product portfolios to include diverse, lower-impact and regeneratively produced ingredients.<sup>37</sup>
- Consider incorporating circular economy principles into food design to achieve environmental, economic, and yield benefits. (see Box 6)
- Conduct Lifecycle Assessments to evaluate the effects that products have on the environment over their lifespan.<sup>38</sup>
- Utilise technology and AI tools for better demand forecasting, understanding purchase patterns, and communicating with food waste reduction organisations and food banks.<sup>39</sup>
- Use dynamic pricing to adjust the price of a product according to its quality and meet market demand.<sup>40</sup>
- Use dynamic shelf life (DSL) to reflect the variable quality of a product and change the expiration date accordingly.<sup>41</sup>



### BOX 6.

#### CASE STUDY:

#### Apeel's innovative packaging and waste management solution

According to the Ellen Macarthur Foundation, the circular economy is based on three principles, driven by design:

- Eliminate waste and pollution
- Circulate products and materials (at their highest value)
- Regenerate nature<sup>42</sup>

Founded in 2012, Apeel has created a plant-based coating that replicates and enhances the natural defenses of fruits and vegetables, significantly slowing down spoilage caused by water loss and oxidation. Apeel's solution follows circular economy principles, extending the usability of fresh produce and promoting a food system where resources are used efficiently. By extending the shelf life of produce, Apeel contributes to reducing food waste at both retail and household levels, resulting in a lower environmental footprint. Apeel's approach illustrates how technology can be utilised to develop more sustainable and circular food systems. The innovation extends the freshness of produce by using natural plant defenses, which reduces food waste by slowing down the ripening process, plastic waste since no additional packaging is required, and energy and resource waste, as treating one avocado with Apeel saves 23 litres of water and enough energy to charge a smartphone nine times. Thus, Apeel's innovation aligns with key principles of the circular economy.<sup>43</sup>

UK supermarket Tesco trialled Apeel over three months in 2023 and reported that the learnings from the trial will help them shape their future plans.<sup>44</sup>

xii To accelerate the EU's progress towards Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3, the Commission has set **legally binding food waste reduction targets** to be achieved by Member States by 2030, as part of the [revised Waste Framework Directive](#), adopted on 5 July 2023. Preliminary political agreement has been reached on 18 February 2025, which maintains the levels of the targets proposed by the Commission and calls for an extensive review of the 13 targets by 2027. More information is available at: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/foodsafety/food-waste/eu-actions-against-food-waste/food-waste-reduction-targets\\_en](https://food.ec.europa.eu/foodsafety/food-waste/eu-actions-against-food-waste/food-waste-reduction-targets_en)



## 4.2. Complexity of measuring impacts and dependencies

Stakeholders indicated that the complexity of measuring impacts and dependencies arises from the location-specific nature of biodiversity data and the lack of comparability across the value chain. It was noted that more tools and support are necessary to comprehend the steps required to comply with the evolving regulatory landscape. Challenges in measurement evidently lead to sector-wide issues with data availability explored in [Section 4.3](#).

### Practical tips for food retailers:



- Invest in mechanisms to turn transactional relationships into partnerships to drive value chain changes. This facilitates new data collection and sharing methods to monitor nature-related impacts along the value chain. <sup>47</sup> ([see Box 7](#))
- Use the EU B&B Platform's [Biodiversity Measurement Navigation Wheel](#) to choose relevant biodiversity impact assessment methods. <sup>48</sup>



### BOX 7.

#### CASE STUDY:

#### Lidl's Biodiversity Add-On solution

Lidl, in collaboration with GlobalG.A.P. (an organisation that develops agriculture certifications), has developed a Biodiversity Add-on to integrate with its Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) standard for Fruit and Vegetables. This tool aims to help farmers with biodiversity assessments, evaluating their agricultural practices against biodiversity criteria and developing an action plan for continuous improvement. This initiative aims to promote farm level biodiversity and help market participants better understand how to evaluate science-based biodiversity criteria in ways which can create value for fruit and vegetable farmers. <sup>49</sup>

## 4.3. Data availability

To ensure that food retailers can disclose the impacts of their value chains, it is essential to have access to data on dependencies and impacts from upstream suppliers and producers. Recognising the broader footprint of businesses is crucial for determining suitable actions within business models and facilitating sector-wide nature-positive changes. ([see Box 1, Section 2.1](#)).

Challenges around availability of data from some value chain actors, particularly those which are not captured by mandatory reporting frameworks due to their size or location, was raised multiple times by stakeholders and a bottleneck created by data privacy regulations was identified. Participants reported, however, that digitalisation was an opportunity which could help with transparency and traceability.

### Practical tips for food retailers:

- Use available tools such as ENCORE50 to get an understanding of which sections of the value chain are likely to have highly material impacts.
- Use available guidance such as the TNFD LEAP approach <sup>51</sup> to assist with how to assess available data.
- Explore opportunities for digitalisation and streamlining of data sharing mechanisms.



## 4.4. Access to finance

High costs associated with biodiversity measurement and action were reported as a barrier to change by stakeholders consulted for this report. It was suggested subsidies could be used as an incentive towards biodiversity positive action throughout the value chain.

Investors typically take a commodity-centric approach to nature-positive strategies and target-setting, for example focusing on palm-oil in order to reduce deforestation impact, or focusing on sustainably caught tuna to reduce impact caused by unsustainable fishing practices. From an investor's perspective, the retail sector is crucial in addressing nature and biodiversity loss and this presents an opportunity for the sector to channel sustainably driven investment and drive systemic change throughout its value chain. To gain a better understanding of investors' expectations and initiate a dialogue with them, food retailers can implement different actions, some of which are introduced below.

## 4.5. Collaboration

Food retailers only represent one step in a complex value chain and collaboration with other value chain actors was identified by stakeholders as a key lever for change. Stakeholders also reported that they saw an opportunity for more exchange with sector peers, for example sharing examples of best practice solutions. Stakeholders noted a lack of standardisation of language and terminology was a barrier to inter-sector collaboration for example with biodiversity conservation organisations and investors.



### Practical tips for food retailers:

- Food retailers can join communities of practice and other knowledgesharing initiatives such as the EU Business & Biodiversity Platform<sup>54</sup> and the EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub.<sup>55</sup>

### Practical tips for food retailers:



- Food retailers can leverage the results of the first Nature Action 100 (NA100) Company Benchmark and its methodology. NA100 is a global investor-led engagement initiative where investors collaborate with companies in key sectors to enhance corporate efforts to address and reverse nature and biodiversity loss by 2030. Businesses can refer to Nature Action 100's [six Investor Expectations](#) for Companies (related to Ambition, Assessment, Targets, Implementation, Governance, Engagement)<sup>52</sup> to better understand investor expectations. The [accompanying guide](#) exploring nature impacts and dependencies across eight key sectors, including food retail, provides for example a list of questions for investor engagement with the sector. These include among other: Has the company conducted an assessment to identify material impacts and/or dependencies, including from upstream and downstream in the value chain? Does the company engage suppliers on the nature impacts of producing food and beverage products, including addressing air, soil, and water pollution, water use, habitat degradation, and loss of pollinators?
- Food retailers can also use the '[Guide on engagement with companies](#)' and its [Annex](#) identifying collaborative engagement initiatives developed by the EU B&B Platform and the Finance for Biodiversity Foundation to better understand investor expectations around key commodities or resources.<sup>53</sup>
- Food production (agriculture) is seen as a high opportunity sector by the finance sector when it comes to strengthening biodiversity. Especially as it also generates co-benefits for climate adaptation. Food production with a healthy soil is more resilient for drought and flash flooding. Food retailers that promote this type of food are contributing to a more resilient food system which also secures their business continuity.

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## 5. Conclusion

The food retail sector has an essential role to play in halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. Significant impacts are found not only in the upstream but also in the mid- and downstream value-chains, particularly waste management, which was the focus of this work. To reduce waste impacts, food retailers can consider opportunities such as use of circular models and improvements in demand forecasting. They can also minimise household waste by influencing consumers about sustainable choices, though work is required to increase trust in sustainability information/claims.

Businesses vary in their progress towards nature-positive operations and those at more advanced stages can use initiatives like the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN) to set more ambitious targets. Retailers can also use initiatives like the EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub and the EU Business & Biodiversity Platform for guidance and community support.

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## 6. Further reading

Author	Material	Description
<b>Ellen MacArthur Foundation</b>	<a href="#">The big food redesign study</a>	The study highlights the crucial role of FMCGs and food retailers in creating a nature-positive food system through circular economy principles. It outlines five actions for businesses to adopt this approach.
<b>Business for Nature</b>	<a href="#">Waste Management</a>	This document outlines key steps for a Nature Positive roadmap in waste management, focusing on impacts, dependencies, and priority actions.
<b>IEEP</b> (Institute for European Environmental Policy)	<a href="#">Addressing Food Waste in the retail sector</a>	Report on food waste externalities and internalising them, including an overview of current policies, strategies, and economic instruments to reduce food waste.
<b>Environmental Investigation Agency / Rethink Plastic</b>	<a href="#">European-Grocery-Retail-Plastic-Policy-Briefing</a>	Policy briefing providing inspiration on possible actions to take regarding use of plastics in the EU.
<b>National Retail Federation (NRF)</b>	<a href="#">NRF CIRCULARITY ACTION GUIDE</a>	A guide for retailers to explore controllable and influenceable circularity activities, including insights on resale, repair, and recycling opportunities.

Author	Material	Description
Capitals Coalition	<a href="#">ACT-D: High Level Business Actions on Nature</a>	ACT-D provides businesses with tools, frameworks, and initiatives to help them assess their relationships with nature, commit to actions and target setting, transform their practices, and disclose nature-related information. This guidance was developed through a collaboration of organisations including the Capitals Coalition, Business for Nature, WBCSD, TNFD, Science Based Targets Network, WEF, and WWF.
Science-based targets for nature (SBTN)	<a href="#">A step-by-step guide</a>	The SBTN target-setting process is divided into five steps; Assess, Prioritize, Set targets, Act and Track. Each step contains methods, tools and additional resources to guide companies through the process. SBTN has published several guidance documents to help businesses on their biodiversity journey.
Taskforce on Nature Related Financial Disclosure (TNFD)	<a href="#">Additional sector guidance for food and agriculture</a>	This additional sector guidance supplements the TNFD's Guidance on assessment of nature-related issues— the LEAP approach. To help those in the food and agriculture sectors apply the LEAP method to their unique situations, TNFD has provided this extra guidance, created with feedback from various experts and market participants.
Taskforce on Nature Related Financial Disclosure (TNFD)	<a href="#">Getting started with the TNFD Recommendations</a>	This guide helps organisations adopt the TNFD Recommendations. It outlines key steps to start the adoption journey and offers practical considerations for TNFD-aligned disclosure.
World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)	<a href="#">Roadmap to Nature Positive Foundations for the agri-food system</a>	This guide helps agri-food companies shift to a naturepositive system. It stresses assessing materiality, setting targets, transforming practices, and reporting progress. The roadmap outlines steps for sustainability and nature impact, involving stakeholders like agri-input providers, financial institutions, and landowners.
World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)	<a href="#">An enhanced assessment of risks impacting the food and agriculture sector</a>	The report discusses the significance of understanding and managing ESG-related risks in the food and agriculture sector. It highlights the need for a forwardlooking and complex approach to risk assessment that accounts for the complexity, interconnectivity, and aggregated nature of these risks. It indicates that addressing these issues will require sector-wide actions and the allocation of resources to enhance the understanding of agricultural practices, regulation, and inefficient production methods.

## 7. Endnotes

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Biodiversity is the backbone of our economy and the key to a sustainable future for businesses. However, many businesses remain unaware of their dependence on and impact on biodiversity. From natural resources and services to climate regulation and economic stability, biodiversity is essential for all life on Earth. Through the EU Business & Biodiversity Platform, businesses can learn about the importance of biodiversity and develop strategies to move towards a nature-positive future, benefiting both their operations and the planet, and thereby people.

