

FARM ASSESSMENT TOOLS FOR MONITORING AND IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY

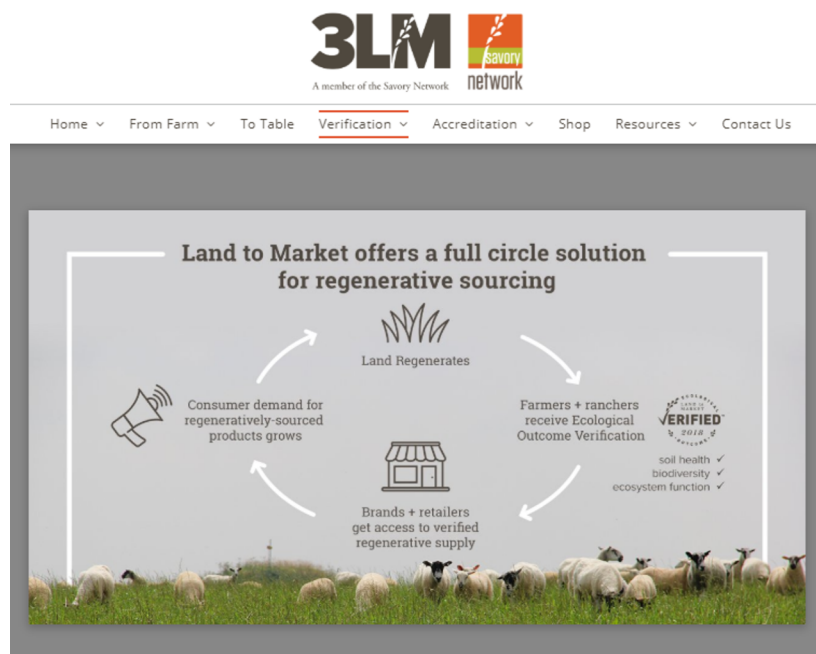


The benefits of incorporating holistic practices and the barriers to adoption

HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Current figures suggest many UK farmers are struggling economically. With future policy changes focusing on the delivery of 'public goods' UK farmers need to address how they manage their farms in a more holistic manner.

The benefits of holistic farm management and a more 'whole farm' view are beginning to be incorporated across the UK, but adoption rates are low and there is still a lot of distrust in the true value of 'holistic'.



In the UK, 71% (or 17.4 million hectares) of land is classified as utilised agricultural area, 60% of which is suitable for growing grass, livestock can convert this land/forage into a healthy human food source

THE CASE STUDY

The Savory Institute through 3LM offer a graded series of Holistic Management (HM) courses in the UK. Initially farmers undergo HM training, they can then apply for Ecological Outcome Verification allowing produce to achieve premiums through the Land to Market Scheme.

Sheep farmers opinions were sought on the value of participation in HM training offered by 3LM. They were also offered the opportunity to participate in a simple sustainability assessment using the Public Goods (PG) tool and invited to comment on the value of the tool.



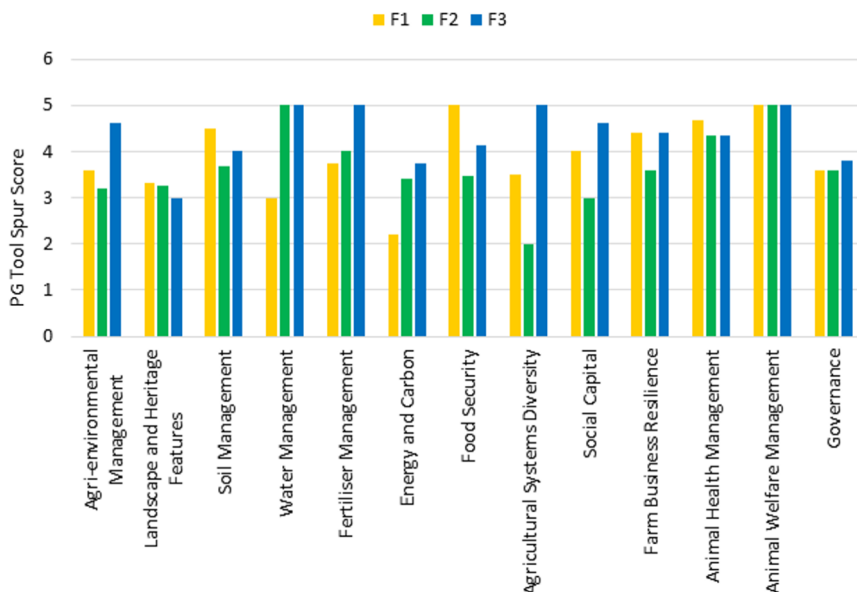
PG TOOL ASSESSMENT

Sustainable practices are divided into 13 areas (spurs) in the PG Tool. Farmers answer questions associated with each spur and the PG Tool calculates a score. The results are presented in a radar diagram illustrating the performance in each spur. A score of 1 is poor whilst 5 is very good.

Performance varied on each of the three farms but as a whole they demonstrated good and very good practices across the spurs.

General feedback on the tool was positive, with it providing relevant results and aiding their understanding of sustainability.

The breakdown of sections and radar presentation was identified as particularly useful, helping to develop an understanding of how different elements of a business contribute towards its overall sustainability.



PG tool results by sustainability 'spur' across the three sheep farmers practicing holistic management principles

EOV gives the land a voice of its own, through empirical and tangible outcomes, which in turn provide the farmer with ongoing feedback from which to make better management decisions"

Savory, 2018

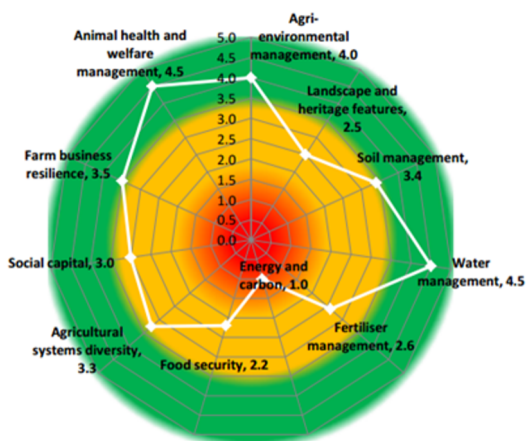
HM TRAINING AND ECOLOGICAL OUTCOME VERIFICATION

All three farmers had successfully completed HM training provided by 3LM in the last 1-2 years and joined the regenerative network but had not progressed to Ecological Outcome verification.

Participants felt the training was useful, delivering information that was 'eye opening' and provided 'much to think about'.

Farmers suggested that implementation of holistic practices led to improvements in grass availability during the 2018 drought.

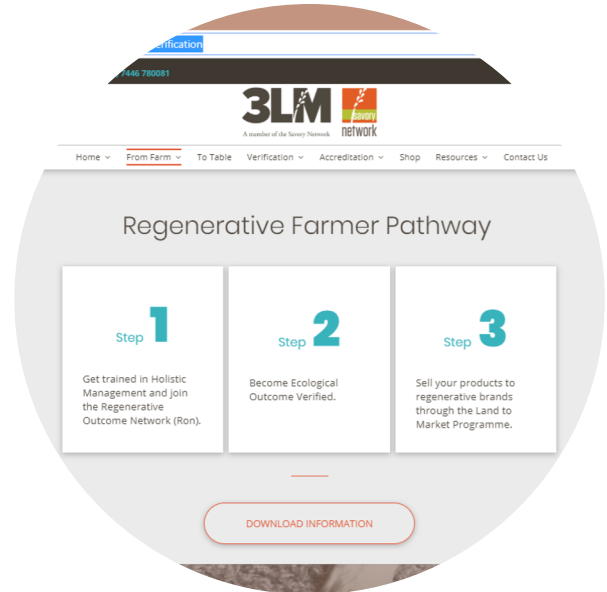
Participants were positive about the usefulness of HM principles and their on-farm application.



Example PG Tool reporting format presented to participating farmers

OUTCOMES

- The PG Tool was highlighted as a useful means for developing initial sustainability concepts without a financial investment
- HM training, while worth while, requires commitment of both time and money and therefore participants need to be dedicated to achieve the most from the experience
- EOV enables farmers practising HM techniques to achieve a financial benefit from their end product but is expensive
- Together the PG tool, HM training and EOV were considered by practising farmers as an effective means for improving farm sustainability



Holistic management provides farmers with the fundamental knowledge of regenerative farming while allowing them to incorporate the principles / practices which suit their overall aims and objectives



DRIVERS, CONSTRAINTS AND POTENTIAL

With policy changes imminent, UK farmers will be forced to adapt their practices in order to be more competitive and to address environmental concerns - holistic approaches are a means of doing this. The Savory HM/EOV system has been adopted worldwide by a variety of livestock producers concerned with sustainability issues and regenerating agriculture. Both the PG Tool and Savory networks are accessible by anyone, there is no stereotype to participants and the only barrier is willingness.

The financial costs of HM training and EOV provide a barrier / constraint to its uptake but there are benefits to participating in the Land to Market programme. The Public Goods Tool provides an initial sustainability assessment and platform for discussion without cost.

THANKS TO

The participating sheep farmers who conducted assessments and provided feedback, 3LM, a member of the Savory Network in the UK



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