



# Hero Group Sustainable Farming Principles

“The Hero Group has been working closely with farmers since 1886. Our mission to “delight consumers by conserving the goodness of nature” depends entirely on healthy soils and ecosystem services, like crop pollination. Working towards regenerative agriculture is at the core of Hero Group’s Sustainability Commitment. Simply said - our consumers care about how their food is grown and so do we. Thus, we continue to actively engage with our farmers to adopt and measure climate-smart farming practices that preserve nutrient-level and quality of soils.”



**Rob Versloot**  
*CEO Hero Group*

**Sustainable farming** fosters practices that help preserve our environment while producing better crops, better raw materials and better foods. Our sustainable farming principles define provide a definition based on what we believe we can achieve in our food system. They form the foundation of how we work with both our suppliers, who work with farmers, and our farmers, directly across the Hero Group, globally.

Our Principles crossover and align with the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For us, SDGs 3, 12, 13, 15 & 17 are in focus for our overall Sustainability Commitment – spanning health & well-being, efficient production, land-use and partnering to learn & exchange experience.



Above all, we believe that a key enabler for sustainable farming practices lies within working with suppliers, traders and directly with our farmers in a way that benefits the farmer, especially economically. Only if we as an industry can guarantee profitability of sustainable, climate-smart agriculture solutions we can future-proof our food systems. Thus, our Sustainable Farming Principles draw from industry best practice and well-established multi-actor platforms.<sup>1</sup> Supporting, improving & influencing farming practices for sustainability is in our best interest for today and for tomorrow. Thus, we identified Identifying **6 Sustainable Farming Principles** outlined on the following page.

Within Pillar 1 “Sourcing and Supplier Partnering” of our sustainability strategy these principles and related practices are being integrated into the way we procure our raw materials, guiding us in identifying ways to engage with farmers, suppliers and intermediaries, as well as informing our supplier ratings where applicable.

<sup>1</sup> We draw from insights of SAI’s *Vision for sustainable, thriving and resilient agriculture* (2021), the WEF EU Carbon+ Farming Coalition, and FAO’s *Building a common vision for sustainable food and agriculture* (2014)

# Our Sustainable Farming Principles

## 1 Climate

Not only does sustainable farming seek to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution: It realizes the **carbon sequestration** potential of sustainable farming & increases **farming communities' resiliency** against climate change related risks.

## 2 Nature

Sustainable farming is key to maintaining healthy ecosystems and their services. Thus, farming must contribute to **fostering biodiversity** and plant diversity, as well as to **protect and support pollinators** through responsible farming and the **creation of suitable habitat**.

## 3 Land & Soil

Healthy land and soil are key to securing crop quality, quantity and resiliency. Land is a GHG sink. To this end it is crucial to minimize the physical, biological and chemical disturbance of the soil. **Scaling organic and focusing on regenerative farming practices**, including cover- & diverse cropping, **responsible use of agricultural inputs**, as well as **implementing new technologies** can significantly improve soil health.

## 4 Water

We procure our raw materials all around the world, some of which in water scarce areas. It is crucial to always guarantee responsible water management. This entails **minimized and efficient irrigation**, reducing runoff and pollution, while securing equitable access to catchments for all users.

## 5 Health and Safety

We acknowledge that the agricultural sector is one of the most dangerous sectors to work in. Sustainable farming means to **guarantee health and safety of farmers, workers, families and communities**. We want to encourage and work with farmers who are implementing measures related to this principle through sensibilizing our buyers through training and practices.

## 6 Working and Living Conditions

Sustainable farming provides farmers, workers and their families with an environment, in which **human rights are adhered to**. Work environments are **free from forced labor and** the worst forms of **child labor**, discrimination and disciplinary practices. **Fair compensation**, access to suitable sanitary, housing and transportation infrastructures are provided.

### Acknowledgements & Limitations

We acknowledge, that a set of general principles can by no means reflect the diverse farmer landscape and the regulatory framework surrounding the future of farming is ever-evolving. Mitigating these limitations, we commit to the following:

<b>Customization</b>	There is no one-size fits all, we build from common principles for local impact.	<b>Standardization</b>	We focus on comparable approaches & models we can scale across entities
<b>Holistic View</b>	Our Principles positively complement Supply Chain engagement	<b>Regulation</b>	Our Principles reflect current & anticipate future agricultural policy
<b>People-First</b>	Social conditions of suppliers & workers must be ensured & demonstrated	<b>Communication</b>	We must actively explain & engage with our suppliers and farmers on our principles.