

# Sustainability

## Major pivot in industry emissions target

**Australia's red meat industry has moved away from its Carbon Neutral 2030 target towards a focus on emissions intensity, signalling a more pragmatic approach to setting industry sustainability ambitions.** The Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) has released its Red Meat 2030 plan, which outlines plans to focus on reducing emissions intensity.

The industry's Carbon Neutral target was set in 2017. It communicated to global markets and other stakeholders that Australia's red meat industry was proactively engaging in and addressing its environmental footprint.

However, despite reporting in 2024 that a 78% reduction in net emissions had been achieved, this progress was mainly driven by increases in the land-based carbon pool reducing the industry's *net* emissions. **Direct emissions from livestock have remained closely correlated with herd and flock size.**

As work on identifying credible decarbonisation pathways for the agriculture sector has progressed, a shift away from 'carbon neutral' as an end goal within markets has been observed. In the supply chain, many food and agriculture companies have set medium-term greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets

based on engaging with their suppliers or achieving specific reductions in emissions intensity (emissions per unit of production).

**These approaches are intended to enable a more nuanced approach to target setting, which better reflects both the GHG profile of agricultural production and the technological availability and economic feasibility of mitigation options.** A focus on emissions intensity also typically aligns more closely with producers' existing objectives connected with optimising efficiency and productivity.

RMAC's 2030 plan also highlights other ongoing environmental focus areas, including coordination of supply chain action, investment in measurement tools, and methane reduction technologies.

Although a specific, quantified emissions intensity target has not yet been announced, the red meat industry's efforts in recent years have highlighted the scale and complexity of the task of emissions reductions as the industry refines its approach to balancing ambition, feasibility, and credibility.

### What to watch:

- **The Australian government has adopted a new equation to estimate the feedlot industry's GHG emissions** – Under the new equation, grain-fed cattle emissions are 56% lower than previously estimated. The old formula was based on data from US dairy cows, while the new methodology is based on research by the University of New England and more closely reflects the dietary composition of Australian grain-fed cattle.



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