

# FOR A ✱ SUSTAINABLE ✱ EUROPE

## THE SPECIAL MISSION OF BEEF

REDUCING EMISSIONS AND PRESERVING  
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# PRESS KIT

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### Sustainable European Beef (2025-2027)

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#### 1. SEUB Programme Justification

The **Sustainable European Beef (SEUB)** is a campaign co-funded by the European Union that will be implemented over the coming three years (2025-2027) by the Agri-food Inter-professional Organisation of the Spanish Beef Industry (Provacuno) and the Agence Wallonne pour la Promotion d'Une Agriculture de Qualité (Walloon Agency for the Promotion of Quality Agriculture, Apaq-W) in Belgium.

Under the slogan "**For a sustainable Europe, the special mission of beef**", the campaign aims to raise citizen awareness of the European beef sector's commitment to meet the Carbon Neutral Target and increase sustainability, while informing the sector itself of the latest trends and developments in the field of sustainability.

To achieve this goal, over the three years of the programme, a major effort will be made to inform citizens from a scientific base about the sustainability of the European beef sector in general and in particular, about which measures are being adopted by the sector to reduce emissions and improve and preserve soils. The programme will also promote and inform producers about the application of continuous improvements measures in all stages of the process to achieve the Carbon Neutral 2050 Target and, in particular, those that lead to:

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- a) Climate change mitigation, including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural practices, as well as the maintenance of existing carbon stores and the enhancement of carbon sequestration.
- b) Soil degradation prevention, soil restoration, improved soil fertility and soil nutrient and biota management.

## 2. Contribution of the SEUB programme to the EU sustainability goals

To appreciate the contribution that this program can make to the EU sustainability goals, it is important to know what the EU commitment to sustainability is in order to be climate neutral by 2050 and to understand what perception and commitment European citizens truly have to sustainability and what they know about the role of beef cattle produced in Europe.

### EU commitment to sustainability in order to be climate neutral by 2050

The starting point of the SEUB programme is the definition of sustainability as “the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations”, which is a fundamental aspect to address global challenges, such as climate change and resource scarcity based on three pillars: economic, social and environmental, as defined at the **2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development**. Therefore, sustainability means protecting **natural resources** and using them rationally, promoting **equitable social and economic development** and generating wealth **without harming the environment**.

Since the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the **Carbon Neutrality Target 2050** has become a key concern in the EU global agenda. In November 2016, the European Commission presented its strategic approach for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The **European Green Deal**, the European Commission’s political and economic initiative to transform the EU economy into a sustainable, carbon neutral economy by 2050 was adopted in December 2019.

In May 2020, the **Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy** was adopted to help the existing EU food system evolve towards a more sustainable model capable of ensuring food security, achieving sustainable food production through a substantial reduction in the use of plant protection products, antimicrobial agents and fertilizers, and an increase in organic farming, as well as fostering more sustainable food consumption and healthier diets, reducing food loss and waste, combating food fraud in the production chain and improving animal welfare. In September of the same year, the Commission modified its initial proposal regarding the **European Climate Law** to include the ambitious revised target of reducing EU emissions by at least 55% by 2030. In June 2021, this European Climate Law was finally adopted, ensuring that the EU can be climate neutral by 2050.

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How are **European beef cattle** contributing to the EU sustainability commitments? The European beef cattle production model contributes positively to sustainability and the fulfilment of the Carbon Neutral Target 2050 from different perspectives.

On the one hand, fostering the continuous improvement of the production system's sustainability contributes to promoting sustainable economic and social development in rural areas, an aspect that is absolutely essential to combat depopulation and guarantee the quality of life of its inhabitants. Guaranteeing life and economic development in rural areas contributes to increasing the resilience of these areas and helps to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change.

On the other hand, in conjunction with science and research, the sector has been working intensively on an unprecedented transformation of the production system, continuously improving the management of both livestock and land, reducing emissions, managing water use better, minimising impact and guaranteeing enhanced soil use, health and fertility.

The sector's commitment to turn its production system into a sustainable and climate resilient livestock farming and become an essential tool to effectively support the EU's transition towards agriculture and livestock farming with a lower environmental impact and ensure convergence towards the Carbon Neutrality Target 2050.

## **Perception and commitment of European citizens to sustainability and the role of beef cattle**

***What do citizens think about sustainability and how committed are they?*** \_In 2020, the EU set out to gauge public knowledge of the existing European production system and citizens' real appetite for change and the convergence towards the Carbon Neutrality Target by 2050. To do so, the Special Eurobarometer 505 "Making our food fit for the future – Citizens' Expectations"<sup>1</sup> was carried out, providing revealing details about citizens' real knowledge of sustainability in its broadest sense (economic, social and environmental), their commitment to it and their willingness to assume their responsibility in the convergence towards Carbon Neutrality 2050.

The survey reveals that the perception, intentions and wishes of today's citizens are far removed from the true meaning of sustainability. The majority of Europeans are unaware of the three-dimensional meaning of sustainability and think that sustainable food and diets are mainly associated with nutrition and health or pesticide-free food production. The majority of citizens (two thirds of those surveyed) also think that the responsibility for ensuring a sustainable food system lies mainly with those who produce, but in no case with those who consume, considering themselves as mere secondary actors of sustainability.

***What is the citizens' general perception of beef? Are they able to appreciate and value the European beef production model?*** \_On the other hand, and according to data from the Special

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<sup>1</sup> <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2241>

Eurobarometer 538 - Climate Change”<sup>2</sup> and the ”EU Agricultural Outlook 2023-2035 Report”<sup>3</sup>, the citizens’ perception of livestock in general, and beef in particular, is that they are largely responsible for climate change and that the reduction and even eradication of beef consumption could be the solution to the environmental problem. This finding indicates that citizens are unaware of the European beef production model, as well as the effort and transformation that the sector has been making to ensure convergence with the Carbon Neutral Target 2050.

### 3. Main challenges of the SEUB programme

To reach the impact sought by the SEUB Programme's driving bodies and from the EU, it is necessary for the **beef sector** to overcome a series of challenges:

- Increase the dissemination of the new techniques and technologies that can be implemented to enhance sustainability.
- Increase the implementation of measures for the continuous improvement of sustainability in general and, in particular, to reduce emissions and preserve and enhance the soil.

**European citizens** also face a series of challenges regarding their perception of the sector’s sustainability:

- Misinformation, lack of knowledge and campaigns that harm the sector’s image on environmental or animal welfare grounds.
- Ignorance of the meaning of sustainability in its three dimensions (economic, social and environmental), so that two out of three European citizens believe that guaranteeing a sustainable and climate-neutral food system is the sole responsibility of those who produce, rather than consumers; while, on the other hand, 60% believe that sustainable food is synonymous with nutrition and health.

### 4. Objectives of the SEUB Programme

The **main objective** of the SEUB programme is to promote and foster the application of sustainability measures in beef production in Europe, particularly with regard to emissions reduction and soil preservation and enhancement, as well as and to provide citizens with the necessary and appropriate information and training on sustainability in its three dimensions and the European beef production system.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2954>

<sup>3</sup> [https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a353812c-733e-4ee9-aed6-43f8f44ca7f4\\_en?filename=agricultural-outlook-2023-report\\_en\\_0.pdf&prefLang=es](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a353812c-733e-4ee9-aed6-43f8f44ca7f4_en?filename=agricultural-outlook-2023-report_en_0.pdf&prefLang=es)

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Therefore, this programme seeks to inform citizens so that they can identify beef that has been produced sustainably in the EU, with full guarantees and awareness, and hence, fulfil the sustainability and carbon neutrality objectives set by the EU.

In this way, the SEUB project fulfils the requirements of the information and promotion programmes that raise awareness of sustainable agriculture and animal welfare in the European Union, AGRIP-MULTI-2024-IM-SUSTAINABLE, which aim to highlight the sustainability of EU agriculture, stressing its beneficial role for the climate, the environment and animal welfare.

Based on the objectives of these European programmes, the actions to be developed under SEUB include a series of **specific communication objectives**:

- Raise European citizens' awareness and recognition of sustainable practices in the European beef sector in relation to climate change and sustainability across their three dimensions (economic, social and environmental).
- Increase the competitiveness of sustainable beef production in the European Union.
- Foster the implementation of good sustainability practices in the European beef sector.

#### Objectives aimed at citizens:

- Raise awareness of the European beef production model and its high sustainability standards.
- Raise awareness of the meaning of sustainability in its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.
- Raise awareness of the sustainability of the beef production model in Europe in general and more specifically in Spain and Belgium.
- Raise awareness of citizens' responsibility for the EU sustainability objectives (Carbon Neutrality by 2050).

Regarding the **objectives aimed at the sector**, the SEUB programme seeks to:

- Raise awareness of the Spanish and Belgian beef sectors regarding the sustainability measures they can apply to continuously improve sustainability, in particular with regard to the reduction of emissions and the preservation and improvement of the soil.
- Increase the sector's implementation of sustainable measures to move towards the target of achieving climate neutrality by 2050.
- Create meeting points with European producers where knowledge on improvements in the sustainability of production systems can be shared.

#### 5. Other actions to improve the sustainability of the sector

The Spanish and Belgian beef sectors are fully committed to sustainability and the Carbon Neutral Target 2050. It is for this reason that both sectors have been carrying out a major transformation of their production systems for years in search of optimum sustainability and excellence.

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\_In Belgium, different actions have been implemented to help farmers increase their sustainability.

- **“Sustainability Observatory”**

Launched in 2019 by Belbeef - the Inter-professional Organisation of Belgian Beef Cattle Farmers-, this sustainability monitor seeks to objectively map and quantify the sustainable progress of the beef sector. Approximately 2,500 French-speaking farmers out of a total of 6,000 are members of Belbeef. As farmers participate on a voluntary basis, this means that about 35% of the French-speaking farmers in this programme implement certified sustainability measures. Every two years, an external inspection body visits the farms to check the implementation of sustainable measures.

- **Sustainability Unit at the Walloon Agricultural Research Centre (WARC)**

The Walloon Agricultural Research Centre (WARC) has a unit devoted to sustainability that is developing different tools to evaluate various agricultural production sustainability indicators, including the production of beef and dairy farms:

**\_DECiDE Tool**, a tool for the agri-ecological transition to carbon neutrality. Free of charge and adapted to Walloon agriculture, DECiDE currently offers the possibility to evaluate greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions, as well as the energy consumption of farms. In order to help producers identify the most interesting strategies to limit their environmental impact and rethink their practices according to their own situation, in the future, the tool will incorporate new indicators linked to the three dimensions of sustainability.

**\_PROBOV project**, a forward-looking study that has established various scenarios for Walloon livestock farms up to 2040.

Apaq-W supports all of these initiatives, promoting their communication and dissemination among both farmers and consumers.

\_In Spain, Provacuno developed a specific strategy for the sector in order to fulfil the Carbon Neutral Target 2050 and it has been participating in and promoting different tools and research projects aimed at improving the sustainability of the sector for years:

- **2050 Carbon Neutral Beef Strategy promoted by Provacuno**

At the Paris Climate Summit, COP21, held in **2015**, ambitious goals, backed by the international community, were set to reduce GHG emissions and achieve climate neutrality. Spain, and in particular the Beef sector has not stopped working in line with these objectives since then, taking specific measures to reduce emissions and increase sustainability. **In 2019**, the Governing Board of Provacuno agreed to implement the 2050 Carbon Neutral Beef Strategy, which focused on **research, the adoption of good environmental practices, increased productivity and collaboration with the Spanish scientific community.**

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Approval of the European Green Deal in December 2020, following on from the strategy promoted by Provacuno, and the growing media attention on livestock emissions strengthened the Beef Sector's commitment to sustainability.

The 2050 Carbon Neutral Beef strategy promoted by Provacuno with the collaboration of the scientific community has been developed by means of a continuous approach to find out, measure and improve environmental practices throughout the value chain with transparency and in collaboration with Spanish researchers. Different activities are being developed within this strategy:

- **Codes of Good Practices**

Objective: to provide practical guidelines to reduce emissions, increase efficiency on beef farms, reduce emissions and improve the sustainability of the processing stage and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices at beef sales points. The following three documents have been developed by the scientific community of the Remedia Network in collaboration with the technical community.

- [Code of Good Practices for Livestock](#)
- [Code of Good Practices for the Meat Industry](#)
- [Code of Good Practices for Butchers'](#)

- **ADVANCED AGRO-COMPOSTING OF BEEF CATTLE MANURE Project**

Objective: to contribute to the circular economy from the farm through the use of manure, developing a Proposal for Best Available Techniques for Advanced Agri-composting from cattle manure, aimed at mitigating climate change.

Over the past two years, agri-composting tests have been carried out and valuable information has been obtained, and the report on the best available techniques for advanced agri-composting of cattle manure has been drawn up.

Two face-to-face workshops will be held in the near future to present the results. Scheduled for completion: May-June 2025.

- **SECUESVAC Operational Group**

Supra-autonomic operational group led by Provacuno, whose objective is to optimise carbon sequestration in soils associated with beef cattle farms, analysing the current situation, identifying good practices and developing a decision support tool.

The beneficiary entity is made up of a total of 8 members and two subcontracted companies (technical coordination services and the NEIKER research company).

Project duration: August 2024 to May 2027

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The first two phases will be completed in this first period (which ends in May 2025). *Phase 1.* Characterisation and classification of farms according to production systems; and *Phase 2.* Harmonisation of the sampling protocol and its implementation on farms.

More information: <https://www.gosecuesvac.com/>

- **Water Footprint Project**

Project funded by Provacuno with the participation of Valencia Polytechnic University and the Basque Centre for Climate Change, BC3. It began in January 2025 and will be carried out over 20 months.

Its main objective is to quantify the water footprint of beef cattle in Spain using different metrics.

The first of the two phases is currently under way: *First Phase:* Compilation of data on activities; *Second Phase:* Measurement of the use of direct water (water required for the farm).

An analysis phase and calculation of the water footprint is then planned, in which the water shortage data will also be assessed.

- **Re-Livestock, Resilient Farming Systems European Project<sup>4</sup>**

European project with the overall objective of understanding and mobilising the adoption of innovative practices, applied cross-scale (animal, herd/farm, sectors and regions), to reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of livestock farming and to increase the capacity to deal with climate change impacts, in order to ultimately increase the overall resilience of the livestock sector.

Re-Livestock proposes a holistic approach based on the 'Re-Concept', by Re-Framing climate change action in livestock systems through:

- Re-Evaluation of feeding inputs and nutrients cycle
- Re-Exploring the animals' adaptive capacity to integrate mitigation and adaptation
- Re-Design of livestock systems

## 6. Sustainable Decalogue: our commitment

The Spanish and Belgian beef sectors are fully committed to sustainability and becoming carbon neutral by 2050. For this reason, their production systems have been undergoing a major transformation for some years, in search of optimum sustainability and excellence. This commitment is a reality and they wish to manifest it and encourage society as a whole to join them through this Decalogue.

Their commitment is:

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<sup>4</sup> <https://re-livestock.eu/>

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**I. Sustainability is in our DNA.** The beef farming and industrial sector is firmly committed to a sustainable production model. Our approach to sustainability encompasses all three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

**II. Protecting the environment and promoting biodiversity.** We actively contribute to the protection of the ecosystems of Mediterranean pastures, meadows and mountains, while making efficient use of resources and minimising our environmental footprint.

**III. Sustainable soil management.** We use regenerative practices that improve soil health, promote biodiversity and prevent the degradation of agricultural land.

**IV. Efficient use of water and energy.** We optimise the use of water in all stages of production, ensuring the conservation and reuse of this vital resource, and making progress in the use of renewable energy sources and improving energy efficiency in production and distribution processes.

**V. Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.** We are working on the development and implementation of strategies to improve production efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout the value chain.

**VI. Compliance with the European production model.** Our production model, based on European standards, is the strictest in the world in terms of food safety, animal welfare, quality and environmental protection.

**VII. Providing a safe working environment.** We guarantee decent working conditions, fostering respect, inclusion and equal opportunities for all people that form part of the sector.

**VIII. Supporting generational change and the rural world.** We work to ensure the economic viability of farms and industries, facilitating the continuity of the sector and contributing to securing the population in rural areas.

**IX. Innovating for a more sustainable future.** We work with public and private research centres to develop new techniques and technologies that improve animal welfare, reduce environmental impact and increase efficiency in the sector.

**X. Commitment to transparency and communication.** We report truthfully on our activities, their impacts and improvements in sustainability based on scientific evidence, promoting open dialogue with society and combating fake news.

## 7. EU dimension in the SEUB campaign

The SEUB campaign is designed with a European dimension that is now implicit in its main claim: **“For a sustainable Europe, the special mission of beef”** and the programme’s objectives seek to contribute to European sustainability by:

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- Consolidating beef cattle in Europe as a sustainable production system with significant economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Extending the debate on European sustainability objectives by focusing on their three dimensions, mainly economic and social, which are not so well known by citizens. This is the case of the contribution of European sustainable cattle farming to the maintenance of permanent pastures, which benefits biodiversity and represents an important carbon sink, but it is also an indispensable population fixer in the rural environment. By making it competitive, it can offer decent employment to those who work in the sector, which guarantees the sustainability of rural areas.
- Promoting rural employment policies in the EU. European livestock farms employ around four million people, with an average of one or two workers per farm.
- Promoting sustainable food systems. With specific European targets for 2030, such as reducing the sale of antimicrobial agents used in farm animals by 50%.
- Ensuring protein self-sufficiency for European citizens. The European Parliament has asked the Commission to urgently present an ambitious and comprehensive EU protein strategy covering the sustainable production and consumption of all types of proteins in the EU, especially proteins of plant and animal origin. In this request, **the Parliament recognises the different aspects related to the positive contribution of sustainable beef production**, including social (nutrition, territory, citizenship...), economic and environmental.

## 8. Symposium on the Sustainability of European Beef.

The SEUB programme will focus specifically on the European beef sector. The programme includes a European symposium on beef sustainability that seeks to be a meeting point for the entire European sector where the present and future of sustainability in the European beef sector will be addressed. The latest trends in improving the sustainability of the industry will be presented, and experiences and knowledge on sustainability from the three dimensions of sustainability — economic, social and environmental — will be shared.

The aim of the symposium, which is the first to be held in Europe on sustainability in the sector, is to create a meeting point to bring together all the actors involved in ensuring the sustainability of beef production in Europe. The symposium will feature internationally renowned experts and organisations with scientific expertise in sustainability issues, as well as representatives from leading European organisations and entities.

This symposium will be held in Brussels in 2025 and 2027 and can be attended in-person and followed on-line.

The 1st edition of the Symposium on the Sustainability of European Beef will be held on 12th November 2025 in Brussels.

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Registration to attend in person and to follow it on-line is free of charge and is now open via the website [www.vacunosostenible.eu](http://www.vacunosostenible.eu).

Other actions are also planned for professionals, such as participation in sectoral fairs such as FIGAN or SALAMAQ, international fairs like ANUGA (Cologne, Germany) or SIAL (Paris, France), information days and meeting points with producers in Italy and Portugal, and conferences and debates in Belgium.

In the case of Spain, the project is expected to launch a tool to determine the beef cattle sector's emissions, covering both livestock and industrial production, in order to continue improving environmental sustainability. Therefore, an API will be developed to connect an emissions calculation application to the management systems (ERPs) used in the sector. This will provide farmers and industrialists with automated, fast and accurate information on the emissions of their farms or industries, facilitating decision-making to reduce their carbon footprint.

As far as citizens are concerned, scientifically proven content will also be generated during the campaign and disseminated via the website, social network profiles, participation in trade fairs and seminars to be held at universities with the participation of different researchers and experts in sustainability and climate change.

## 9. The beef sector in figures

**\_The beef industry in the European Union.** Within the EU, the sector as a whole generated around €35,478 billion in 2024, of which Spain contributed 11%, making it the third largest Member State, only behind France and Germany, and ahead of Italy. Over the past year, Europe has produced 6.43 million tonnes of meat, with approximately 78 million head of cattle, making it one of the world's leading beef producers.

**\_The beef industry in Spain.** According to the latest data from the sector, endorsed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the value of beef production in Spain grew by 15% in 2024 to €4,641 billion. Furthermore, exports increased by 7% over the year to reach €1,650 billion, which reflects the soundness of the sector. This increase in the value of production stems from the increase in volume (0.6% with respect to 2023) and the increase in prices. In Spain, the total number of beef cattle farms is estimated at around 130,000, generating between 80,000 and 100,000 jobs, while the processing industry (with around 280 slaughterhouses and 140 cutting plants) generates around 15,000 direct jobs and 140,000 indirect jobs.

**\_The beef industry in Belgium and in the Walloon Region.** The value of beef production in Belgium amounted to €1.305 billion in 2023, according to data from Statbel, Belgium's Directorate-General for Statistics and Economic Information. 45% of this was produced in the Walloon region, where cattle farming is an important pillar of its agriculture. In 2022, more than half (54%) of Walloon farms had cattle, or in other words, nearly 7,300 farms, of which 6,830 had more than 10 head of cattle. The Belgian beef sector, ranging from farms to slaughterhouses and cutting plants, is mainly made up of family-run businesses that guarantee flexibility and a

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personalised service. Family-run companies have a typical and highly committed corporate culture, which guarantees the highest quality and the best service. The flexible business environment offers a fast response to business inquiries. They offer a perfect ecosystem to boost the sustainability of beef production in the region.

## **10. About Provacuno and Apaq-W**

### **Apaq-W**

La Agence Wallonne pour la Promotion d'Une Agriculture de Qualité (Walloon Agency for the Promotion of Quality Agriculture, Apaq-W) is an agri-industrial organisation of the Belgian Public Administration whose objective is to support farmers and agricultural activity by setting up a promotion and communication agency specialised in the agricultural sector, including horticulture, its services and the processing of agricultural products. Founded in 2003, its director is the Minister for Agriculture in Walloon.

The new Walloon code for agriculture specifies the agency's four mission categories:

- Develop a positive image of agriculture, its business and its benefits.
- Promote and value the work of farmers and develop their positive image.
- Highlight the role of agriculture and agricultural products in sustainable development, as well as their social, cultural, economic, environmental and healthcare functions.
- Support and unite farmers at events, fairs and other gatherings, organising the development of spaces to increase their knowledge and agricultural products.
- Support the creation of a network of markets that promote agricultural products.
- Implement educational actions and foster the development of tastes and flavours.

Further information at [www.apaq.be](http://www.apaq.be).

### **Provacuno**

The Agri-Food Inter-professional Organisation of the Spanish Beef Industry is an entity recognised by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Environment, and represents almost all of the Spanish beef companies (85%) involved in the whole production and marketing process, which implies a stable framework for action and a global vision of the sector. Its objectives include:

- Defend the interests of the beef sector during production, processing, transportation and marketing.
- Guarantee the efficient functioning of the beef sector's value chain.
- Foster good practices in relations between the different agents in the value chain.
- Steer beef production to satisfy market demands and those of consumers.
- Improve the image of the sector due to its sustainable and environmentally friendly production methods.

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- Foster responsible consumption through the nutritional and health properties, high quality and food safety of beef.
- Develop innovative processes to increase the quality of beef in all stages of the chain.
- Support the internationalisation process of companies from the sector via export markets.
- Offer a positive image of Spanish beef.

Further information at [www.provacuno.es](http://www.provacuno.es).

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