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## **Sustainability and Environmental Policy**

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## 1. Niab SUSTAINABILITY POLICY STATEMENT

Niab is fully committed to operating sustainably.

Niab adopts and promotes best practice in operating sustainably by implementing a management system that actively considers the procurement and delivery of services that are fit for purpose, offer value for money across their lifetime and take into account environmental, social and economic factors.

In practice this means making tangible efforts to conserve resources, control pollution, reduce waste and raise the quality of people's lives. Specifically, Niab seeks, at all levels of the organisation, to:

- Understand, measure and minimise, where possible, the impacts of Niab activities (daily work activities, estate management and development, resource consumption and waste production) on the environment, the local community and on Niab's costs.
- Continually improve environmental performance to comply with relevant environmental legislation and adopt current standards of best practice.
- Work with suppliers, customers and contractors to minimise adverse environmental impacts.
- Continually improve the health and well-being of staff.
- Develop metrics and targets to improve the measurement of sustainability.

This policy is reviewed and implemented by the Director of Resource Management (in the role of Sustainability Director), assisted by all staff members, and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

Signed: **Prof. Mario Caccamo**

Position: Chief Executive Officer

## 2. PRINCIPLES

Sustainability encompasses three interconnected pillars:

- Environmental (management of natural resources, reducing pollution, and protecting ecosystems),
- Social (equity, justice and community wellbeing), and
- Economic (ensuring financial viability whilst minimising negative impacts on people and the planet).

Niab's approach to sustainability must enable its business and support Niab's objectives and the efficient and effective delivery of its work.

Risk management is important and should be driven by all, overseen at Board level. Assessments will identify potential threats, vulnerabilities, and appropriate controls to reduce the risks to people, the environment, and business viability, to an acceptable level.

This process will take full account of any relevant statutory obligations and protections, including key environmental legislation related to energy, trade effluent, pollution to water, land, or air, waste or recycling, and hazardous waste.

Attitudes and behaviours are fundamental to achieving high levels of sustainability. The right culture, proper expectations, management commitment and effective training are essential.

Policies and processes will be in place for assessing, reporting, managing, and resolving threats. Where systems have broken down or individuals have acted improperly, the appropriate action will be taken.

### **3. GOVERNANCE**

Effective leadership is a critical component of sustainability. The Niab CEO will own Niab's approach to sustainability and ensure that these issues receive the attention and investment required. Niab will have:

- An appropriate sustainability governance structure, to support the CEO, including:
  - a Sustainability Director (currently the Director of Resource Management)
  - a Sustainability Group comprised of representatives from across the company
- Board-level oversight of sustainability, environmental compliance and auditing processes
- Arrangements to determine and satisfy itself that subcontractors, service providers and third-party suppliers, apply appropriate sustainability and environmental controls too

### **4. ACCOUNTABILITY**

All Niab personnel have a responsibility towards environmental, social and economic sustainability under appropriate governance structures, including at Board level. The Sustainability Director is accountable and responsible for sustainability across Niab, supported by the Sustainability Group. The Sustainability Director will ensure that everyone is aware of their personal responsibility to exercise good judgement, and to safeguard the environment appropriately. Niab continues to remind its suppliers and customers of the importance of sustainability in their business dealings with Niab.

Compliance with environmental legislation is relevant to Niab's operations as whole, and to specific areas of activity. Niab's Director of Resource Management has lead responsibility for environmental compliance for Niab's facilities and operations, on behalf of the Senior Management team. This is implemented through the Health and Safety group, Facilities team, Biological Safety Officer, Quality Management team, Laboratory Managers and Regional Trials teams. However, all staff are personally responsible for ensuring that they operate in accordance with the policies, protocols, and standard operating procedures for the work they undertake, including elements that are intended to safeguard compliance with current environmental and other legislation. Risk assessments may also be required to be undertaken. Any accidents or incidents, including those relating to the environment or relevant legislation, are reported at the quarterly meetings of the Niab Board.

### **5. CULTURE AND AWARENESS**

Everyday actions and behaviours, at all levels in the organisation, contribute to sustainability. A strong culture of sustainability with personal accountability and understanding of managing risk, responsibility and reputation will enable the business to function most effectively. Niab will have:

- a sustainability culture that supports business and sustainability priorities and is aligned to Niab's overarching priorities and the organisation's own appreciation of risk
- training that encourages personal responsibility and good behaviours
- processes, systems, and support to deliver this
- mechanisms to drive continuous improvement, tackle poor practice and inappropriate behaviour, enforce sanctions, and encourage the sharing of best practice

Information about initiatives to reduce Niab's impact on the environment and the delivery of its Sustainability Policy is regularly shared with staff via email and team / staff meetings. All staff are expected to contribute to achieving Niab's goal of sustainable operations.

Niab customers and stakeholders are informed of its programme of sustainable practices through a range of communication tools and at its many events, conferences, and workshops. Funding bodies are also informed of Niab's progress through contract meetings and formal written communications.

Niab's procurement processes require potential suppliers to communicate their relevant credentials when tendering/quoting. Sub-contractors are informed of and provided with Niab documentation that may be pertinent to their activities, and they are required to adhere to relevant environmental legislation and to any risk assessments with regard to safeguarding the environment.

## **6. RISK MANAGEMENT**

All Niab activities can involve risk. Risks need to be assessed so that informed, practical, and effective business enabling decisions can be made. Niab will maintain:

- a mature understanding of the environmental, social and economic risks throughout the organisation
- a clearly-communicated set of policies and procedures that reflect business objectives to support good risk management
- mechanisms and trained staff to analyse threats, vulnerabilities, and potential impacts that are associated with business activities
- arrangements to determine and apply cost-effective controls to mitigate the identified risks to within acceptable levels
- assurance processes to make sure that mitigations are, and remain, effective

## **7. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Niab's environmental sustainability encompasses its water and energy usage, output of wastes, emissions of greenhouse gases (climate change), ammonia (air quality), nitrates and phosphates (water quality), and its impact on wildlife (biodiversity). Niab not only aims to minimise the risk of pollution or environmental damage from its operations, but also manage its estate to maintain and enhance ecological diversity and conservation value, through for example wildlife zones, and sown wildflower and 'no mow' areas.

## **7.1. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Niab operates an overarching Quality Management System (QMS) that meets the ISO 9001:2015 standard. The accreditation, which is for the "Provision of research, technical services, consultancy, training, knowledge transfer and associated services in plant genetic resources, agricultural and primary food products and plant biotechnology", encompasses a wide variety of activities relevant to the delivery of Niab's work. Through internal and external audits, the QMS includes monitoring of adherence to requirements for storage and handling of chemicals in laboratories or agricultural pesticides (including application); service and maintenance schedules of vehicles/equipment to ensure safe and efficient operation; sample storage to avoid contamination, and containment procedures for pathogens, pests, or other biological materials to prevent accidental release.

Niab and its facilities have also been officially recognised as being competent to carry out efficacy trials/tests in the UK, in the categories of Agriculture/Horticulture, Biologicals and Semi chemicals, and Stored Crops, under Certification Number ORETO 460 (issued Jan 2023, expires 2028), providing a further validation of compliance with relevant legislation.

To enhance the existing QMS, Niab is working towards an Environmental Management System that sets out the measures implemented and maintained by Niab in relation to all aspects of its work and all processes associated with delivery.

## **7.2. WASTE REDUCTION, RECYCLING AND DISPOSAL**

Through its procurement processes Niab encourages the use of suppliers who can demonstrate environmentally-responsible business policies and practices. It aims to purchase supplies and goods made from recycled materials or materials that can be recycled. Niab actively promotes the composting of plant material, including through the operation of its own bio-digester, and all staff will be encouraged to recycle paper and printer consumables, and separate out plastics and recyclable kitchen waste. Waste records will be maintained, along with appropriate procedures and risk assessments for any hazardous waste.

## **7.3. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND CARBON MANAGEMENT**

Niab is committed to constructing buildings with low environmental impact that, when built, were designed to achieve its sustainability goals alongside improved performance, with staff participating in design and planning to ensure facilities fulfil requirements efficiently. In addition to Energy Performance certificates available for new build developments, Niab will use an Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS) Assessment, undertaken by the Low Carbon Alliance, to identify opportunities to further reduce net energy consumption.

Niab will seek to use sustainable approaches for refurbishment and maintenance projects including replacement of gas or oil-fired boilers with green electricity; introducing renewable energy sources such as solar photovoltaics; replacing lighting with low energy CFL or LED lighting controlled by PIR sensors; using materials that enhance insulation and reflect natural radiation; and replacing server and PC equipment (including use of cloud services where appropriate). Refrigeration, fire protection and air conditioning equipment will be serviced according to manufacturer requirements.

Niab's capital replacement programme will ensure that the organisation's transport fleet is regularly refreshed to bring into use vehicles that benefit from new efficient and cleaner engine technology and are better suited to current working practices thereby reducing annual running times. Niab's main Cambridge and East Malling sites are situated near to

public transport routes, and Niab will encourage and enable sustainable travel practices among its staff, including the provision of showering and changing facilities for staff who cycle to work, the use of non-car travel around the site through the provision of bicycles, and car-sharing to external meetings. With regard to suppliers, Niab actively supports local businesses for catering purposes as a means of reducing food miles.

#### **7.4. WATER USE AND PROTECTION**

Rainwater harvesting will be incorporated within water supplies for new or refurbished buildings, and winter abstracted water and specialist irrigation systems used to enable efficient application of water to crops.

Niab agronomists and field trials staff are required to maintain up-to-date knowledge of environmental legislation relating to the use of plant protection products, fertilisers, and manures, to ensure that Niab itself and the advice and recommendations it provides to its customers are compliant. This includes storage, appropriate use and effective application, pollution avoidance, water, wildlife and habitat protection Training and qualification, and continuing professional development, are key to achieving this, along with team communications alerting to any changes or developments.

Through a comprehensive Health & Safety Policy, including COSHH assessments, the aim is to continuously improve storage and disposal of hazardous chemicals.

All agrochemical and large volume fuel storage is in bunded containers to prevent contamination of soil or water courses. Lab chemicals are also contained to prevent spillage or seepage into the wider environment.

#### **7.5. PREPARING FOR AND RESPONDING TO ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENTS**

Well-tested plans, policies and procedures will reduce Niab's vulnerability to incidents, but also leaks and other disruptive challenges.

The Niab group considers that it works in four principal areas

- Field research and advice
- Laboratory research
- Administration and business travel
- Property ownership and management

Niab will have:

- business continuity arrangements aligned to industry standards, to maintain key business services, building resilience and security to facilitate a rapid and effective response to recover from incidents
- processes in place to regularly conduct risk and vulnerability assessments and review resilience planning
- an Emergency Plan in case of a major incident, and spill kits in case of accidental chemical discharge

- effective management structures that ensure shared communications between teams and provide procedures for detecting, reporting, responding to and handling incidents that are well communicated and understood by staff
- reporting mechanisms to its Board, and authorities as appropriate (such as the Environment Agency), regarding risks incidents of environmental contamination or pollution, and in accordance with applicable legislation.
- An Environmental Risk Assessment (provided under separate cover)

## 8. SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Niab's social sustainability encompasses the impact of its business activities on its staff, the local community, the community that Niab's work directly supports, and wider society.

Niab is committed to maintaining a workplace environment that is inclusive and promotes the wellbeing of all employees, including a family-friendly, work-life balance. Niab aims to continually improve its levels of training, skills development, and opportunities to learn, with succession planning and high levels of service delivery at the heart of this process. All employees will have access to Niab's Health and Wellbeing Hub via the staff Intranet, providing free access to information and services designed to enhance physical, mental and emotional health, including a confidential 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme.

Staff views will be captured through an anonymous survey, which will be undertaken periodically to track trends and guide management. The survey follows Health and Safety Executive (HSE) methodology, covering Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role and Change, and the outcomes of which are shared with staff.

Niab seeks to ensure that its physical presence and its daily operations do not adversely impact on the local community. This includes impacts associated with:

- buildings and infrastructure, during construction and when completed
- traffic (staff, visitor or delivery vehicles accessing its premises; machinery accessing its farmland and trials sites; or attendees at indoor and outdoor events)
- noise (machinery operation, fixed equipment, events), light (glasshouse lighting) or odours (field applications of manures or plant protection products)

Niab also aims to support the local community, through use of locally-based service providers and local employment opportunities

Niab aims to benefit the agriculture and horticulture industry through the research that it undertakes, the information and innovation that it generates, and the events and other knowledge exchange activities that it undertakes. This in turn supports Niab's mission to pioneer crop science, driving a sustainable future for UK farming and delivering practical solutions for healthy people and the planet.

A socio-economic impact study commissioned in 2019 showed that for every £1 spent at Niab, at least £17.60 is returned to the wider UK economy through improved production efficiency, economic growth, import substitution, export earnings and inward investment.

## 9. ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Niab's economic sustainability encompasses its long-term financial stability and viability, as indicated by its sources of income and its cost considerations in undertaking its business.

Niab's business strategy, objectives and practices aim to support long-term economic growth without negatively impacting the environmental or social outcomes of its activities.

Niab will seek to:

- Procure goods and services that deliver value for money over their lifetime
- Use recycling to reduce waste and save resources
- Generate and use renewable energy, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and its dependence on fossil fuels

Niab will assess projects or services prior to undertaking them to ensure that they are within scope for Niab to deliver, appropriately costed, and are consistent with its business objectives including its sustainability policy.

Niab will continue to pursue project and service opportunities that support sustainable agriculture and horticulture, and that promote the circular bioeconomy.

## **10. APPENDIX**

An overarching risk assessment of the Niab activities that could lead to pollution events is covered in "over-arching best environmental practices" on the Niab intranet.