

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN 2030

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



WORLD  
RUGBY



# A ROADMAP FOR THE SPORT

**As the global governing body for rugby union, World Rugby is responsible for the development of the sport and the wellbeing and interests of all players, workforce, volunteers and fans of rugby.**

However, we live in an increasingly interconnected world, and we must recognise the needs and expectations of society at large and our role within the context of the global community.

This plan sets out what we believe rugby can and should be doing to contribute to a healthier planet and a more sustainable society. We are doing this because we believe it is the right thing to do, it is our responsibility to players and fans around the globe, and it is essential for the long-term sustainability and prosperity of rugby itself – as highlighted in [World Rugby's Strategic Plan 2021-25](#).

Following a wide-ranging process of stakeholder consultation, we are confident that many of our members, partners and fans feel the same way and we look forward to combining our efforts to achieve a sustainable future for the sport in all senses of the term.

The commitments we present here apply across our three spheres of responsibility:

## 1. WORLD RUGBY AS AN ORGANISATION

Our day-to-day activities at our offices and the work of our staff wherever they operate.

## 2. WORLD RUGBY AS AN OWNER OF MAJOR EVENTS

The driving force behind the sport's significant growth has been our portfolio of major events, including:

- **Rugby World Cup**  
(our flagship men's and women's events)
- **Rugby World Cup Sevens**
- **HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series**

We also host a variety of other tournaments, which can be great vehicles for testing new initiatives and engaging youth audiences.

## 3. WORLD RUGBY AS AN INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION

We are the governing body for a global movement comprising more than 500 million fans and 10 million players within 128 national member federations affiliated through six regional associations.



# PRIORITY THEMES

Our research and stakeholder engagement gave us a clear indication as to the three key environmental themes which our plan needed to address to ensure relevance and authenticity:



## CLIMATE ACTION

This is the most urgent and pressing issue at a global level and is the top public and political concern. The rugby community is already experiencing impacts of extreme temperatures, storms, floods, droughts, air pollution and sea level rise. In the case of the Pacific islands, which make up such a vital part of the rugby family and its heritage, these impacts are increasingly severe and potentially existential.

In recognition of this urgency, World Rugby was among the first sports to sign up to the United Nations [Sports for Climate Action Framework](#) and we are committed to taking action across our portfolio of activities to address climate change and make the sport more sustainable.

The principal ways we must act to address this theme:

- Reducing the carbon footprint of the sport of rugby
- Introducing climate adaptation measures across rugby facilities and events
- Using our global platform to spread awareness, educate and advocate for climate action



## CIRCULAR ECONOMY (MANAGING MATERIALS AND RESOURCES)

This theme is a high priority for all our stakeholder groups. This is because many people recognise that the practice of sport and staging of events can be hugely wasteful of materials and resources and that there are many practical and visible ways to reduce waste, extend the lifecycle of equipment and materials, and find reuse solutions.

Here we also address the issues of single-use and short-life materials and the impact of plastic pollution, which have attracted massive public attention in recent years.

The principal ways we must act to address this theme:

- Sourcing policies to reflect whole life costing
- Reassessing the need, quantities and types of materials
- Eliminating single-use and short-life items
- Extending the useful life of materials and equipment



## PROTECTING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Closely linked to climate change, the global loss of biodiversity and threat of mass extinctions are widely regarded as the next great environmental crisis. As an outdoor sport played on a variety of surfaces including grass, sand and snow, rugby has a close affinity with nature, and it is important that we do our utmost to sustain ecosystems and promote healthier environments wherever we operate.

The principal ways we must act to address this theme:

- Integrating biodiversity and environmental quality into the design, construction and management of sport facilities
- Creating space for nature around where rugby is played
- Ensuring biodiversity impacts are assessed in our sourcing policies (e.g. in relation to timber, cotton, food and turfgrass management)

## EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

Across each of these priority themes we will engage with the wider rugby community to spread awareness, disseminate best practice and advocate for positive action.





# WORLD RUGBY ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN 2030

**Our three priority themes provide the overarching purpose for this plan. They will be addressed through four pillars of activity, which in turn are underpinned by strategic goals and targets, as summarised on the following page.**

By implementing this plan, we will also be contributing to the broader United Nations [Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development](#) – widely known as the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).



## FOUR PILLARS OF ACTIVITY

	PILLAR 1 GOVERNANCE	PILLAR 2 ADDRESSING OUR DIRECT IMPACTS	PILLAR 3 DELIVERING AND SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE RUGBY EVENTS	PILLAR 4 PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY IN RUGBY THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING
<b>STRATEGIC GOALS</b>	To ensure that sustainability is systematically embedded in our day-to-day operations and in all major decision-making processes	To reduce the environmental impact of our own activities, with a focus on climate action, circular economy, and protecting the natural environment	To ensure that all World Rugby events are delivered to the best international standards of sustainability, with a focus on climate action, circular economy, and protecting the natural environment	To use our position as a global organisation to support, promote and encourage the uptake of sustainability practices across the global rugby family
<b>TARGETS</b> Our ambition by 2030	Sustainability to be a material consideration in all World Rugby decision-making and organisational processes	<p><b>Climate Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce our carbon footprint by at least 50 per cent by 2030, without relying on offsetting, as per the UN's Sport for Climate Action Framework requirements</li> </ul> <p><b>Circular Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All sourcing of goods to be justified on basis of need, lifetime cost of ownership and end-of-life reuse options</li> <li>Identify single-use and short-life items used by World Rugby and reduce by 80 per cent by 2030</li> <li>Prolong use of electronic devices to twice their current average lifespan</li> </ul> <p><b>Natural Environment Protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zero use of forest-risk commodities and products or food derived from endangered species</li> </ul>	<p><b>Climate Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with local organisers to reduce the carbon footprint of events by 50 per cent by 2030, without relying on offsetting</li> <li>Ensure Rugby World Cups and Sevens Series are climate positive events by 2030</li> </ul> <p><b>Circular Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2030, all World Rugby event organisers to apply circular economy principles in the conceptual planning and design of the event and sourcing of goods and materials</li> <li>Collaborate with event organisers to reduce single-use and short-life items used for events by 50 per cent by 2023 and by 80 per cent by 2027 from a 2019 baseline (e.g. merchandising, signage, packaging, furniture, look and feel elements)</li> <li>Require all working or repairable electronic equipment to be reused after World Rugby events from 2025</li> </ul> <p><b>Natural Environment Protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all major World Rugby competitions have a measurable positive effect on the natural environment and biodiversity within the host territory by 2030</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All high-performance rugby unions to have developed their own sustainability plans and be monitoring and reporting on progress by 2025</li> <li>All affiliated World Rugby unions and regions to have developed their own sustainability plans and be monitoring and reporting on progress by 2030</li> <li>All affiliated World Rugby unions and regions to have signed up to the UN's Sport for Climate Action Framework by 2025 and be actively implementing the framework's principles by 2030</li> <li>Stakeholder surveys show year-on-year measurable increase in recognition of World Rugby's environmental sustainability ambition and results</li> </ul>





# ACTIONS & TIMELINES

**For each of the above targets, we have identified what we will do in the form of specific actions. These are presented below alongside our timeline to 2030.**

The first period 2022 and 2023 is a foundational phase, or “kick-off sprint”, which we consider important for several short-term measures to get the plan fully established. The plan will then follow the Rugby World Cup cycles of 2024-27 (medium-term) and 2028-31 (long-term). This plan will go through periodic refinements as we evaluate progress and respond to new situations and priorities.



## WHAT WE WILL DO – ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT OUR PLAN

WHAT WE WILL DO – ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT OUR PLAN	KICK-OFF SPRINT		CYCLE 1					CYCLE 2			
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	
PILLAR 1 GOVERNANCE											
Develop a detailed implementation plan, review and adjust the plan											
Secure resources for sustainability, appoint a Sustainability lead, assign responsibilities											
Integrate sustainability criteria in decision-making; introduce sustainability KPIs into World Rugby governance											
Establish a sustainability management system ISO 20121											
Develop and implement a sustainable procurement strategy (processes and tools)											
Align all global partnership and broadcasting contracts with environmental targets											
Publish a public sustainability report											
Incorporate sustainability criteria in grant and other funding allocations											
Introduce commitments into governance relationships with unions and regions											
PILLAR 2 ADDRESSING OUR DIRECT IMPACTS											
Management Approach											
Establish quantitative baselines for World Rugby as an organisation (carbon footprint, short-life materials, electronic devices, forest-risk commodities, products from endangered species) for 2016-19											
Produce the related reduction/elimination plans											
Evaluate progress towards our targets on a rolling four-year cycle											
Thematic Actions											
Revise business air travel policy											
Revise ground transportation policies											
Revise catering policies											
Elaborate a plan for sustainable use of electronic devices and IT services											
Revise branding, signage, decoration concept to eliminate short-life materials											
Revise energy efficiency and renewable energy sourcing/production concepts											
Adopt sourcing requirements across specific product categories (clothing/textile, wood products)											



## WHAT WE WILL DO – ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT OUR PLAN

	KICK-OFF SPRINT		CYCLE 1					CYCLE 2		
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
<b>PILLAR 3 DELIVERING AND SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE EVENTS</b>										
<b>Management Approach</b>										
Establish quantitative baselines for RWCs and sevens (carbon footprint, short-life materials, electronic devices, forest-risk commodities, products from endangered species) for 2016-19										
Integrate sustainability requirements into the awarding of all major events										
Set operational sustainability requirements for local organisers including ISO 20121										
Review World Rugby event requirements to facilitate sustainability objectives										
Monitor the implementation of the requirements and assess progress on a rolling four-year basis										
Support local organisers to integrate sustainability obligations into partners and suppliers' selection										
Provide direct technical guidance to local organising committees										
Organise knowledge capture and sharing on sustainability between local organising committees										
<b>Thematic Actions</b>										
For major events, confirm a carbon budget for delivery and define a GHG emissions reduction plan										
Support local organisers to develop a sustainable sourcing code/policy										
Review signage and look and feel concepts for World Rugby events										
Collaborate with broadcasters to optimise use of remote production										
Collaborate with commercial partners to leverage use of low carbon technologies and innovations										
Define a reduction plan for fans travel and transport, through alternative event opportunities										
Align materials we and/or our partners bring to events with the resource management policies										
Apply the recommendations of the IUCN guide: "Mitigating biodiversity impacts of sports events"										
<b>PILLAR 4 PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY IN RUGBY THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, KNOWLEDGE SHARING</b>										
Actively participate at international level in discussions on the future model of sport events										
Engage with other sports organisations (IOC, IFs, unions...) to share best practices										
Integrate sustainability questions into regular stakeholder surveys										
Create a mentoring programme for more advanced unions to help others get started										
Establish World Rugby Sustainability Award(s)										
Create an ambassadors' programme using players to advocate and promote sustainability initiatives										
Monitor union and region progress towards developing their own sustainability plan										
Develop guidance, templates and tools on sustainability for unions and the rugby ecosystem										
Develop promotional and awareness raising initiatives and campaigns on sustainability										
Develop and animate a platform to share knowledge										





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