

D2.2

Report of the assessment of the supply chain of football organisations



Sant'Anna
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Real Betis
Fundación



EUROPEAN CLUB ASSOCIATION

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1. Overview of the FREE KICKS project

Despite the urgency of increasing efforts for greening sport, **most football and sport organisations in Europe still lack a coherent environmental sustainability strategy**, as well as “good governance” capabilities to **assess and reduce their environmental impacts in a systematic way**.

The FREE KICKS project (**Football Relies on EMAS and Ecolabel to Keep Innovating on Circularity as a Key for Sustainability**), co-financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Sport programme, tries to address this gap by focusing on the topics of **circular economy and environmental sustainability in football**. Its main aim is to **trigger the transition of the world of football towards the objectives of the Green Deal and the New Action Plan** for the circular economy, collectively and individually, by supporting the adoption of environmental management practices and sustainable organizational models and actions among national football federations and professional football clubs to reduce the pressures of the football world on the environment.

The project is coordinated by Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, an Italian public university based in Pisa, and in particular by the research group on Sport and Sustainability of the SuM Laboratory of the Institute of Management. The football clubs FC Porto, Malmö FF, Racing Club from Argentina, the Fundación Real Betis Balompie and the Romanian Football Federation are the project partners, together with Sport Positive which takes care of the communication and dissemination of the results, and ECA (European Club association) which is a supporting entity.

2. Assessing the sustainability governance of the supply chains of football organisations

As part of the FREE KICKS project, Work Package 2 focuses on evaluating the status of sustainability management in participating football organisations. Specifically, Task 2.2 focuses on the assessment of the sustainability governance of football organisations' supply-chains, starting from the consideration that professional football organisations and clubs have a strong “**indirect**” **environmental impact** that derives, for example, from their collaboration with a variety of suppliers of goods and services that are needed in the organization of football events and in the management football infrastructures.

Effective environmental management of these supply chains can decrease the overall environmental footprint of football organisations. Thus, the aim of this report is to identify the **environmental governance gaps and needs, as well as improvement opportunities, of each participating football organisation from a supply chain perspective.**

The identified gaps and recommendations will be discussed among the project partners, and selected recommendations will be considered to develop specific improvement plans and implemented by participating football organisations as part of Work Package 2 and 3. This collaborative approach ensures that the findings and recommendations from the assessment are translated into actionable steps to enhance sustainability practices within the football organisations involved in the project. The findings and improvements identified and detailed in this report will help not only FREE KICKS partners, but also all football organisations looking to reduce their impact on the environment.

3. Methods

The assessment was conducted by Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies (SSSA), project leader, and it relied on two methods:

- 1) As a first step, an organizational analysis was carried out by SSSA researchers, through a **desk analysis** aimed at **mapping the existing actors, responsibilities and departments that are involved in, or appointed to, environmentally salient operations or processes connected to the management of the supply chain.**
- 2) As a second step of the analysis, SSSA researchers conducted **semi-structured interviews** with the **procurement departments** of the 5 football organisations partners of the project, and with **three key contractors** from cleaning, turf maintenance and catering supply chains.

Researchers at SSSA created an interview protocol for both the interviews to procurement departments and contractors. The aim was to identify areas that have potential for improvement and to determine governance practices that can be implemented in those areas.

A total of 6 interviews with specialists working in the procurement departments of Real Betis, FrF, FC Porto, Malmo FF and Racing Club were conducted between May 2023 and October 2023.

The researchers examined the environmental policy/strategy of the organisations in relation to procurement, suppliers’ selection processes, criteria and requirements, the existence of an environmental assessment of

suppliers, the existence of monitoring processes, the involvement of procurement department employees in sustainability-related trainings, etc.

The interview protocol for purchase department comprises five thematic sections, which are detailed in the table below:

Section	Example of key questions
<p>Environmental policy</p>	<p>Is environmental sustainability a topic of discussion in the organisation?</p> <p>If yes, are there procurement aspects or references in the organisation’s sustainability strategy/policy?</p> <p>Has the organisation or the procurement department evaluated its main supply chains environmental hotspots and impacts (for example, emissions of CO2)?</p> <p>If yes, what are the most relevant supply chains?</p> <p>If yes, what kind of assessments have been carried out?</p> <p>If yes, have the assessments involved the engagement of suppliers?</p> <p>If yes, does the procurement department collect environmental KPIs from the suppliers?</p>
<p>Training</p>	<p>Has the procurement department ever been involved in sustainability-related trainings?</p> <p>Does the procurement department have personnel with sustainability experience?</p>
<p>Suppliers’ engagement and selection</p>	<p>What are the current rules to select suppliers of works, services, and products?</p> <p>Are there differences in the rules to select suppliers within works, services and products?</p> <p>Does the selection of suppliers happen in the same way for all facilities of the organisation or are there differences? If yes, why?</p> <p>Do you have procedures?</p> <p>Do you have green criteria taken into account in the selection procedure? If yes, of what type?</p> <p>If yes, are they compulsory criteria (must-have) or are they managed as rewarding criteria (nice-to-have which provides points to the suppliers useful for the ranking)?</p>

	In case you do not have green criteria, are you thinking to introduce them in the selection procedure, and if yes, what are they?
Contracts with suppliers	Once you have selected the supplier do you include green rules to follow in the contract? (e.g. use of green products for the cleaning services, etc.) In case you do not include green rules, are you thinking to introduce them in the contract and if yes, what are they? Could you provide an example of contract?
Monitoring	How do you monitor your suppliers in the provision of the service/products? How often do you monitor your suppliers? What happens if they are not compliant with the criteria set in the contract? Do you carry out monitoring activities linked with green requirements (if any)?

Following these first interviews, in November 2023 SSSA started interviewing football organisations’ external contractors, in order to gain a broader understanding of the dynamics and environmental impact of the supply chain. In particular, three common types of contractors were identified for each football organisation: the suppliers of **catering services** (food & beverage), **cleaning services** and **turf maintenance**. The choice was since these are three key services for football organisations which also have a relevant impact on the environment. Specifically, LCAs studies carried out in the frame of FREE KICKS highlighted the relevance of food and beverage as well as cleaning sectors of football events. Moreover, turf maintenance is an under investigated topic in sport sustainability management with few studies. Also, these three common contractors can promote best practice exchange among the different football organisations.

Three different protocols were designed for each service, and a total of 15 contractors were identified with the help of each football organization and interviewed by SSSA researchers between November 2023 and February 2024.

The interviews included both general questions for all contractors as well as specific questions for the three different services. General questions covered whether environmental sustainability is a topic of discussion within the company, if sustainability strategies and policies or environmental certifications are in place, the involvement of the top management and employees in sustainability-related trainings, and more. Additional questions included, for example; the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides or sustainable products for the

management of the turf, the provision of vegetarian meal options or the use of environmentally-friendly and biodegradable cleaning products.

The interview protocol for contractors comprises four thematic sections, which are detailed in the table below:

Section	Example of key questions
<p>Organisation's Sustainability Governance</p>	<p>Do you have sustainability strategies and policies?</p> <p>Has the organisation appointed a sustainability manager?</p> <p>Has the organisation evaluated its main direct and supply chains environmental impacts? What kind of assessments have been carried out?</p> <p>Have you set sustainability action plans?</p> <p>Did you monitor periodically the achievement of the objectives?</p>
<p>Operations</p>	<p>What actions are you implementing regarding the sustainability of the food/cleaning/turf maintenance supply chain? what is your influence on these choices?</p> <p>Have you obtained any specific certifications or recognitions for sustainability?</p> <p>Are there specific sustainability initiatives or practices that your company has implemented for sport events?</p>
<p>Sustainability training and monitoring</p>	<p>Has the sustainability department ever been involved in sustainability-related trainings?</p> <p>Have you implemented sustainability KPIs to evaluate your sustainability performances? If yes, how?</p> <p>Do you adopt green criteria to monitor your suppliers?</p> <p>Have you ever thought to obtain an environmental certification for your activity?</p>
<p>Clients' sustainability requests</p>	<p>Do you use sustainability commitment as a leverage to obtain contracts?</p> <p>Have you ever found in the selection procedure of your clients' requests or awarding criteria about sustainability?</p> <p>If yes, what are the most common sustainability requirements and what kind of criteria?</p> <p>If yes, are they compulsory criteria (must-have) or are they managed as rewarding criteria (nice-to-have which provides points for the clients' suppliers ranking)?</p>

	<p>How do clients monitor the sustainability criteria they require? How often do they monitor them? Have you ever received a monitoring visit during your service/product delivery about sustainability requirements?</p> <p>What happens if you are not compliant with the criteria they set in the contract?</p>
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4. Overview of the interviews

The following 21 interviews have been conducted in the frame of the project WP2, Task 2.2.

4.1 Interviews with Real Betis Balompié (RBB)

Interviewee	Organisation	Date
Purchasing and administration technician	RBB	06.09.2023
Coordinator	Royal Vert (Turf maintenance)	14.12.2023
Quality and Environmental Technician	Clece S.A. (Cleaning)	11.01.2024
Director of Marketing, Communication and Sustainability at Aramark	Aramark (Food and beverage)	17.01.2024

4.2 Interviews with the Romanian Football Federation (FRF)

Interviewee	Organisation	Date
Procurement specialist	FRF	18.09.2023
Office Manager	Best Cleaning Experts (Ceaning)	13.12.2023
General Manager	Real time catering (food and beverage)	13.12.2023
General Manager	Gama Verde (Turf maintenance)	15.12.2023

4.3 Interviews with Porto FC (POR)

Interviewee	Organisation	Date
Procurement department, FC Porto	POR	04.10.2023
General manager of the catering division	IBERSOL Group (Food and beverage)	11.12.2023
Operational manager	RED - Relvados e Equipamentos Desportivos (Turf maintenance)	11.12.2023

Responsible of Operations	DERICHEBOURG Multiservices (Cleaning)	12.12.2023
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4.4 Interviews with Malmö FF (MAL)

Interviewee	Organisation	Date
Stadium Manager	MAL	12.10.2023
Head Chef	MAL	12.10.2023
Head of Sustainability	Menigo (Food and beverage)	17.11.2023
Green maintenance Manager for the turf, grass areas and Eleda stadium	Municipality (Turf maintenance)	17.11.2023
CEO & founder	Kundpartner Syd AB (Cleaning)	02.02.2024

4.5 Interviews with Racing Club (RAC)

Interviewee	Organisation	Date
Procurement Manager	RAC	
Asistente área césped	Semillas Picasso (Turf maintenance)	15.11.2023
Manager	Productos Químicos Casuso (Cleaning)	21.11.2023
Manager	B&C Gastronomía (Food and beverage)	10.01.2024

The summary of interviews conducted is provided in Annex.

5. Sustainability governance supply chains “gaps” and recommendations

5.1 FREE KICKS football organisations

This section presents the research findings derived from the study conducted among participating football organisations and suppliers, namely RBB, RAC, FRF, POR, and MAL. The aim is to identify key areas for

improvement in the supply chain governance of these organisations. It should be noted that while these organisations vary in terms of their structure, resources, strategies and previous experiences in environmental and sustainability management, there are common environmental supply chain governance needs that have emerged from the interviews conducted across all participating organisations. This indicates that these needs represent shared challenges faced by organisations within the football sector.

Before delving into the key needs, it is important to acknowledge that all organisations involved in the study have consistently placed a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability in recent years. These organisations thus demonstrate a significant level of awareness regarding environmental issues in football and have taken steps to address them. Most organisations have – formally or informally – appointed specific roles and responsibilities related to environmental sustainability within their organisational structures (i.e. sustainability manager) and, in many instances, have adopted comprehensive environmental sustainability strategies.

Despite these considerable efforts, there are still challenges in fully integrating environmental concerns across all aspects of organisational activities and particularly regarding supply chains. Seven main areas for improvement emerged from the overall analysis, which are summarized as follows:

1. Strengthening the formalisation of environmental management responsibilities across organisational positions, coherently with the sustainability strategy;
2. Strengthening the formalisation of sustainability governance commitment towards the supply chain;
3. Strengthening the awareness on supply chains environmental impacts and enhancing the use of sustainable products and services;
4. Strengthening environmental transparency and traceability in supply chains;
5. Strengthening environmental clauses in supplier contracts;
6. Strengthening supplier sustainability assessments;
7. Strengthening supply chain sustainability-oriented stakeholder engagement and external communication;

Based on the needs identified above, we also provide 11 recommendations for improving environmental sustainability supply chain governance among participating football organisations:

1. Formalisation of a sustainability managers and a sustainability department, coordinating supply chain management strategies within the organization;

2. Development of a sustainability report with focus on sustainable supply chain management;
3. Implementation of environmental management systems (EMSs);
4. Enhancement of environmental training to managers and purchasing departments;
5. Development of a sustainable purchasing policy;
6. Development of a sustainable supplier selection procedure;
7. Enhancement and implementation of environmental clauses in contracts with suppliers;
8. Development of a monitoring procedure for suppliers;
9. Development of an environmental audit protocol;
10. Engagement with suppliers to foster sustainability awareness and higher transparency of data;
11. Policy on sponsorship for sustainability: developing environmental sustainability criteria for aiding selection of commercial partnerships

The following paragraphs delve into the above-mentioned areas for improvement and possible improvement actions, discussing how such needs constitute opportunities for football organisations to foster environmental sustainability improvement, and how these could be tackled by the football organisations, within the frame of the FREE KICKS project and beyond.

The tables below link the areas for improvement to the recommendations (first table) and highlight how some recommendations cover more than one area for improvement (second table).

Areas for improvement	Direct recommendations
Strengthening the formalisation of environmental management responsibilities, coherently with the sustainability strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalisation of a sustainability managers and a sustainability department, coordinating supply chain management strategies within the organisation
Strengthening the formalisation of sustainability governance commitment towards the supply chain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a sustainability report with focus on sustainable supply chain management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of environmental management systems (EMSs)
Strengthening the awareness on sustainable supply chain management and enhancing the use of sustainable products and service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement of environmental training to managers and purchasing departments
Strengthening environmental transparency and traceability in supply chains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a sustainable purchasing policy Development of a sustainable supplier selection procedure
Strengthening environmental clauses in supplier contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement and implementation of environmental clauses in contracts with suppliers
Strengthening supplier sustainability assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a monitoring procedure for suppliers Development of an environmental audit protocol
Strengthening supply chain sustainability-oriented stakeholder engagement and external communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with suppliers to foster sustainability awareness and higher transparency of data Policy on sponsorship for sustainability: developing environmental sustainability criteria for aiding selection of commercial partnerships

Areas for improvement Recommendations	Strengthening...						
	Formalisation of environmental management responsibilities, coherently with the sustainability strategy.	Formalisation of sustainability governance commitment towards the supply chain.	Awareness on sustainable supply chain management and enhancing the use of sustainable products and service.	Environmental transparency and traceability in supply chains	Environmental clauses in supplier contracts	Supplier sustainability assessment	Supply chain sustainability-oriented stakeholder engagement and external communication
Formalisation of a sustainability managers and a sustainability department, coordinating supply chain management strategies within the organisation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Development of a sustainability report with focus on sustainable supply chain management		X	X	X			X
Implementation of environmental management systems (EMSs)	X		X	X	X	X	X
Enhancement of environmental training to managers and purchasing departments			X	X	X	X	X
Development of a sustainable purchasing policy		X	X	X	X		X
Development of a sustainable supplier selection procedure		X	X	X	X		X
Enhancement and implementation of environmental clauses in contracts with suppliers			X	X	X		X
Development of a monitoring procedure for suppliers			X	X		X	X
Development of an environmental audit protocol			X	X		X	X
Engagement with suppliers to foster sustainability awareness and higher transparency of data		X	X	X			X

5.1.1 Strengthening the formalisation of environmental management responsibilities, coherently with the sustainability strategy.

Although most participating organisations have appointed a sustainability manager or officer to develop, promote and oversee the implementation of their sustainability strategy, the research has revealed a lack of clear allocation of environmental duties and responsibilities. This means that, in addition to the supervision provided by the sustainability officers, the management of environmental aspects of operations and supply chains often relies on the proactive efforts of employees in addressing environmental issues within their work activities. There is an observed inconsistency in how environmental responsibilities are defined and distributed among staff and departments within football organizations. While some positions might inherently focus on sustainability, the explicit formalization of these responsibilities across the organization is often missing. Even when organizations have a sustainability strategy in place, there might be a disconnect between the strategic goals and the day-to-day responsibilities of various organizational members. This can lead to inefficiencies and missed opportunities in achieving sustainability objectives. Moreover, the management of supply chain aspects is sometimes ununiformly carried out by more departments, as for example the purchasing department, commercial department, operations department, HSE department etc, even within single organisations. This may slow down processes and actions.

Recommendation #1

Formalisation of a sustainability managers and a sustainability department, coordinating supply chain management strategies within the organisation

Establishing a dedicated role and department for sustainability ensures focused oversight and strategic implementation of sustainability practices across all operations, including the supply chain. This entity would be clearly responsible for setting sustainability goals, developing strategies, and overseeing their execution. The formalization of a sustainability manager together with a specific department will also improve the allocation of environmental management responsibilities and the coordination with all other departments. In this regard, the sustainability department could co-develop and co- coordinate supply chain management strategies within the organisation. A centralized department on sustainability topics could oversee the implementation and internalization of sustainability supply chain management aspects and identify specific roles and responsibilities across other departments, such as procurement, marketing, HSE, for assessing suppliers' sustainability, managing eco-friendly procurement, and ensuring compliance with

sustainability standards, in coordination with the sustainability department. This approach would limit the fragmentation of responsibilities and enhance the overall implementation of sustainable supply chain management best practices as well as the monitoring.

To do it, football organizations could formalize a sustainability manager and department, and then carry out a gap analysis to identify how supply chain aspects are managed within the organisation. Working on the specific organizational responsibilities, the gap analysis can identify improvement opportunities that could be discussed and that could lead to a more systematic way to manage football supply chains from a sustainable point of view.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, RFR, RBB, MAL, PORT

5.1.2 Strengthening the formalisation of sustainability governance commitment towards the supply chain.

The formalisation of environmental roles and responsibilities is a key leverage for supply chain management. However, the analysis also shows the lack of formalized commitment regarding the sustainable management of football supply chains. This gap highlights that while there may be a general intent or informal practices aimed at promoting sustainability within the supply chain, there is a lack of formalized policies, strategies, or commitments explicitly dedicated to this purpose. This absence undermines the effectiveness and consistency of sustainability efforts. Similarly, the analysis shows a weak integration with supply chain management procedures. Sustainability considerations are not fully integrated into the key decision-making processes, criteria, and evaluations that govern supply chain management. This results in missed opportunities to leverage supply chain relationships in support of broader environmental and social goals. Without a formalized governance commitment, sustainability practices across the supply chain can vary significantly, leading to inconsistent outcomes and potentially undermining the organization's overall sustainability objectives. A lack of formal commitment may also limit an organization's ability to influence its suppliers towards adopting more sustainable practices, as there are no clear expectations or requirements to guide their operations. Moreover, the absence of formalized commitments makes it challenging to hold suppliers accountable for sustainability performance and to communicate transparently about supply chain sustainability efforts to stakeholders.

Recommendation #2

Development of a sustainability report with focus on sustainable supply chain management

The development of a sustainability report with a focus on sustainable supply chain management represents a key strategy toward transparency and accountability in environmental and social stewardship for any football organization. This type of report serves not only as a reflection of the organization's current sustainability practices but also as a strategy and roadmap for future initiatives, particularly focusing supply chain management. To develop such a report, organizations could start by conducting a thorough assessment of their supply chains to identify key areas of environmental impact, such as greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, waste generation, and social impacts including labor practices and community engagement. In this regard, the use of life cycle assessment according to specific ISO and European standard is fundamental. FREE KICKS project has already set a milestone for RAC, RBB, POR and MAL.

The report should then detail the organization's strategies, policies and practices aimed at addressing these impacts, including the criteria for supplier selection, monitoring and auditing processes, and any sustainability certifications required of suppliers. It is also essential to highlight specific initiatives or partnerships aimed at improving sustainability within the supply chain, such as collaboration with suppliers to reduce packaging or investments in renewable energy projects.

Quantitative data plays a crucial role in making the report informative and credible. Organizations should include sustainability Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to their supply chain, such as percentage reductions in emissions or water use, alongside benchmarks or goals for future performance improvements. This data should be complemented by case studies or examples that illustrate successful sustainability projects or innovations within the supply chain.

By focusing on sustainable supply chain management within their sustainability reports, organizations can demonstrate their commitment to reducing their environmental footprint and enhancing social well-being, thereby leading by example in the football industry.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, MAL, FRF, RBB

Recommendation #3

Implementation of environmental management systems (EMSs)

Implementing an Environmental Management System according to ISO 14001 and/or EMAS offers a systematic framework to enhance environmental performance and sustainability. EMSs are designed to help organizations reduce their environmental impact, comply with applicable laws and regulations, and continuously improve their environmental performance. When it comes to supply chain management, several aspects of ISO14001 and EMAS can be directly applied to ensure that environmental considerations are deeply integrated into the procurement, production, and distribution processes. Again, the FREE KICKS project already covers this aspect for RBB, PORT, FRF and MALM, by working on the obtainment of EMAS certifications.

EMSs could help:

- Identifying indirect environmental aspects and impacts. This includes evaluating how procurement decisions, material sourcing, transportation, and supplier operations contribute to pollution, resource depletion, waste generation, and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Setting objectives and targets. Based on the identified aspects and impacts, organizations can set clear environmental objectives and targets specific to supply chain operations. These might include reducing carbon emissions through optimized logistics, increasing the use of recycled materials, or ensuring suppliers adhere to environmental regulations and best practices.
- Supplier selection and evaluation: EMSs according to ISO14001 and EMAS require environmental criteria to be integrated into the selection and evaluation of suppliers. Organizations should develop policies and procedures that prioritize suppliers with strong environmental management practices, such as those who also operate under ISO 14001, EMAS or similar standards. This encourages a greener supply chain by promoting sustainable practices among suppliers.
- Monitoring and continuous improvement. This includes tracking performance indicators related to environmental aspects, conducting audits of supplier facilities, and reviewing the environmental performance of the supply chain regularly.

Implementing EMSs according to ISO 14001 and EMAS within supply chain management not only helps in minimizing the environmental impact but also enhances operational efficiency, reduces costs, and improves corporate reputation. By extending the principles of ISO 14001 and EMAS to the supply chain,

organizations can ensure a holistic approach to environmental sustainability, demonstrating leadership and commitment to responsible environmental stewardship.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC

5.1.3 Strengthening the awareness on sustainable supply chain management and enhancing the use of sustainable products and service.

Often there is a gap in understanding among staff at various levels of football organizations about the broader environmental and social impacts of their supply chain decisions. A similar pattern can be highlighted among supply chains actors. This includes a lack of awareness about the origin of products and services, the sustainability practices of suppliers, and the overall environmental footprint of procured goods. Even when there is some level of awareness, organizations might not fully leverage the availability of sustainable products and services due to lack of knowledge of sustainable solutions, lack of managerial capacity, perceived cost implications, availability concerns, or resistance to change from traditional suppliers and products. However, a lack of awareness and action regarding sustainable supply chain practices can lead to missed opportunities for reducing environmental impacts. In fact, indirect impacts coming from supply chain choices represent the biggest cake of football organisations and matches environmental impacts. Moreover, as sustainability becomes a more significant factor in consumer and partner decisions, lagging in this area can diminish an organization's attractiveness and competitive positioning.

Recommendation #4

Enhancement of environmental training to managers and purchasing departments

Football organisations could offer training courses to employees, personnel, and staff both within and outside their organisations. These training initiatives aim to enhance key competencies related to the management of significant environmental aspects of daily operations and supply chains. In particular, internal personnel may involve managers and purchasing departments, whereas external training can target suppliers. Training may cover the following topics:

- environmental strategy and decarbonisation roadmap: how to design a coherent environmental strategy and decarbonisation roadmap addressing key environmental challenges of the football sector.

- environmental assessment methodologies: what are and how to implement key environmental footprint assessment methodologies to sports events, such as Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and carbon footprint, according to internationally renowned and reliable standards (e.g. PEF and OEF).
- green procurement: how to integrate environmental sustainability criteria in the selection of suppliers of services and products.
- environmental auditing: how to carry out on-site visits and audits for assessing the environmental management performance of sports events.
- environmental communication and reporting: how to communicate about sustainability initiatives in a transparent, reliable and trustworthy way.
- environmental management systems: what are, and how to implement an environmental management system according to noteworthy and internationally recognized standards such as ISO 14001 and EMAS.
- eco-labels and certifications: what are and how to use eco-labels and environmental certifications for products, services and organisations.
- Etc.

Under the FREE KICKS project, participating organisations' employees and staff will receive training courses facilitated by SSSA, as part of WP4.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, FRF, RBB, MAL, POR

5.1.4 Strengthening environmental transparency and traceability in supply chains

Although football organisations show good relationships with their suppliers, the analysis highlights the need to enhance visibility and accountability regarding the environmental impacts of their supply chain activities. Often there is a lack of detailed insight into the environmental practices and impacts of suppliers deep within the supply chain, making it challenging to assess the overall environmental footprint of organizational operations and products. Also, the absence of robust systems to trace products and materials back through the supply chain impedes the ability to verify sustainability credentials and manage risks related to environmental compliance and reputation. Lack of visibility into supply chain practices could lead to inadvertent associations with environmentally harmful practices, exposing organizations to regulatory and compliance risks. Moreover,

clear data on supply chain impacts, organizations may miss opportunities to identify and implement targeted sustainability improvements.

Recommendation #5

Development of a sustainable purchasing policy

A sustainable purchasing policy is a document which outlines the commitment of a football organisation to sustainable procurement. A formal policy ensures that procurement decisions are made not only based on cost and quality but also consider environmental and social factors, aligning with global sustainability standards and stakeholder expectations. The document highlights the criteria and the processes for selecting products and services that minimize negative environmental impacts, support fair labor practices, and contribute to community well-being.

From an environmental point of view, the implementation of such a policy requires a comprehensive understanding of the life cycle impacts of products and services, as well as the ability to engage suppliers on sustainability issues. In this regard, the LCA carried out in FREE KICKS project represent a key step to identify the most impactful indirect impacts of a football event and football organisation. The policy involves setting clear environmental standards, such as requiring certifications (e.g., FSC for wood, Ecolabel for cleaning products) or specifying minimum recycled content. Additionally, the policy could encourage innovation by preferring suppliers that demonstrate continuous improvement in sustainability performance or that offer novel solutions to reduce environmental impacts.

Implementing a sustainable purchasing policy requires coordination across departments to identify the priorities and the type of commitment which will be needed.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, FRF, RBB, MAL, POR

Recommendation #6

Development of a sustainable supplier selection procedure

Creating a sustainable supplier selection procedure involves creating a new supplier procedure or modifying the existing one based on quality and economic factors, by establishing clear criteria that evaluate suppliers' environmental performance, social responsibility practices, and ethical standards. This can include assessing their carbon footprint, resource efficiency, environmental performances, labor practices, and contributions to community well-being. Implementing such a policy helps organizations identify and partner with suppliers who are committed to sustainability, thereby extending the organization's sustainability efforts throughout the supply chain.

The procedure should be aligned with the sustainable purchasing policy. The procedure should define the way suppliers are assessed from an environmental and social point of view. Sustainability requirements should be set and every supplier assessed against such requirements. As such, the first step is the development of specific sustainability criteria. They could be internal requirements or could rely on the use of sustainability standards (such as for example EMAS and the EU ecolabel). Every sustainability performance should be benchmarked, so that suppliers' performances can be quantified against the benchmark, facilitating an objective selection process. The type of evaluation depends on the specific situation. Criteria can be considered guidelines to guide suppliers and provide best practices, thereby being flexible and not mandatory for suppliers to be qualified and selected (awarding criteria). However, criteria can also be mandatory and as such suppliers must be compliant if they want to be selected (mandatory criteria). Criteria could also be specific for some types of suppliers, depending on their sector peculiarities. For example, traceability certifications may be required to food and beverage suppliers, whereas certifications related to sustainability performances to cleaning and turf maintenance suppliers. The procedure and its criteria could cover different environmental aspects and topics, such as:

- Accommodation for staff and athletes
- Mobility
- Use of materials
- Branding and merchandising materials
- Infrastructures
- Water management

- Energy management
- Food and beverages
- Waste management
- Biodiversity and natural capital

The procedure should clearly define roles, responsibilities, and processes. Activities such as collection of data, interviews and audit should be included or mentioned. The procedure should also highlight the processes behind a continuous monitoring and review of supplier’s performances and the way the football organisation can collaborate with the suppliers.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, FRF, RBB, MAL, POR

5.1.5 Strengthening environmental clauses in supplier contracts

Football organisations show awareness about the opportunity to include environmental clauses. However, this practice is not internalised yet for every product and service and some organisations do not include them. Environmental clauses involve an explicit incorporation of environmental standards and requirements into the procurement contracts that football organizations have with their suppliers. This strategy directly influences the operational practices of suppliers through contractual obligations, indeed. It ensures that suppliers are not only encouraged but required to adhere to specific environmental practices and standards, aligning their operations with the sustainability goals of the contracting organization.

When present, many contracts may contain generic sustainability language that lacks specificity or, worse, entirely omit environmental considerations. This vagueness or absence could fail to enforce any real commitment or change in supplier behaviour regarding environmental impacts.

Recommendation #7

Enhancement and implementation of environmental clauses in contracts with suppliers

The inclusion of environmental clauses in contracts with suppliers represents a further step in the sustainable management of the supply chains of a football organisation. Embedding these clauses ensures that sustainability is integrated into the contractual obligations of suppliers. Environmental clauses can work in alignment with a sustainable supply chain strategy and a sustainable procurement policy. They can also be outlined in the sustainable supplier selection procedure, where not only suppliers are assessed based on their sustainability performances, but after selection they are obliged to be compliant with contractual duties.

Environmental clauses in contracts can range from requirements for suppliers to hold specific environmental certifications (e.g., EMA, ISO 14001, EU Ecolabel) to obligations for reducing carbon emissions, water usage, or waste generation in the supply of goods and services. In the frame of FREE KICKS partners, examples range from generic clauses to more specific ones. Such clauses can be specific for some suppliers depending on their sectorial peculiarities. However, ideally all suppliers could be involved in environmental clauses in their contracts. In general, these clauses establish a clear expectation for environmental performance, indeed. The benefits of implementing environmental clauses and sustainability performance incentives in contracts are extensive, including for example not only environmental benefits, but also stronger supply chain relationships.

Moreover, football organisations could provide sustainability performance incentives, such as bonuses for achieving specified environmental targets or preferential procurement terms for exceeding compliance requirements, encouraging suppliers to go beyond minimum standards. This approach could lead to the development of more sustainable products and services, as suppliers innovate to meet and surpass these criteria.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, FRF, RBB, MAL, POR

5.1.6 Strengthening supplier sustainability assessments

Even when some sustainability criteria are present in supplier selection or through contractual obligations, no football organisations have put in place robust suppliers monitoring procedures and systems. Suppliers also highlighted the lack of monitoring by their clients in the football sector as well as in other industrial sectors.

However, monitoring of suppliers is fundamental to evaluate the compliance to such requirements and to promote awareness and commitment of suppliers on environmental issues.

To bridge this gap, football organisations should work both on monitoring procedures of supplier selections and contracts. Football organisations could develop specific procedures and protocols stating the way they can assess suppliers according to the requested sustainability criteria. These procedures may encompass the periodic request of documents and environmental data as well as specific audits to assess the compliance to the sustainability requirements they have previously defined. The use of sharing platform could enhance the monitoring process. Similarly, specific contractors can be assessed through audits during the implementation of football events, as for example in case of externalised services such as catering and cleaning services.

Recommendation #8

Development of a monitoring procedure for suppliers

The development of a monitoring procedure for suppliers can be either part of a wider sustainable supplier selection procedure and strategy or a specific procedure. Monitoring procedures enable organizations to systematically assess suppliers' compliance with sustainability standards and contractual obligations, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability. The main assessment methods are documentation analysis, interviews and audit. A monitoring procedure could imply one of them, a combination of them or all of them.

A supplier monitoring procedure could involve setting:

- Purpose and scope (for example, to whom it applies);
- Roles and responsibilities;
- Monitoring criteria (for example, the ones defined in the sustainable supplier selection procedure or new ones);
- Monitoring and assessment methods: documentation analysis, interviews and audit;
- Monitoring frequency;
- Performance evaluation management;
- Communication and feedback management;

- Corrective actions and follow-up management;
- Record and document management;
- Continuous improvement;
- Compliance and legal requirements.

Organizations may need to adapt and expand upon this framework to meet their specific needs, standards, and national regulatory requirements. The procedure should be transparent, fair, and collaborative, offering feedback and support to suppliers to help them improve their sustainability performance.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, FRF, RBB, MAL, POR

Recommendation #9

Development of an environmental audit protocol

In the frame of a sustainable supplier selection procedure, the ability to monitor and assess the implementation of environmental management practices and the compliance to environmental requirements could be enhanced by devising and adopting a specific protocol for the environmental auditing of suppliers. Audits provide a structured and objective mechanism to assess, verify, and report on the sustainability practices of suppliers. They are crucial for identifying gaps in performance, areas of risk, and opportunities for improvement. By conducting audits, football organizations can ensure their suppliers are aligned with their sustainability goals and values, thereby minimizing reputational risks and verifying the truthfulness of the information they provide to football organisations in the selection phase and periodically. An audit protocol typically includes criteria for selection, scheduling, conducting, and reporting audits. It outlines the sustainability standards against which suppliers are assessed, the methodology for conducting audits, and the process for addressing non-compliance issues. The protocol should ensure that audits are conducted fairly and consistently, with a focus on collaboration and capacity building for suppliers. Audits could be carried out during football events where suppliers are working (e.g., catering services) as well as by visiting supplier’s headquarters and processes or overseeing their activities in the football organization’s facilities (e.g. cleaning services, turf maintenance, etc.).

Drawing on internationally recognized guidelines for environmental and quality audits (such as ISO 14011:1996 Guidelines for environmental auditing and ISO 19011:2011), the protocol may contain practical information and tips on how to conduct an effective on-site visit, and how to prepare an informative report of the visit. The protocol may also be developed according to formalised procedures or customizable to incorporate specific requirements which have not been formally integrated in governance documents yet.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, FRF, RBB, MAL, POR

5.1.7 Strengthening supply chain sustainability-oriented stakeholder engagement and external communication

Promoting environmental sustainability within the football supply chain necessitates active coordination and collaboration with various stakeholders: the football sector is indeed characterized by fragmented governance structures and a diverse range of actors, both public and private. Enhancing stakeholder engagement capabilities is crucial for football organisations to introduce new sustainability practices, disseminate knowledge, share best practices, and communicate their commitment to various actors in the sector such as supporters, local communities, and policy makers.

According to the interviews and desk analysis, most participating organisations are already engaged in stakeholder engagement initiatives, with a particular focus on social responsibility issues. However, interviewees highlight the need to expand stakeholder engagement efforts specifically related to environmental sustainability. This expansion aims to create opportunities for collaborative initiatives and environmental improvements under a supply chain lens.

Recommendation #10

Engagement with suppliers to foster sustainability awareness and higher transparency of data

In line and in coordination with a sustainable supply chain management strategy, a sustainable procurement policy and a sustainable supplier selection procedure, a football organization can engage with its suppliers to foster sustainability awareness and enhance data transparency through proactive communication,

collaboration, and educational initiatives. By organizing regular activities such as meetings and workshops, tables, co-creation workshops, project collaborations and other similar approaches, the organization can share its sustainability goals and expectations with suppliers, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices and transparent reporting. The primary objective is to establish common ground between football organisations, their suppliers and their network of stakeholders. This approach also enables the co-creation of sustainable solutions and ensures a broader and more inclusive approach to environmental sustainability.

Encouraging suppliers to disclose their sustainability metrics and practices fosters a culture of openness and accountability. This could be facilitated by implementing a shared digital platform where suppliers can report their environmental data, making it easier to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement. In this regard, Real Betis' engagement with suppliers on sustainability, especially the use of a platform to track their carbon footprint, represents a good practice. Additionally, the organization can recognize and reward suppliers who demonstrate outstanding commitment to sustainability, encouraging others to follow. Through these efforts, the football organization not only promotes sustainability within its supply chain but also contributes to the broader goal of creating a more sustainable and transparent sporting industry.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, FRF, RBB, MAL, POR

Recommendation #11

Policy on sponsorship for sustainability: developing environmental sustainability criteria for aiding selection of commercial partnerships

To mitigate the potential negative consequences on reputation resulting from partnering with companies that have a poor environmental track record, as well as to avoid partnering with companies that do not align with football organisations' sustainability strategy, it is advisable for the football organisations to develop and implement a partnership policy that incorporates environmental sustainability criteria.

The policy can involve the integration of environmental indicators or criteria into the profiling and mapping of potential sponsors and partners. This would assist organisations in selecting suitable sponsorships. To support this process, SSSA researchers can aid football organisations in identifying and compiling relevant environmental indicators to supplement existing partner mapping efforts. These indicators will serve as a measure of partners' environmental risks and responsibility. Possible indicators may encompass factors such

as the economic sector, adoption of certifications or management systems, involvement in sustainability reporting initiatives, sustainability ratings, and participation in sustainability projects and initiatives.

To whom the recommendation is addressed: RAC, FRF, RBB, MAL, POR

5.2 Focus: sustainability “gaps” in football supply chains

The table below presents a comparative analysis of three supply chains within the football industry - Catering (Food and Beverage), Cleaning, and Turf Maintenance - across 8 sustainability governance dimensions. By analysing the contractors per specific supply chain, the table provides information on the presence of sustainability managers, assessment of environmental impacts, sustainability report, KPIs monitoring, environmental certification, green requirements from clients to contractors, green requirements by contractor to their suppliers, and environmental education. The numbers go from 0 to 5, as 5 were the number of contractors interviewed for each supply chain (equal to the number of football organisations in FREE KICKS).

Football Supply chains	Appointment of Sustainability Managers	Assessment of environmental impacts	Presence of sustainability report	Monitoring of sustainability KPIs	Presence of environmental Certifications	Green requirements by clients	Green requirements to suppliers	Education
Catering (Food and beverage)	3/5	3/5	3/5	2/5	3/5	2/5*	3/5	2/5
Cleaning	2/5	2/5	0/5	2/5	3/5	3/5*	2/5	2/5
Turf Maintenance	0/5	2/5	0/5	0/5	2/5	2/5*	1/5	1/5

* Some declared that when required they were mostly due by national regulations

The interview analysis shows significant differences in environmental awareness and degree of internalization among different football supply chains. Specifically, the food supply chain appears more ready in the sustainability journey compared to the cleaning and turf maintenance.

5.2.1 Catering (Food and Beverage)

Catering contractors in the football sector demonstrates a moderate engagement with sustainability practices (between 40% to 60% of the interviewers for every sustainability dimension), from the appointment of sustainability managers to environmental impact assessments and the presence of sustainability reports. This moderate engagement in sustainability reflects the environmental awareness related to the relevant

environmental impacts of the supply chain and a conscious effort to balance operational needs with sustainability goals, although there is room for improvement, especially in monitoring sustainability KPIs and enhancing education. Although clients (including football organisations) do not always require green features (e.g. vegetarian food, reusable cups), the interviewed actors involved in the football supply chain require green criteria to their suppliers. In this regard, the food and beverage supply chain the presence of certifications is quite consolidated. The involvement in environmental certifications and the imposition of green requirements to suppliers suggest a proactive approach, yet the impact could be significantly enhanced with more rigorous monitoring and broader educational efforts.

5.2.2 Cleaning

The Cleaning supply chain shows a lower engagement compared to the food supply chain in its sustainability practices (among 0% and 60% of the interviewers implemented sustainability practices). No contractors developed sustainability reports. The lack of sustainability reporting highlights a significant gap in transparency and external communication of sustainability efforts and achievements. However, the moderate to strong emphasis on environmental certifications (such as EU Ecolabel) and client-driven green requirements (often spurred by national regulations) suggests an externally motivated drive toward sustainability. This external motivation indicates that while certain practices are adopted, possibly due to regulatory compliance or client expectations, a more integrated and internally driven sustainability strategy might enhance overall performance and engagement.

5.2.3 Turf Maintenance

Turf Maintenance presents the most considerable room for improvement in sustainability practices among the three supply chains (only among 0% and 40% of the interviewers implemented sustainability practices within the considered dimensions, with most practices never implemented by any turf maintenance organisation). The absence of appointed sustainability managers, sustainability reports, and almost non-existent monitoring of sustainability KPIs indicate a nascent stage of sustainability integration. Actors of the supply chain seem to be more focused on the quality of their services, even though best practices exist. In this regard, particular attention is dedicated to water and biodiversity management, for example to the use of non-harmful chemicals. The reliance on minimal compliance with green requirements, often dictated by national regulations, points to

an opportunity for developing a more proactive and comprehensive approach to sustainability, but also room for improvement for football organisations, from which turf maintenance actors are strongly dependent.

5.2.4 Conclusions

The analysis reveals a landscape where sustainability efforts are present but unevenly distributed and often influenced by external pressures such as national regulations. While some football supply chain actors present sustainability awareness and commitment, especially in the food and beverage, very few have implemented robust monitoring of their environmental performances and transparent sustainability reporting, as well as have sustainability skilled people or sustainability training in place. Similarly, the degree of requests of green criteria from an organisation (including football organisations) to its supplier is quite low. In general, there are strong differences between actors in South America and Europe. In this regard, South America lacks behind in all categories. However, as supply chains and their environmental impacts are global, the FREE KICKS interactions and continuous capacity building exchange between EU and South American football partners are particularly relevant. Football organisations can indeed behave as agents of changes, greening their supply chains and limiting environmental impacts by adopting good governance. The results of this comparative analysis provide insights on the level of the sustainability integration among football supply chains. Football organisations can leverage on good governance and positively influence their supply chains through their choices, starting from those supply chains where collaboration can be more fruitful, also in terms of pilots of good practices. The comparative analysis also provides sustainability dimensions to be considered as green criteria in specific improvement actions.