Responsible Minimum Standards (RMS) for the Protein Shift

The ***Responsible Minimum Standards for the Protein Shift*** provide a framework for financial institutions and investors to accelerate the transition toward more sustainable, plant-forward food systems while managing risks associated with animal agriculture.

About the FARMS Initiative

The FARMS Initiative is a collaborative effort to help financial institutions understand and address the risks and opportunities associated with **animal agriculture** and to promote the integration of **animal welfare** as a key consideration in finance and investment. Founded by a coalition of leading animal protection organizations, FARMS provides **Responsible Minimum Standards (RMS)** to guide financial institutions in aligning their portfolios and policies with more sustainable and humane food systems. farmsinitiative.org

The FARMS Initiative has developed two complementary sets of RMS:

The animal welfare standards establish baseline expectations for the treatment of animals in the global food system. Species-specific standards exist for: Cattle used for beef, cattle used for dairy, chickens used for meat, hens kept for eggs, pigs raised for pork and farmed fish.

The protein shift standards guide financial institutions on how to align their financing and investment activities with plant-forward food systems and broader sustainability goals, including climate action, biodiversity protection, and food security.

Opportunity 1: Acknowledgement	
Mitigation standards	
1.1	Acknowledge in public-facing policies that, on a global scale, protein production and consumption should transition from animal-based protein to plant-based and alternative protein sources, following common but differentiated responsibilities.
1.2	Acknowledge that the protein shift can contribute to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food, as well as to improved food and nutrition security.
1.3	Acknowledge that the protein shift is essential for achieving a credible and timely pathway to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, promoting healthy diets and protecting biodiversity.

Opportunity 2: Objectives	
Mitigation standards	
2.1	Set objectives to drive the protein shift, in line with a credible and timely pathway to net zero GHG emissions and the EAT-Lancet recommendations for a healthy diet. This should include objectives for phasing out food-feed competition.
2.2	Require agri-food companies receiving financing or included in investment portfolios to establish objectives that drive the protein shift, aligning with a credible and timely pathway to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and the EAT-Lancet recommendations for healthy diets.

Opportunity 3: Strategy	
Mitigation standards	
3.1	Develop a strategy to achieve protein shift objectives, ensuring it prioritizes transformative changes over perpetuating the current system. For example, avoid supporting innovations such as insect farming for animal feed or large-scale biomethane production from manure, which reinforce existing practices rather than drive meaningful change.
3.2	Include the protein shift in sustainability- and climate-related financing efforts; provide advantageous financing to applicable companies to incentivize this shift.
3.3	Engage, individually or collectively, with agri-food companies receiving financing or included in investment portfolios to align them with their protein transition objectives. If these efforts fail to achieve sufficient progress within established timelines, financial consequences should be implemented, including, if necessary, terminating the financial relationship.
3.4	Optimize financing and investment portfolios to align with the transition from animal-based proteins to plant-based and alternative protein sources.
3.5	Engage with relevant stakeholder groups and initiatives to support the protein shift.
3.6	If applicable, align internal procurement standards with protein shift goals.

Opportunity 4: Monitoring and reporting	
Mitigation standards	
4.1	Monitor and annually publicly report on progress in relation to protein transition objectives.
4.2	Require that agri-food companies in finance and/or investment portfolios monitor and annually publicly report on protein transition objectives.
4.3	Publicly report on allocation of investment and financing to agriculture, clearly outlining support for animal agriculture and feed versus financing and investments in plant-based crops and innovative alternatives.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Agri-food companies	Companies involved in any level of the food supply chain.
Alternative protein (includes plant-based, cultivation, and fermentation)	Alternative proteins refer to proteins that are plant-based, cultivated or fermentation-derived. These innovative foods are intended to taste the same as, or better than, conventional animal products and to provide similar nutritional value while costing the same or less. This term covers a wide variety of emerging products, some of which use novel technologies that are not yet regulated.
Animal agriculture	The agricultural sector that involves the breeding, feeding, keeping, transporting and slaughtering of animals for food, textiles and traction, including all relevant inputs and supply chains.
Financing	Financing in this context refers to all equity, debt, lending, investing and other financing-related activities pursued by a wide array of financial institutions; an all-encompassing word for financial institutions' activities.
Plant-based proteins	Plant-based protein refers to protein derived from plants. Plant-based proteins include protein-rich whole plant foods such as pulses, nuts and seeds, and minimally processed plant-based foods such as tofu, tempeh and seitan.
Protein transition/protein shift	The transition from animal-based proteins to plant-based and alternative proteins. This transition should be supported by micro- and macro-economic efforts, including dietary shifts, innovative resource-efficient novel protein production systems and broad-scale agri-food system transformation.