

Wine  
Australia

Sustainability  
communications

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## Sustainability communications are no longer a ‘nice to have’ – they’re a strategic tool

This guide is designed to help grape and wine businesses effectively communicate their environmental, community and workforce practices. While it is particularly relevant to small and medium-sized wineries, medium and large grape producers who are increasingly required to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability may also find it helpful.

**A well-executed sustainability communication strategy can:**



Open new markets by meeting the growing preference for transparent, values-led brands



Build trust and credibility by sharing meaningful progress, not just promises



Strengthen your brand story through honest, evidence-based narratives



Drive real impact by reinforcing internal action and inspiring others across the sector



# How to use this guide



Download the Sustainability Strategy and Reporting Guide

This guide is for grape and wine businesses that want to go beyond ticking boxes and start communicating their sustainability efforts in a clear and meaningful way. It’s primarily aimed at small to medium producers – whether you’re sharing your story for the first time or looking to improve what you already say. If you haven’t yet created a sustainability strategy or report, start with our Sustainability Strategy and Reporting Guide, which can be found on the Wine Australia website (see QR code) – because great communications are built on real action and solid evidence.


## What this guide will help you do

- Turn your sustainability data into a clear, engaging story
- Communicate honestly with customers, staff and partners
- Build a brand that reflects your values and connects with today’s market

## Why it matters

Effective sustainability communication is no longer optional – it’s expected. It helps you:

- Build trust by showing real action, not just talk
- Stand out from the crowd with a strong, values-driven story
- Win new business in markets where sustainability is part of the buying decision



# Principles of sustainability communications

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Sustainability communications need to be built on real action. It isn't about spin – it's about building trust through honest, clear and consistent messages.

# 1

## Be transparent and honest

People don't expect you to be perfect – but they do expect the truth. Be open about what's going well and where you've faced challenges. If you've missed a goal, explain what happened. Back up your claims with clear, measurable data. This builds trust and shows you're serious, not just saying the right things.

What it looks like in practice:



We missed our 2024 packaging target due to supply delays. We've now secured a new FSC-certified supplier and are on track to reach 100% by mid-2025



### Example channels:



Annual report



Stakeholder update



### Why it works:

1

Owns the shortfall

2

Explains the 'why' and the fix

3

Builds trust through honesty

# 2

## Be consistent across platforms

Your sustainability message should stay the same no matter where people see it – whether it’s on your website, packaging, social media or in a report. Keep your priorities, claims and evidence aligned. If your messages don’t match, it can confuse your audience and damage trust.

What it looks like in practice:

Website:



Our greenhouse gas emissions target is a 20% reduction by 2026

Social:



Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, one vintage at a time – down 10% since 2023



Example channels:



Homepage and social series



Why it works:

1

Same target, tailored format

2

Reinforces messaging across touchpoints

3

Builds recognition

# 3

## Avoid greenwashing

Greenwashing happens when sustainability claims are vague, misleading or not backed by facts – even if it’s unintentional. To avoid this, make sure every claim connects to a real action or clear result.

Avoid these greenwashing examples:



**Vague language**

Like saying ‘eco-friendly’ without explaining how



**Irrelevant claims**

Like saying something is ‘BPA-free’ when it never had BPA to begin with



**No proof**

Making claims without showing data or evidence



**Distraction**

Focusing on one small win while ignoring bigger issues

What it looks like in practice:

Before:



Eco-friendly bottles

After:



We now use 420g lightweight bottles – reducing emissions by 18% and saving 12 tonnes of glass each year.



Example channels:



Product label



Point-of-sale



Trade flyer



Why it works:

1

Provides proof

2

Focuses on outcomes

3

Avoids vague claims and buzzwords

# 4

## Be clear, accessible and inclusive

Use plain language that everyone can understand. Avoid jargon or technical terms unless your audience knows them. Visuals, infographics and simple storytelling can help explain complex ideas and make your message more engaging – especially for people who aren’t familiar with sustainability.

What it looks like in practice:



We planted 300 native trees in our vineyard last year to help protect soil and attract pollinators



### Example channels:



Newsletter with photo story from vineyard



### Why it works:

1

Plain language

2

Shows relevance

3

Visual storytelling makes it relatable

# 5

## Know your audience

Not everyone cares about the same things. Your customers, staff, suppliers and community may all have different priorities. Make sure your message speaks to each group in a way that matters to them. Where you can, involve them in the process – ask for feedback or work together to shape your message.

What it looks like in practice:

For retail buyers:



Our packaging meets your Scope 3 reporting requirements – 100% recyclable, with verified emissions reductions per unit

For local community:



We’ve hosted three native planting days this year – restoring creek banks and building pollinator corridors with local volunteers



Example channels:



Retailer ESG pack



Community noticeboard



Local media feature



Why it works:

1

Frames the messaging in a way that speaks directly to each audience’s values

2

Uses specific, relevant language

3

Demonstrates both commercial relevance and local impact



# Understanding your audience

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Divide your communications audience into distinct, targeted groups based on shared characteristics





It’s important to tailor your sustainability communications to different audience groups. When you speak to each group’s specific interests and needs, your message becomes clearer, more engaging, and more likely to have an impact.

Why segmentation matters:

Different groups care about different things. For example, retail buyers may want data about your supply chain, while your staff might be more interested in purpose and values. If you try to speak to everyone with the same message, it can end up being too vague, too complex, or miss the mark entirely.

Segmenting your audiences helps you:

-  Share the right information with the right people
-  Adjust your tone and level of detail for each audience
-  Build stronger, more trusted relationships over time



Example of audience segmentation:

Audience	Focus Area
Retail customers	How your actions help them meet their own ESG goals and procurement standards
Consumers	Product sustainability, transparency, and how they can support or contribute
Investors	Risk management, long-term value creation, and evidence of sustainable performance
Employees	Opportunities to engage, workplace culture, and your commitment to doing business responsibly
Media and NGOs	Leadership, collaboration, and demonstrable social or environmental impact
First Nations stakeholders / local community	Reconciliation, place-based partnerships and shared value

Glossary for this section

<b>ESG</b> Stands for environmental, social and governance which represent the 3 main topic areas that businesses are expected to report on with respect to how they are impacting society and the environment and how they manage themselves.	<b>Modern slavery</b> Modern slavery refers to situations where individuals are forced, coerced or deceived into work or services under conditions of exploitation, often with little or no freedom to leave. In the grape and wine sector, modern slavery practices have occurred primarily within the contract labour environment. This includes grape picking and pruning.	<b>Scope 3</b> Scope 3 emissions are indirect greenhouse gas emissions that occur throughout a company’s entire value chain, including both upstream activities (like the production of purchased goods and services) and downstream activities (such as product use and end-of-life disposal).
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# Meet Melissa

**National Procurement Manager,  
Wine Category**

## What Mel cares about:



### Commercial priorities:

- Products that meet margin, velocity, and volume targets
- Reliable supply, quality assurance and strong consumer appeal
- Category growth through innovation, premiumisation or provenance storytelling



### Sustainability priorities:

- Supplier alignment to Scope 3 emissions reduction, packaging and waste targets
- Traceable, ethical supply chains with verified modern slavery risk mitigation
- Evidence that ESG efforts are genuine, measurable and brand-safe
- Suppliers that make her reporting and compliance easier

**Region:** Australia-wide

### Organisation:

Large domestic grocery retailer  
with sustainability commitments

### Decision influence:

High responsibility for product selection, supplier  
performance and sustainability alignment

## How to communicate with Mel:



Provide clear, comparable data in  
supplier fact sheets



Align your claims to their public  
sustainability goals or supplier codes



Use retail-ready storytelling to strengthen  
marketing and brand alignment



Be consistent across buyer conversations,  
point of sale materials, and packaging claims



### Example audience persona:

Personas help you step into the shoes of your audience,  
so you can craft messages that speak directly to their  
needs, values and priorities. You can create them with  
the knowledge you already have or conduct research.

## What to say to Mel:



We've reduced our total packaging footprint  
by 18% since 2022, helping partners like you  
achieve Scope 3 emissions goals

All of our vineyards are Sustainable  
Winegrowing Australia certified and we  
provide annual sustainability data aligned  
to retail scorecards

Lightweight bottles, native habitat  
restoration, and verified labour practices –  
with stories your customers value



# Messaging and storytelling

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Do more than just list your progress – tell a story that reflects your values and connects with people.



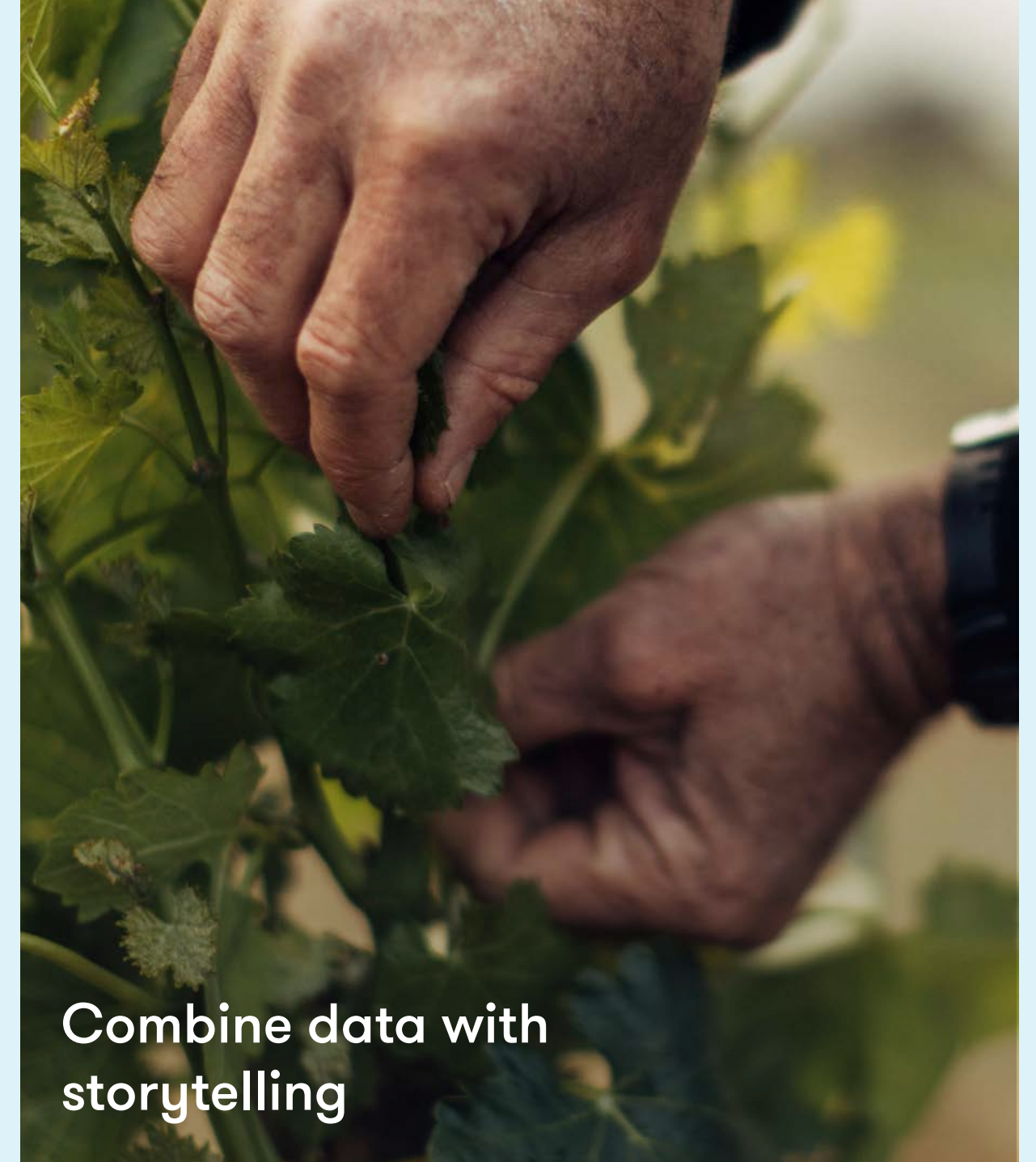
Start with your values and purpose



Tell the story behind the action



Match your tone to your brand



Combine data with storytelling

Customers, investors and communities want to understand why you're taking action, not just what you're doing. Good messaging turns your strategy and data into clear, human stories. It shows the meaning behind your actions, builds trust and makes your brand stronger. When you combine facts with purpose, your message becomes easier to understand – and more powerful.

Your sustainability story should be built on what your brand stands for and where you're heading. When your messaging reflects your purpose – not just your achievements – it feels more real and is easier for people to remember.

Keeping your strategy, business goals and communications aligned also builds trust and strengthens your credibility over time.

Don't just share the numbers – explain why your goals and actions matter. What problem are you trying to solve? Why does it matter to your customers, your community or your team?

Putting your actions into context helps people understand the bigger picture – and makes them more likely to care about what you're doing.

Your sustainability messages should sound like your brand. Whether your tone is friendly, bold, honest or humble – keep it consistent and true to who you are.

Avoid using technical language unless your audience expects it. Speak in a clear, human way that people can relate to and understand.

Facts build trust. Stories build connection. When you bring them together, your sustainability message becomes stronger and more memorable.

Here are a few examples of how to do it well:



**Pollinator health.**

Share the numbers within a bigger goal – helping restore ecosystems and protect biodiversity



**Supply chain engagement**

Link supplier targets to a larger story of working together for more transparency



**Energy efficiency**

Show real progress on solar energy with clear data and a positive, future-focused message



**Carbon footprint reduction**

Tell a story about climate action that reflect company values – backed by yearly emissions data



# Channels and tools

Good sustainability communication means sharing the right message with the right people – in the right way. Internal and external audiences will engage with your content differently, so it’s important to tailor both what you say and how you say it. Third-party certifications can also help build trust. Whether it’s a sustainability label, accreditation or industry standard, external proof strengthens your message – especially in competitive or regulated markets. Match your message to the channel. A social media post might highlight a story or milestone, while a formal report should include the data and detail behind it.

**Internal: engage early, build buy-in**

Your team plays a big part in making your sustainability goals happen – so it’s important to bring them into the conversation early. When staff are involved in setting goals and tracking progress, they’re more likely to feel ownership and help drive success.

Internal comms should:



Explain how everyday actions contribute to bigger targets



Help staff understand the goals and why they matter



Create space for learning, questions and feedback



Use training sessions to link people’s roles to real results – especially when the topic is new or complex

**External: choose the right mix**

When sharing your sustainability story with customers, partners or the public, make sure your messages are clear, consistent and easy to trust. Use a mix of channels that suit different audiences and goals.

Key tools include:

**Website and social media**

Keep your sustainability content visible, honest and easy to find. Use stories, icons or short videos to bring it to life

**Press releases**

Announce big milestones, achievements or investments in sustainability

**Reports and certifications**

Share detailed results and independent proof of your efforts

**Events and webinars**

Show leadership, share your journey and connect with others in the industry


**Partnerships**

Team up with trusted organisations to strengthen your message and broaden your reach

**What if I’m a certified member of Sustainable Winegrowing Australia (SWA)?**

If you’re a certified member of SWA, then you already have a useful communication tool at your disposal – the SWA trust mark. If your wine is produced in a Sustainable Winegrowing Australia certified member winery or wineries and at least 85% of the grapes from which the wine was made have been grown in a Sustainable Winegrowing Australia certified member vineyard, you can display the SWA trust mark on promotional materials and wine packaging, such as your wine labels, packaging materials, stationery and website. The trust mark is a visual representation of your commitment to sustainable practices.





# From strategy to impact

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A sustainability strategy is  
just the starting point

A sustainability strategy sets your vision, goals and the steps your business will take. But strategy alone isn't enough. To make a real impact, people need to see what you're doing, understand why it matters and feel connected to it – and that's where communication makes all the difference.

### Action first, communication second

The best sustainability communication starts with real action. It's a step-by-step process: your strategy sets the priorities, your report shows what you've achieved, and your communication brings it all to life. That's how you help customers, staff and stakeholders see the bigger picture – why it matters and what's next.

## Sustainability strategy

Establishes targets and actions to be completed within a set timeframe



## Sustainability report

Reports against the targets and actions outlined within the sustainability strategy, typically on an annual basis

### Stories that show impact

The most memorable sustainability messages don't just share numbers – they tell real stories. Stories of progress, innovation or working together help bring your values to life and make your messages stick.

For example:



Harris Woolf Almonds shared clear, purpose-driven stories alongside their data on pollinator health and emissions cuts.

[www.harriswoolfalmonds.com/sustainability](http://www.harriswoolfalmonds.com/sustainability)



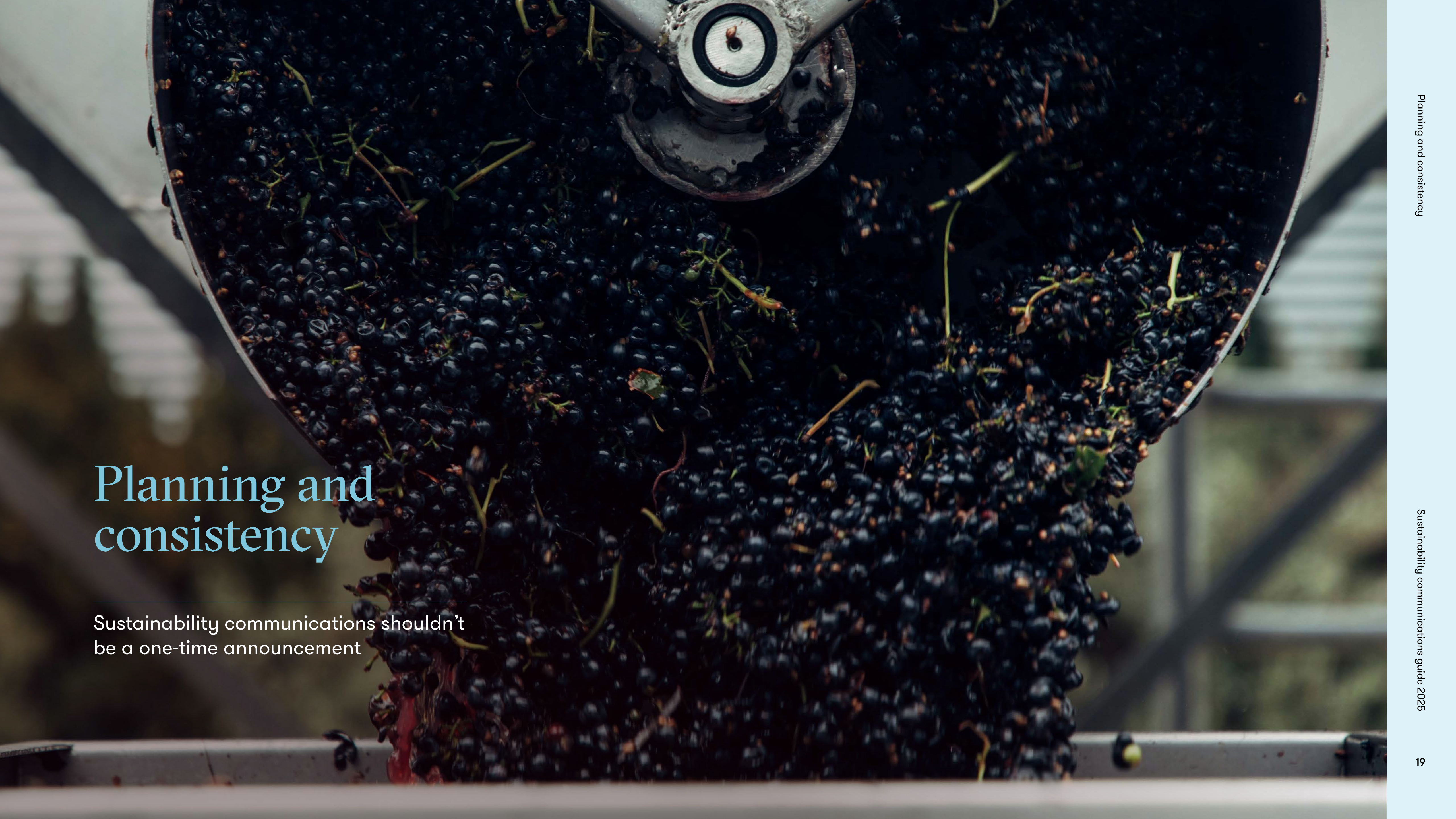
Hill-Smith Family Estates shared their experience combining regenerative farming, carbon modelling and renewables – embedding carbon capture into their winemaking to drive real climate impact.

[www.hsfe.com/sustainability](http://www.hsfe.com/sustainability)



Whether it's a case study, a milestone or a personal insight, storytelling helps people connect with your journey. You don't need a perfect ending – just honest progress and a clear story of how you got there.





# Planning and consistency

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Sustainability communications shouldn't be a one-time announcement



Sustainability communications work best when they’re planned, consistent and part of your overall brand story. Having a clear, ongoing plan helps you build momentum, stay visible and show that your commitment is long-term – not just a fad.

**Build a communications calendar**

Plan your sustainability messages around key moments in your business and the wider world. A clear schedule helps you stay ahead, create stronger content and avoid last-minute rushes.

**Consider:**



Vintage milestones and seasonal events



Sustainability-linked dates like Earth Day, National Recycling Week or World Environment Day



Internal reporting cycles and certification updates



Product launches, events or public campaigns

**Integrate sustainability into your brand**

Sustainability shouldn’t sit on the side – it should be part of how you talk about your brand every day. When you weave it into your regular storytelling, it reinforces your values and helps build a brand that feels consistent, credible and true to who you are.

**It should be reflected across:**



Product descriptions and packaging



Website content and social media



Staff training and onboarding



Supplier communications and tender responses

**Monitor, measure and adjust**

Good sustainability communication is built on real results – and it should evolve as your business does. Set a clear schedule for reporting and reviewing your messages, like every one or two years. Regular check-ins help keep your communication honest, up to date and aligned with where your business is heading.

**Track:**



How you’re progressing toward your goals



Feedback from your audience and shifts in what they care about



New risks, opportunities or changes in laws and regulations



Key business moments, like product launches, events or campaigns

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[www.wineaustralia.com](http://www.wineaustralia.com)