SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

RIVERFORD

2024

Welcome
to our latest annual sustainability report!

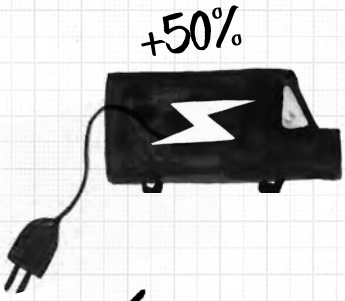
What is Riverford's impact on people and planet? Every year, we gather together the latest data from our in-house sustainability experts, and create this transparent report. We look at where we're succeeding, where we can do better – and set ourselves ambitious targets for the year ahead.

Read on to see our sustainability achievements, plans, and aspirations. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Contents

Last year's targets – did we hit them?

Convert over 50% of our van fleet to electric vehicles.



✓ YES

We've now converted 50% of our fleet to electric vehicles.

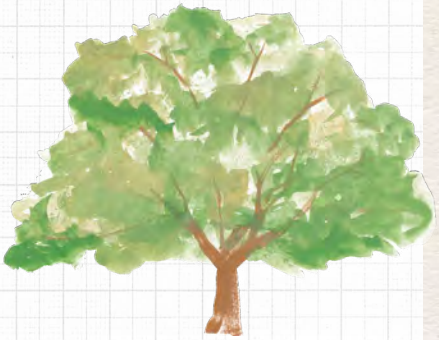
Recertify as a B Corp and score at least 10% more (minimum 137 points).

Certified B Corporation

ALMOST

We raised our score by 8%.

Plant 10,000 trees into agroforestry systems.



✓ YES

Continue working towards emissions of less than 3 $kgCO_2e$ per delivery by the end of the 2024-25 financial year.

✓ YES

However, we made an error in our 2022-23 reporting. We thought our emissions per delivery had gone down, but in fact they went up to 3.93 $kgCO_2e$. The good news is, in 2023-24 we reduced this back to 3.79 $kgCO_2e$ per delivery.

Get 30 UK farms set up with SAX whole-farm assessments and improvement plans.

✓ YES

We have assessed over 30 farms, but delayed creating improvement plans for now. We're working to measure and assess the environmental impacts of more of our supply chain first.

WASH

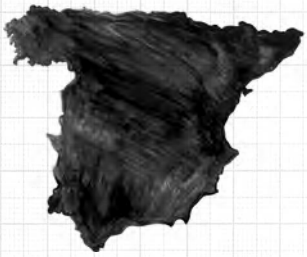
Complete the on-farm changes specified in our Wash Farm Biodiversity Action Plan.

✓ YES

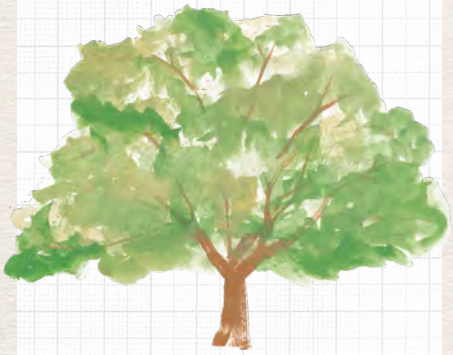
What are our targets for 2025 & beyond?

Work towards our new Planet Target: a 40% reduction in gross carbon emissions by 2030.

In the next year, this will include purchasing more electric vans for our delivery fleet and two all-electric fridge trailers for our lorries.



Pilot using SAX whole-farm assessments to measure the environmental footprints of our Spanish growers' farms.



Plant more agroforestry on our UK growers' farms.

Continue working towards emissions of less than 3 $kgCO_2e$ per delivery by the end of the 2024-25 financial year.

Complete our research project on peat-free growing media in April 2025.

Continue with biodiversity improvements at Riverford on Sacrewell Farm.

Look out for next year's report to find out how we get on!

The U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations published 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals form an urgent call to action for all countries, developed and developing, to help tackle the biggest issues humanity currently faces: from poverty and hunger, to climate change, gender equality, decent working conditions, clean energy, and responsible resource consumption.

If that seems broad, it's because the SDG framework recognises that the world's biggest problems can't be solved in isolation – and least of all without effective collaboration between governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and businesses.

We've identified the four SDGs that Riverford is best placed to work towards...

SDG 15: Life on Land

"Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss."

SDG 13: Climate Action

"Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts."

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption & Production

"Ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns."

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

"End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture."

Certified B Corporation

Using business as a force for good

B Corps are businesses that meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability, certified by the non-profit B Lab. B Corps aim to balance profit with purpose, addressing the needs of employees, communities, and the environment.

Riverford first certified as a B Corp in 2020, with a score of 124.6 out of 200. We recertified in 2024, with a score of 134.8; an increase of 8%. Most businesses score between 40 and 100, with 80 points required to become certified. A score of over 100 is considered outstanding!

What helped us to achieve a higher score this time?

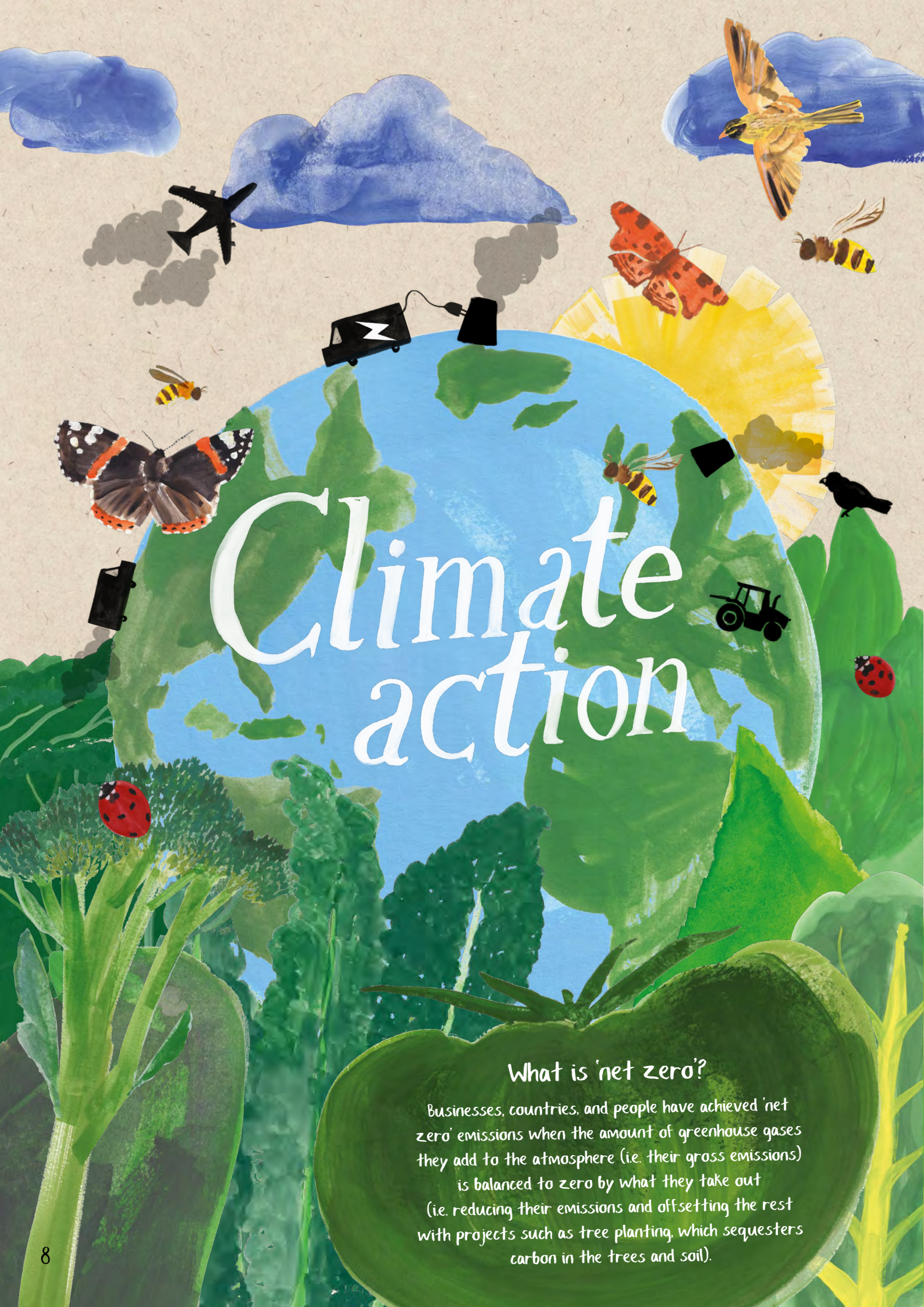
The quality of a company's job offering and its method of measuring social and environmental performance are core pillars of the B Corps Impact Assessment. We have made some key changes which had a big impact on our score:

134.8
200

- We are now 100% employee owned. Employee ownership means every co-owner (our word for staff) has a financial stake in the business, and a say in how it's run.
- We have committed to the Real Living Wage. This is voluntarily paid by over 14,000 UK businesses, who believe their staff deserve a wage which meets everyday needs – like their weekly shop, or a surprise trip to the dentist.
- We have also invested in our learning and development offering. From those in muddy fields to bustling box-packing barns, we're dedicated to nurturing our co-owners and growing their skills, knowledge, and expertise.

AREA	2020	2024	% CHANGE
Governance	14.1	14.8	4.96
Workers	52.2	59.7	14.37
Community	30.7	17.6	-42.67
Environment	24.3	38.9	60.08
Customers	3.1	3.6	16.13
Total	**125**	**134.8**	**8.19**

Our score increased in all areas except Community. B Lab's tightening up of standards around what constitutes 'local' meant that we lost a significant number of points on local economic development.



Climate action

What is 'net zero'?

Businesses, countries, and people have achieved 'net zero' emissions when the amount of greenhouse gases they add to the atmosphere (i.e. their gross emissions) is balanced to zero by what they take out (i.e. reducing their emissions and offsetting the rest with projects such as tree planting, which sequesters carbon in the trees and soil).

Riverford remains committed to tackling carbon emissions through our Cutting Carbon programme. By tracking our annual footprint, we're able to identify key areas for improvement and work towards reducing emissions wherever possible.

In 2023-24, our total operational carbon footprint was 12,205 tCO_2e. This marks a 4% decrease from the previous year (2022-23), but a 4.6% increase since 2018-19, our baseline year.

However, emissions per delivery (a more reliable measure, see p. 11) have improved significantly. This figure has reduced by 20% since 2018-19, despite a small rise compared to 2022-23.

Steps forward in the next year

1. Our new Planet Target: a 40% reduction in gross emissions by 2030

We've been measuring Riverford's operational carbon emissions (Scope 1, 2, and partial Scope 3 emissions - see appendix) for a number of years, with the 2018-19 financial year as our baseline. Our target is to achieve net zero emissions in our operations by 2030. Despite significant rises during the COVID pandemic, largely due to a huge increase in deliveries, we have begun to reduce our total emissions over the last few years.

Within our broader goal of achieving **net** zero by 2030, we're now introducing an additional 'Planet Target', supported by a developing strategy. We're taking a focused look at how to reduce our **gross** emissions (i.e. total emissions prior to offsetting projects). Our target is to cut Riverford's gross controllable emissions by 40% by 2030.

This Planet Target will encompass direct Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, plus select Scope 3 emissions, such as business travel, waste, and packaging. This is different to our net zero scope, which includes employee commuting, upstream freighting, and franchisees. These remain areas where we seek to bring down emissions – but we have used the new Planet Target to prioritise the areas where we can make the most significant impact. We'll start to report our progress towards this ambitious goal in the 2025-26 financial year.

2. Renewable energy - We're installing solar panels totalling around 150kw in 2025, bringing our total renewable energy generation to over 1mw. That's enough to power 320 homes annually, and cut our emissions by 2%.

3. Refrigeration upgrades - Efforts to reduce emissions from refrigeration are already underway, and we have further plans to replace older fridge systems with low-emissions equipment. This will cut our emissions by 2-5%.

4. Electric vans - We will increase the number of electric vans in our delivery fleet over the next 9 months so that 60% of our fleet will be electric, reducing our emissions by a further 6%.

In the 2025-26 financial year, we expect to achieve a quarter of our Planet Target through this initiative. This means cutting our gross emissions by 10%.

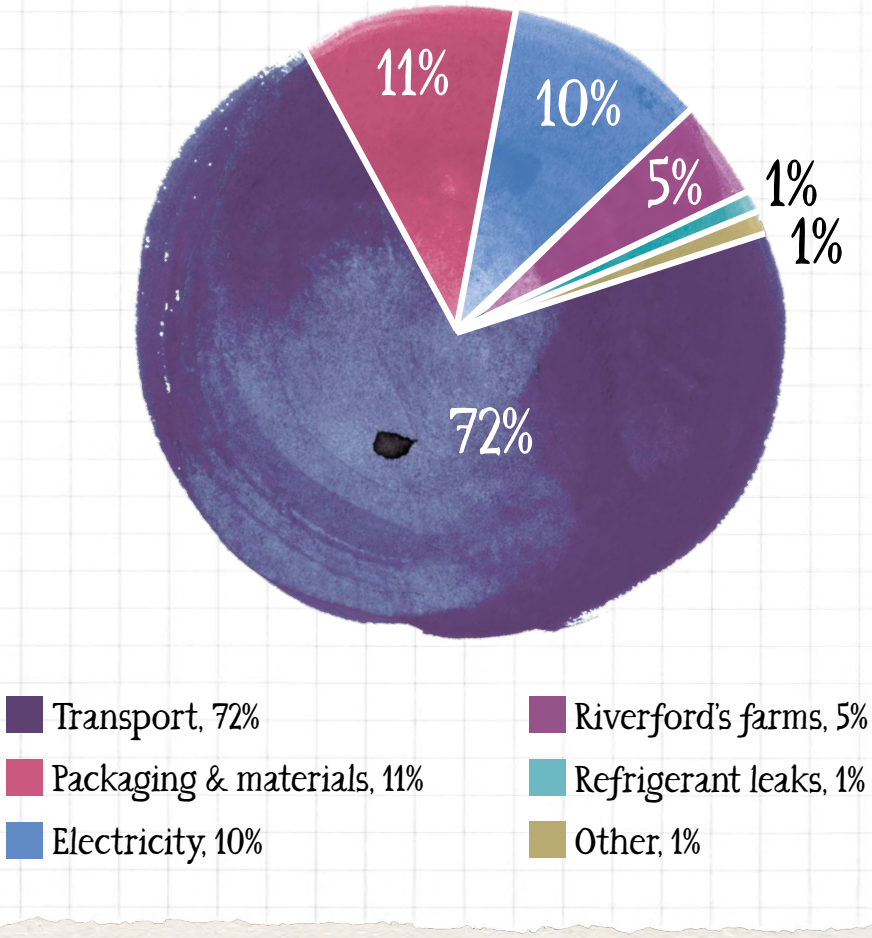
5. Salary sacrifice EVs - We will be launching a salary sacrifice electric vehicle scheme for co-owners in May 2025. Co-owners will be able to lease EVs through Riverford by sacrificing a portion of their pre-tax salary – helping co-owners while reducing emissions from commuting.

Last year's footprint

The slight rise in Riverford's total emissions over 2023-24 (compared to our 2018-19 baseline) is mostly caused by two factors: no longer using HVO (a low-carbon alternative to diesel) in our lorries*, and a slight increase in refrigerant gas leaks. However, we're actively addressing these challenges by implementing new refrigeration systems and continuing to optimise our transportation.

We've also managed to make good emissions reductions in transportation from suppliers to Riverford. Positive changes have included sourcing an even greater percentage of our range from the UK (resulting in shorter journeys), optimising our packaging and materials use, and fewer flights for business travel.

Carbon footprint, financial year 2023-24



*** Why did we stop using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel?**

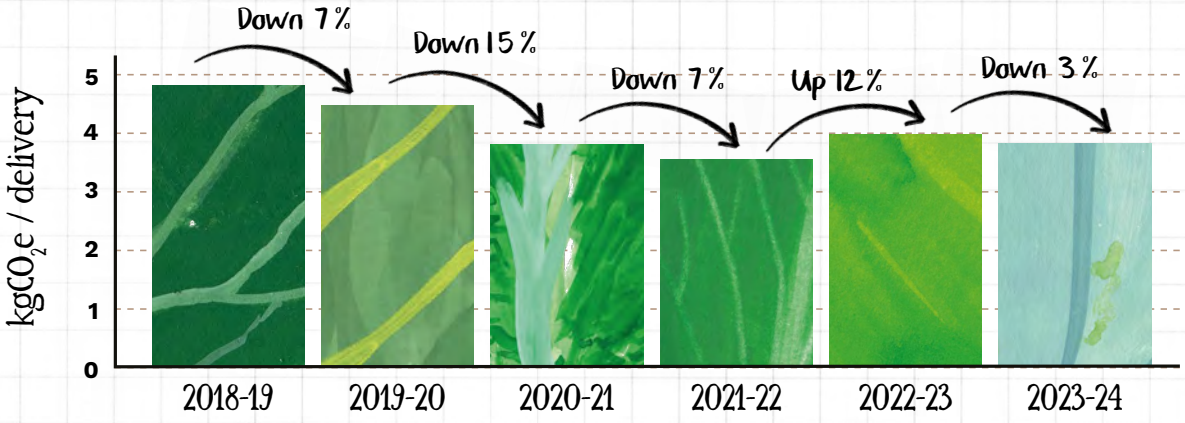
2015-2018: The EU restricted palm oil biodiesel. To replace it, demand for HVO – particularly the kind we wanted, from Used Cooking Oil (UCO) – surged.

2018-2022: Europe exhausted its domestic supply and started importing UCO from Asia, causing global shortages. We stopped buying HVO in late 2022.

2023-now: UCO shortages have forced some industries to use palm oil instead. Fraudulent 'UCO' has also been found to be fresh palm oil, driving deforestation.

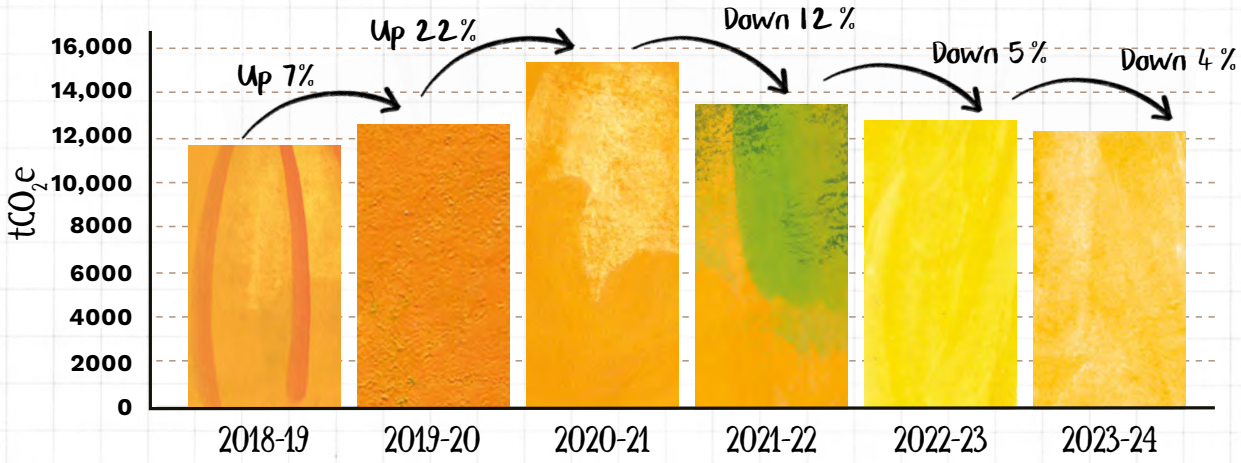
Carbon intensity (emissions per delivery)

We use two measures to compare our progress year on year. The first is our carbon intensity, or emissions per delivery. This is the best measure of success, as it shows us whether a single, consistent measure – the average delivery – is more or less carbon efficient than the previous year.



Total emissions year on year

The other measure we compare is our total emissions. This is a less reliable measure of success, because it fluctuates with sales, which are very variable. However, we're determined to reduce our total emissions too.



Farming for the future

We don't treat our soil like dirt

Our vision

Amidst the climate and ecological emergencies, agriculture faces some big challenges. Working together with our suppliers, we can overcome these challenges by transforming how we farm.

We will establish the best ways to grow exceptional veg in the most environmentally sensitive way possible; practising this on our own farms, collaborating with our supplier community, and influencing the wider food and farming industry.

We want to not just avoid the problems of agriculture, but to maximise the benefits.

We can:

- Enhance soil health
- Restore water quality
- Recover biodiversity
- Reduce and sequester carbon
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change

... All while producing outstanding food for our customers.
To achieve this, we need to show real innovation and leadership – testing bold new initiatives, and investing in them ourselves before securing subsidies.

Progress so far

Since 2022, we've been collaborating with the Soil Association Exchange (SAX) to measure the environmental impact of Riverford's own farms and those of our UK suppliers. With the help of on-farm technicians and advisors, the SAX's whole-farm assessment goes beyond organic certification – looking at how a farm delivers on soil health, water, carbon emissions, animal welfare, social impact, and biodiversity.

We now have assessments for 40 farms, which represents over 50% of the produce we sell.

The results have been quite variable. Sometimes they confirm patterns we anticipated; for example, the carbon footprint of livestock farms tends to be higher than of pure horticulture (fruit and veg growing) farms, but soil health scores are usually better in pasture (animal grazing) fields than in those used to grow crops.

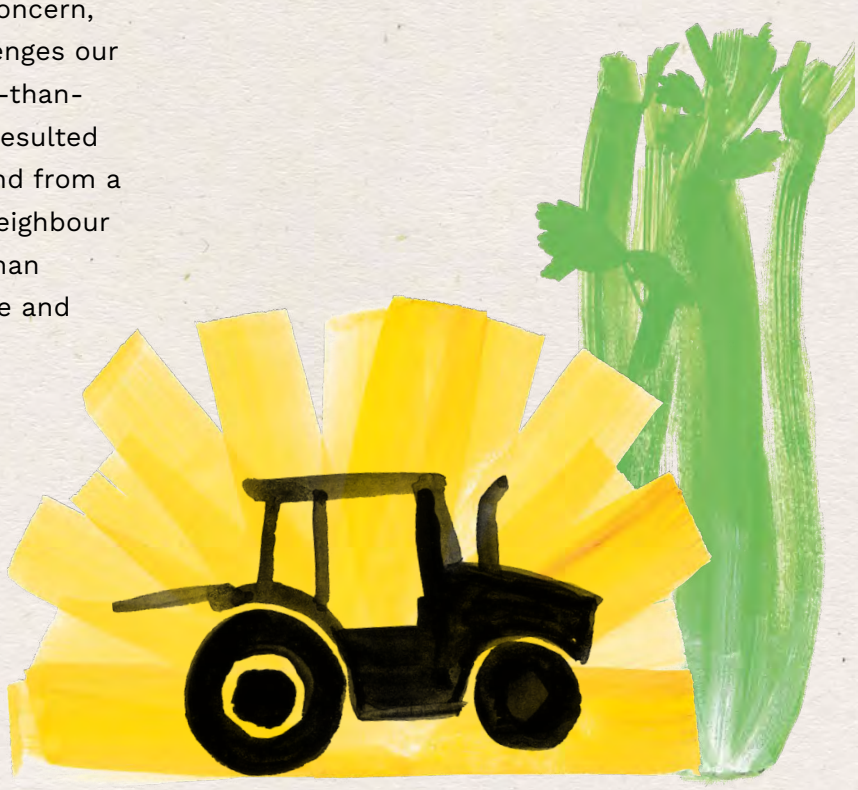
Scores may highlight key areas of risk to the business, such as water scarcity issues in the South East of the country. This gives us a baseline to monitor that risk over time.

Some scores have given us cause for concern, and we've learnt more about the challenges our growers can face. For instance, a lower-than-anticipated hedgerow condition score resulted in a conversation about how renting land from a neighbour has impacted scoring. The neighbour likes to keep hedges cut tight, rather than letting them grow out to benefit wildlife and sequester carbon.

We're not the only ones working with the SAX. The platform has over 1,000 farmers taking part, from Orkney to Land's End. This year, they introduced a new feature: farms can now see how their score benchmarks against all the other farms in the system.

While it is useful to be able to compare the farms supplying Riverford with each other, sometimes it makes more sense to look at how they're performing against farms that don't supply Riverford, but do have similar characteristics, such as similar soil type and rainfall level.

Overall, the benchmarking tool helps to set a realistic goal for what's possible across UK agriculture. We've seen some great performances by Riverford farms. Two of our egg producers have been outstanding; they're officially the top performing egg producers in the country for animal welfare, which is definitely worth celebrating!



Credit John Walter-Symons

Pollinator strips on Borough Farm, Devon

One of the consistent recommendations that has come through from our SAX work is to introduce more in-field features for biodiversity.

This year, our veg grower John Walter-Symons introduced pollinator strips on his brassica field at Borough Farm, Devon. These strips, containing plants like sunflowers, phacelia, and buckwheat, are grown in between crop rows. This means that instead of habitats and food for insects and birds only being available around the edges of fields (in the form of hedges and margins), they're provided right across the field as well.

Pollinator strips help to increase the abundance and diversity of insects on farms. They can also play a role in providing 'integrated pest management' (a method of fighting pests without using artificial chemicals) for crops. Predatory insects, such as ladybirds, may move across from the pollinator strips to the crop and eat the aphids.

Agroforestry

We're continuing to work with our UK suppliers to establish more agroforestry (combining trees with livestock, cropping, or both). We started with nut trees, but have now expanded our remit, supporting growers to establish other forms of agroforestry. Sometimes this is conventional native wood pasture – but we've also helped to plant a few experimental crops, such as peaches and pomegranates, to varying degrees of success.

As well as funding agroforestry directly, we're connecting our suppliers with existing government support. Last winter, we collaborated with Forest for Cornwall and the Duchy of Cornwall to support Hall Barton Farm, one of our beef suppliers, in establishing wood pasture, new hedges, and shelter belts on some land they rent from the Duchy.

The farm is planting small blocks of trees across their permanent pasture fields (fields that are exclusively used to graze animals). These trees will give the animals shelter from rain, cold, wind, and heat – as well as increasing the variety of nutrients in their diet.

Credit Naomi Beddoe

Credit Giles Maddever

Perennial vegetables

When it comes to the environmental impact of our farm system, we know that the high levels of cultivation (tilling the soil) associated with organic horticulture is our Achilles' heel. Organic growers can't use herbicides, so we must till the soil to remove weeds before we sow crops.

One way to reduce tillage is by increasing the amount of perennial (i.e. growing back year after year) veg we grow. For some time, we've been trying to produce enough perennial kale plants for a commercial trial, through a process called micropropagation – which rapidly maximises the number of plants that can be created from small amounts of propagation material. Unfortunately, micropropagation proved too difficult to do organically. Now, Delfland Nurseries have agreed to produce some plants for us through more traditional propagation.

Peat-free growing project

The importance of peat

Peatlands are terrestrial wetlands that contain unique habitats. They are also huge carbon sinks, and have a net cooling effect on the climate when they're not disturbed by humans. Sadly, peatlands all over the world are being drained and mined, because peat soils are excellent for growing crops and trees.

Our collaborative project

Riverford uses approximately 228m^3 of peat each year to grow seedlings on our own three UK farms. This equates to 38 tonnes of carbon equivalent (tCO_2e) being released into the atmosphere. In our quest to go 'beyond organic' and push the boundaries of sustainable farming, our use of peat is holding us back. That's why, in 2023, we embarked on an ambitious project in partnership with Delfland Nurseries, Coventry University, and Cambridge Eco Ltd. Together, we want to find an effective alternative to peat for growing seedlings.

Positive progress

The team has now successfully created and tested 11 peat-free blends (like recipes!). Six more blends are currently being tested in polytunnels on our Devon farm and at Coventry University. The development of the peat-free blends was an iterative process; ingredients and methods of processing were changed in response to the findings of each commercial trial.

Academics from Coventry University assessing the growth of lettuces grown in different peat-free blends.

Once the lettuce seedlings grown in the peat-free blends were large enough, they were

The process of characterising the physical and chemical properties of the peat-free blends.

Batavia lettuces growing in different peat-free blends at Riverford on Wash Farm. The trial lettuces are surrounded by our commercial lettuces.

planted either into fields or polytunnels. The results of our field trials were positive. All the peat-free blocks were able to be planted by our tractor-mounted planter. One of peat's great qualities is how well it sticks together in a block; before this project, we thought that the peat-free blocks would crumble when going through machine planting.

Lastly, we compared the weights of each lettuce head. Encouragingly, the seedlings grown in some peat-free blends gave similar final yields to those grown in peat.

What next?

We want to be certain that the ingredients used in our peat-free blends really are more sustainable than those used in standard peat blocks. In the final part of our project, our peat-free blends will be evaluated in line with the Responsible Sourcing & Manufacture of Growing Media scheme, which has recently been developed by the horticulture industry. This scheme evaluates the ingredients of growing media in relation to seven responsible sourcing criteria: energy use, water use, social compliance (with local laws and regulations), habitat and biodiversity, pollution, resource use efficiency, and renewability.

We're also wary that sourcing and processing our peat-free blends will cost more than using peat. We've kept this in mind while creating the blends, considering how we can use cheaper ingredients, such as repurposing waste. Now we need to evaluate our final peat-free blends in terms of affordability – will lettuces cost us more to grow than before?

So far, our work has been co-funded by Innovate UK and DEFRA's Farming Innovation Programme. We're now seeking further funding for Phase Two of the project. After the last tests and refinements, this will be all about scaling up production of our peat-free blends, so that Delfland Nurseries can grow peat-free seedlings for Riverford's crops.


Biodiversity

Biodiversity means 'the diversity of life'. It encompasses all the living things on Earth, from the tiniest bacteria to blue whales, cloud forests, and plankton. It also includes us!

Farmers are in a Catch 22 situation with biodiversity. Agriculture is a key cause of declining biodiversity around the world – and yet, we're reliant on functioning ecosystems to grow food. 'Ecosystem services' are the benefits that we receive from healthy ecosystems, such as pollination by insects, carbon sequestration by trees, and nutrient cycling by fungi.

Humanity wouldn't be able to survive on a planet without biodiversity for long. We also share this planet with at least 2.1 million other species! We want to reduce our impact on ecosystems out of respect for nature, as well as to protect human life.

The organic movement was born out of that respect for nature, and an understanding that industrial farming is not sustainable. Organic farmers rely on ecosystem services, because we can't use artificial inputs; for example, we need natural predators to manage the pests that feed on our crops, because we can't use artificial pesticides. We therefore have to provide suitable habitats, in suitable proximity to the crop, to shelter and feed these predators. All successful organic practitioners view the whole farm as a functioning ecosystem.

Riverford has Biodiversity Action Plans in place for our two main UK farms: Wash Farm in Devon, and Sacrewell Farm in Cambridgeshire.

While our in-house Sustainability Team does contain nature nerds, they appreciate that they are supporting two working farms. Some sustainability ideas may not always be practical for growers. That's why they work closely with our Farm Teams, making sure that any plans fit with and benefit the growing system. Together, our aim is to increase biodiversity on our farms **and** tangibly improve the quality of our veg.

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth...

What are we doing at Riverford?

At Wash Farm, Devon, we're one year into our Biodiversity Action Plan. Here's what's been happening...

Hedgerow expansion & assessments

Hedgerows are vital habitats in an agricultural landscape. They provide essential habitats and wildlife corridors, reduce soil erosion, and increase the cultural and aesthetic value of the landscape. Last year, we planted 540m of new hedgerow on our Devon farm. Our new hedgerows often join up with existing hedges and woodland, connecting habitats and allowing wildlife to move freely. We aim to plant a further 500m of new hedgerow in 2025.

It's important for us to understand the health of our hedgerows, so that we can manage them accordingly, keeping them at their best for wildlife. If hedges are over-trimmed or become overgrown, they may benefit from hedgelaying or coppicing. We're in the process of recording the state of 15km of hedgerow at Wash Farm and 10km of hedgerow at Sacrewell Farm.

Millie and Lee using a Co-owner Volunteer Day to help plant a hedgerow in January.

Co-owners who volunteered to survey hedgerows at Wash Farm.

Protecting a waterway

In a recent report by the Rivers Trust, no stretch of river in England was classed as having 'good health'. Agriculture and rural land management is having a significant impact on the health of rivers, due to poor nutrient, livestock, and soil management. We've been working with the Westcountry Rivers Trust to reduce the impact of our farming on the health of our waterways.

This year, with the help of the farm advice programme Catchment Sensitive Farming, we were able build 500m of earth bank alongside a stream through a collection of steep fields. The earth bank will stop water running off the fields and into the stream. Next year, a new hedgerow will be planted on top of the bank.

Sacrewell Farm, Peterborough

At Sacrewell Farm, Cambridgeshire

Hedgerow improvement

This year, we planted 180m of new hedgerow at Sacrewell Farm. We have a keen group of hedgerow champions at Sacrewell Farm, who have already put their names forward to plant more hedgerow next year! In 2025, we plan to plant 380m of new hedgerow.

Co-owner volunteers planting a hedge at Sacrewell Farm.

Last winter, we identified hedges that would benefit from hedgelaying (which strengthens the hedge and encourages new growth). This winter, we have had 140m of hedge laid. As our rejuvenated hedges grow, they will allow more wildlife species to feed, shelter, and breed.

Newly laid hedge in Far Field at Sacrewell Farm.

We have also started to plant trees into existing hedgerows. We're planting a diverse mix of tree species, including silver birch, walnut, crab apple, and oak. They will grow into mature trees which stick out of the tops of the hedgerows. This will increase the diversity of structure in the landscape, and provide a different form of habitat. The team will be careful to not damage our new trees when they cut the hedges.

Constructing new ponds

This year, co-owners Nigel and Neil constructed five new ponds in Drummers Field. Over time, our new ponds will become colonised with invertebrates, aquatic plants, and amphibians. These species will support the wider food chain. For example, predators such as the hobby (a bird of prey) hunt dragonflies that are emerging from ponds. The ponds will increase the overall diversity of species at Sacrewell Farm.

Wildlife surveys at Wash & Sacrewell Farms

Co-owners visiting the Greater Horseshoe Bat colony in Buckfastleigh with Vincent Wildlife Trust

Reptile surveys

Co-owners based at Sacrewell Farm took part in the National Reptile Survey this spring, for Amphibian & Reptile Conservation (a national wildlife charity).

Reptiles are masters at going unnoticed, so they can be challenging to detect. This has meant that there's a lack of data on their abundance. Reptiles play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance by providing several valuable services; for example, snakes help to control populations of rodents that nibble on farmers' crops! The results of the National Reptile Survey at Sacrewell Farm may help to guide efforts to conserve reptile species.

Co-owners set up nine 'refugia' in different locations on the farm. Refugia are artificial covers that provide reptiles with protection from predators and harsh weather, or provide conditions for basking, feeding, and breeding. Every two weeks, co-owners would walk to each refugia and check if any reptiles were present.

Unfortunately, no reptiles were found during the surveys. The fact that we found no reptiles is still useful information for us and the charity.

There are already numerous habitats to support reptiles at Sacrewell, so the plan is to persevere in our game of reptile hide-and-seek in 2025!

Bats... A farmer's friends

Bats are vital friends to the Farm Team at Wash. When humans are clocking off for the day, the bats are just starting their shift, to consume vast amounts of insects that would otherwise be munching on our crops.

For the last three summers, co-owners at Wash have been helping to figure out what bat species we have on the farm. We've found that approximately 10 species fly over Wash Farm. One of these species is the Greater Horseshoe Bat. Approximately four miles from Wash Farm, the Vincent Wildlife Trust manages a reserve that contains the largest Greater Horseshoe bat roost in the UK and Western Europe.

We'll use our data to help these amazing animals to thrive.

A link to our latest 'Bat Map' showing the species of bats found at Wash Farm is available here.

Scan this QR code using your smartphone's camera

Seeing the bats at dawn, swooping over our reservoir for one last feed before heading back to their roost, is always an encouraging sight. It's a sign that we have a healthy ecosystem, providing food to a variety of animals. Each bat can eat around 3000 insects a night. They aren't fussy, and could be eating beneficial species as well as pests - but pest numbers generally outweigh the goodies, so the odds are in our favour!

ED SCOTT, WASH FARM TEAM

Packaging


RIVERFORD
COMPOSTABLE
PACKAGING
Please eat the veg before composting!

Making our packaging sustainable

Our packaging promise

1. Our fruit and veg packaging is paper or home compostable, where packaging is needed at all.
2. Remove, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle is our mission.
3. We think long term, balancing the three issues of climate change, marine and land pollution, and food waste.

Because we deliver ourselves, and rely on repeat business with environmentally motivated customers, we're strongly placed to collect our packaging for reuse, recycling, or composting. This allows us to make huge reductions in the raw materials we use and the carbon emitted by manufacturing new packaging.

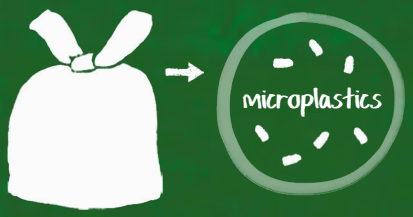
Home compostable packaging

In December 2020, we ditched conventional plastics on our fresh fruit and veg. Instead, we use home compostable packaging. But what does 'home compostable' really mean? Learn more in our infographic on the next page.

SUSTAINABLE PLASTIC ALTERNATIVES

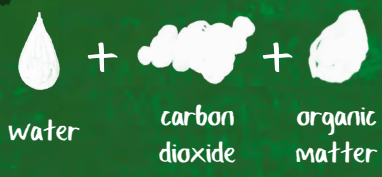
Common terms you'll see on plastic alternatives, and what they mean for the environment.

Degradable plastic
(or "oxo-degradable")



- Breaks down into smaller pieces, i.e. microplastics.
- Will never completely biodegrade.
- Needs chemicals to break down at all.
- WILL contaminate and harm the environment.

Biodegradable plastic



- Biodegrades into water, CO_2 and organic matter.
- Can take a very long time to break down.
- Won't break down on a home compost heap.
- CAN leave some harmful residue of microplastics.

Compostable packaging

- Biodegrades into water, CO_2 and organic matter.
- Quicker to break down than plastics labelled 'biodegradable'.
- Some types will break down on a home compost heap.
- WILL NOT leave any trace of harmful microplastics.

FACT SOURCE - UN Environment

TWO TYPES OF COMPOSTABLE...

Compostable

✗ Only biodegrades in the high temperatures of an industrial compost heap (around 60°C)

✗ Will not fully biodegrade on your home compost heap

Home compostable

✓ Biodegrades in low temperatures (20- 30°C, not industrial conditions)

✓ Will fully biodegrade on your home compost heap

A truly sustainable alternative

Home compostable is the most sustainable alternative to conventional plastic – breaking down quickly and completely, just like a plant decomposing, with no damage to land or sea.

This year's sustainable packaging progress

We introduced our new 'mini chill box', to optimise the packaging of our smaller meat boxes. Smaller boxes means that more can go on each pallet. Fewer pallets = fewer lorries. This is helping to drive down our emissions. Using smaller boxes also reduces plastic and wool use, as they need less Woolcool insulation.

Lidded recipe baskets. We've removed the outer boxes from our recipe box packaging where possible (instead putting lids on the smaller inner baskets). This has saved 1.3 tonnes of cardboard in the 2023-24 financial year alone.

Buckle straps on pallets. We've continued to roll out buckle straps, used in our operations to secure pallets while they're being moved. This is a reusable alternative to single-use pallet wrap (which looks a bit like large cling film). This change is helping to drive down our plastic use.

Reduce, REPAIR, Reuse, Recycle. Over 2024, we repaired over 140,000 veg boxes using a small amount of glue and paper tape, so they could be used again. This has saved 70 tonnes of cardboard from going to waste, and cut our carbon emissions by 83 tCO_2e.

Home compostable labels. Over the past year, we've introduced home compostable labels on some of our home compostable bags. These don't need to be peeled off before the bag is composted, increasing the amount of home compostable materials entering the correct waste stream.

Waste & recycling

The UK generates up to 200 million tonnes of waste a year (DEFRA, 2024). Food waste remains a major issue in the UK, accounting for around 10 million tonnes of waste annually (WRAP, 2023), and significantly contributing to climate change. Tackling waste, especially food waste, is critical for reducing the UK's environmental impact and building a sustainable future.

Recycling

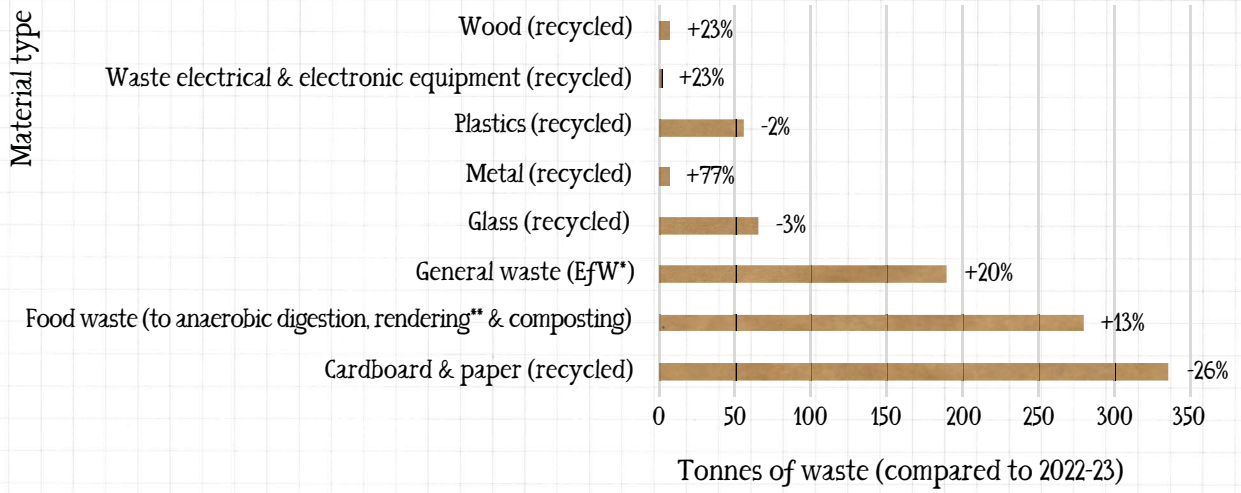
We recycle or compost 75% of our waste. The remainder is general waste, and goes to Energy from Waste (EfW) incineration facilities.

The biggest portion of our waste is cardboard, which we are gradually reducing – for example by repairing our reusable boxes, and switching from cardboard crates to reusable containers with some of our suppliers.

Overall, we reduced our total waste by 6% (compared to the previous year) in 2023-24.

Our veg boxes are designed to be used up to 10 times! Each reuse means less cardboard is used to make new boxes.

Riverford's waste 2023-24



***EfW** – Incineration of non-recyclable waste, which generates energy. This not a perfect solution to the problems of landfill, but it is unfortunately what the UK's recycling system offers. The best way to reduce incineration is to segregate material types at source and recycle as much as possible!*

**** Rendering** – Butchery processing wastes (e.g. bones, fat, and sinew) are sent for recycling into tallow (used in things like biodiesel) and bone meal (used mostly as fuel, and sometimes in fertilisers).*

Tackling food waste

Riverford has a comprehensive approach to making sure food doesn't go to waste, using different strategies at each stage of farming and distribution.

Food surplus vs. food waste?

For us, **food waste** means food that isn't suitable for human or animal consumption. **Food surplus** means food that isn't going out to our customers, but is suitable for people (or animals) to eat.

We work hard to minimise food waste at source – but also to ensure that any surplus is redistributed where possible, to humans or (if it's not up to scratch) to animals.

We currently donate over 164 tonnes of surplus food to our charity partners each year! We're now working on better ways to measure our food waste and food surplus, to understand exactly how we're redistributing surplus outside of these measured charitable donations.

On the farm

Working directly with our growers to create detailed crop plans for the year ahead minimises the risk of surpluses.

We buy everything we say we're going to. Part of that involves working to understand what affects growers' crops at different points in the year, so we can allow for the wonkiness that natural cycles produce in organic farming. As long as it's tasty, we'll still sell fruit and veg that's larger, smaller, pitted, or blemished – unlike a lot of major retailers. Read more about this in our Supplier Charter.

Scan this QR code using your smartphone's camera

We also host gleaning days. In the unlikely event that crops are left as surplus in a farmer's field after harvest, they are harvested by local charity Food in Community.

In our box-packing barns

If food is surplus or not going to have a suitable shelf life for customers, we use it in the following order:

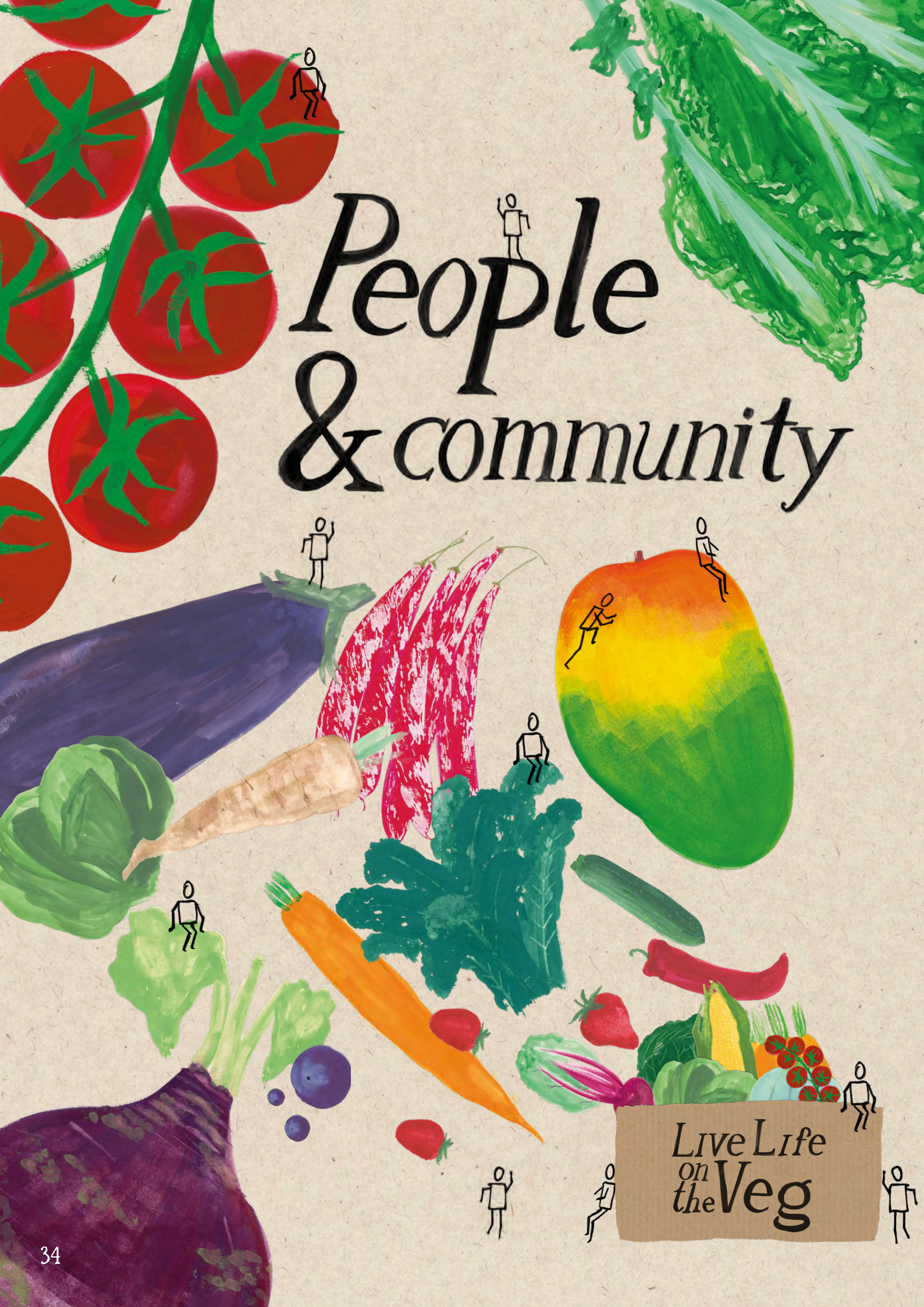
- In our Devon farm restaurant, The Riverford Field Kitchen, or our co-owner canteen.
- Given free to co-owners – People can stock up on free fruit and veg from our grade-out area every day.
- For local charities – Our Grade-Out Champion co-owners organise collections of surplus fruit and veg. These are boxed up and distributed to organisations and individuals in need in the local area, for free. Read more about Food In Community here.

Scan this QR code using your smartphone's camera

- For the cows – If suitable, some fruit and veg will be eaten by local livestock.
- For compost – If the fruit and veg is too far gone (i.e. rotten) then it will be composted at our suppliers' farms with other green waste, and then spread on the fields to help grow more veg. This completes the circular approach to food at Riverford.

In customers' homes

We offer recipe boxes packed with exact quantities of every ingredient, reducing the need for customers to estimate quantities and potentially over-purchase, which can lead to food waste. We also inform our customers about the importance of reducing food waste, through newsletters, blog posts, and other content.


People
& community
Live Life on the Veg

Giving back

Long-term charity partners

Ripple Effect – This 14-year partnership has raised over £1 million so far (mostly from our generous customers) to support projects that help people farm their way out of poverty in Africa. We have also invested in an agroforestry project run by Ripple Effect in Ethiopia, to address our carbon challenge.

Why Ripple Effect? They work patiently for long-term solutions, share our commitment to sustainable food and farming, and put every penny to good use – not driving around in big SUVs like some aid organisations!

Credit Ella Brolly

The Oxford Real Farming Conference, which we sponsor to the tune of £5-7,000 each year, promotes understanding and dialogue about all the things we stand for in sustainable farming. Riverford has a strong voice at the conference. This January, our Sustainability Team chaired panels, spoke at several talks, and presented research topics. A good number of co-owners attended or watched online.

Why ORFC? It gives us a place in progressive debates about food and farming, and the chance to learn, share, and test ideas.

FareShare take large surpluses of fruit and veg (more than co-owners or smaller local charities can use) and get these to people in need throughout the South West and Peterborough area: food banks, community larders, breakfast clubs, and many other groups. FareShare calculate that in 2023 Riverford provided 164 tonnes of fruit and veg, the equivalent of 390,000 meals. This helped 2,649 groups, with the additional benefit of 771 tonnes of CO_2 saved.

Why FareShare? They are responsive, efficient, and at a scale to ensure that pallet-loads of veg are saved from waste.

FareShare
fighting hunger, tackling food waste

164 tonnes
of food donated in 2023

Local, shorter-term & one-off causes

These are aimed at building relationships in our local communities and supporting causes important to co-owners.

Surplus or grade-out fruit and veg continues to be in huge demand. We work with a number of charities who get surplus food to where it's most needed:

- We have worked with **Food in Community** in Devon for many years. Their volunteers collect from us several times a week, and redistribute fruit and veg to individuals and groups in need. Through the winter, when grade-out veg was very limited for some months, we supported them with a donation from our Wholesale department. They also organise gleaning (picking surplus crops from fields) – saving a tonne of berries last year. Their volunteers plan to do more gleaning this year, and our own Roots Grading Team are using their paid Co-owner Volunteer Days to help.

- **Food for Nought & Community Fridge** does a similar job when we have surplus at Sacrewell Farm, Cambridgshire.

- **Be Buckfastleigh** is a local charity with whom we work closely, providing financial support, support in kind, farm visits, and produce. We are trialling a 'Life at Riverford' day, for young people who need exposure to employment opportunities to come and see different sorts of jobs at Riverford.

- We also give occasional grants to organisations locally, such as the Staverton Environment Fund and Totnes Climate Hub.

Guy's pledge

When we became 100% employee owned in 2023, our founder, Guy Singh-Watson, left £800,000 in the business to help those in need get better access to good food, especially veg. A group of co-owners set about working out how best to use the money.

We have selected two fantastic charities to support, committing about half the money over the next three years. Both are focused on giving young people a better chance of eating well, and all the long-term benefits that come with that.

Chefs in Schools (CIS) is dedicated to transforming school food, food education, and food culture, by training and supporting school chefs and kitchen teams, and campaigning for better school food. The schools they work with often have a high percentage of children on free school meals, with many children relying on school lunch for most of their daily nutrition. Through their expanding network of schools, together with national campaigns, the charity addresses childhood obesity, food poverty, and food waste, and improves children's health and well-being.

Riverford will support their campaigning, and the expansion of their programme into schools in the South West. The Riverford Field Kitchen restaurant and our co-owner canteen have already hosted and inspired the first cohort of trainee chefs. We will welcome more groups through the year, as CIS recruits more schools. The Grove School in Totnes is a long-standing part of their programme, and Bradley Barton and Canada Hill in Newton Abbot have recently joined. We hope to see many more local schools follow over the next couple of years!

By 2026, CIS will have supported 1,850 schools across the country, reaching over 700,000 children – and will hopefully be on the way to changing school food and the eating of the next generation. Find out more at **chefsinschools.org.uk**.

Veg Power is another charity campaigning to improve the diets of the next generation, with their 'Eat Them to Defeat Them' campaign. Veg Power calculates that 29% of children eat less than one portion of vegetables daily – and their annual TV advertising campaign, along with intensive work on the ground in schools, encouraging children to try veg, has a direct impact on veg consumption. Find out more at **vegpower.org.uk.**

Through these two partnerships, Riverford's money, our veg, and our campaigning influence will improve children's wellbeing and lifelong eating. We want to give them a lifelong love of life on the veg.

Appendix

Carbon footprint scope

Our current carbon footprint scope includes everything we deem within our ability to influence. It is made up of Scope 1 and 2 emissions and partial Scope 3. The scope includes:

- Operations (after the farm/supplier gate)
- Heating and cooking fuels (LPG etc.) (Scope 1)
- Electricity (Scope 2)
- Transport: Supplier gate to Riverford (HGV, vans, tractor, trailer, ships, etc.) (Scope 1 and 3)
- Transport: Between Riverford facilities (HGV) (Scope 1)
- Transport: Delivery to customer (vans) (Scope 1 and 3)
- Transport: Co-owner commuting (various) (Scope 3)
- Transport: Business travel (flights, trains, taxis, cars) (Scope 3)
- Refrigerant leaks (Scope 1)
- Packaging and materials (all packaging used in veg and meat boxes; packaging around products we buy in, e.g. milk bottles, hummus tubs, etc.; warehouse materials like pallet wrap, labels, tape) (Scope 3)
- Waste disposal (Scope 3)

Farming

Our current farming carbon footprint assessment covers our three Riverford-owned farming operations: Wash Farm in Devon, Sacrewell Farm in Cambridgeshire, and Norton Polytunnels in Hampshire. This footprint currently only covers Scope 1 and 2.

While we include inputs like manure on our fields, the organisational boundaries of our footprint does not include, for example the Riverford Dairy livestock. These are not owned by Riverford Organic Farmers, despite the shared location name, but we share land with them as part of a rotational mixed organic farming system.

So, for clarity, in line with Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Agricultural Guidance, we do not include livestock emissions (e.g. enteric fermentation/belching cows) in our vegetable production footprint. We farm vegetables, and as such the organisational boundaries of the footprint scope currently stick to vegetable production at Riverford. However, through the Soil Association Exchange (see p.14), we have now supported the majority of our UK suppliers to assess their own carbon footprints.

Key aspects of the current farming scope:

- Red diesel (used to fuel farm machinery).
- Soil management (e.g. nitrous oxide emitted from soils, due to tillage and applying manures).
- Liquefied petroleum gas (e.g. from weed-burning equipment).

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Seeing the bats at dawn, swooping over our reservoir for one last feed before heading back to their roost, is always an encouraging sight. It's a sign that we have a healthy ecosystem, providing food to a variety of animals.

ED SCOTT, WASH FARM TEAM