Sustainability is not just a buzz word but an imperative. Many are making sustainability claims without the independent evidence supporting them. NSA sees the need to accurately assess the current environmental, social, health and economic sustainability of UK sheep farming while also considering what changes the sector will need to adopt to improve further.

Its new report provides answers and direction, but also raises important questions and identifies areas where more can be done towards improving sustainability.

It summarises sustainability and the need for it being more than just a measure of carbon. Multifunctionality and holistic thinking are essential factors behind true sustainability, but these are concepts many people find difficult to understand, preferring to consider their specific area of interest in isolation from broader factors. Focusing on any individual sustainability metric in isolation is likely to lead to unintended consequences and does not take account of the trade-offs between the many outcomes arising from a surprisingly complex industry.

The report highlights all the positive attributes delivered by UK sheep farming above high-quality protein and a sustainable fibre production – such as a plethora of additional public goods (biodiversity conservation, improved soil fertility, carbon sequestration, air and water quality). Current challenges with measuring sustainability and obstacles to overcome with carbon auditing tools are highlighted. The report justifies the need for more accurate measures of methane output and that a single metric will never do justice to the complexity and multifunctionality of UK sheep production systems.

Future challenges and solutions are discussed, demonstrating the need for policy and market support alongside adoption and attitude change to ensure food security and sustainability go hand in hand.

There is a focus on public goods provision from UK sheep farming with 21 case studies showcasing prime examples of sustainable UK sheep farming from across the breadth of the diverse stratified sheep system.

The report has over 150 references within the full evidence review which can be found at [www.nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/policy](http://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/our-work/policy).

.

Current sheep research projects the association is involved in will also be discussed.