

A group of five athletes is sitting on a black, textured bench. From left to right: a man in a light blue polo shirt; a woman in a black t-shirt holding a blue, yellow, and white volleyball; a man in an orange t-shirt with a red square on the chest wearing red boxing gloves; a woman in a pink and black long-sleeved shirt holding a black and white soccer ball; and a woman in a white t-shirt and colorful leggings. The background is bright and out of focus.

**White Paper**  
**Elevating the Game**  
**with DEKRA:**  
Empowering Sports  
Clubs to Build  
a Sustainable Future



## Empowering Sports Clubs to Build a Sustainable Future

The global sports industry stands as a gigantic platform, uniting diverse communities and capturing the hearts of millions of fans worldwide. Beyond the sheer thrill of competition, sports wield unparalleled influence, transcending borders, languages, and cultures. Yet, with this vast influence comes a profound responsibility—a responsibility to address the pressing environmental and societal challenges of our time. As stadiums light up and fans fill the stands, there lies a unique opportunity for sports clubs to effect positive change. The resonance of a cheering crowd echoes far beyond the arena, and the actions of sports clubs reverberate on a global scale. This whitepaper embarks on a journey to illuminate the pivotal role that sports clubs play in propelling sustainability efforts forward. It delves into the strategies, innovations, and collective efforts that can turn stadiums into catalysts for positive change.

### Calling **New Plays**

Resistance to change, whether from stakeholders within the club or from external partners, can impede progress. Overcoming this resistance demands a commitment to education and communication, demonstrating the tangible benefits of sustainable practices. Ultimately, achieving sustainability in sports requires a strategic, long-term commitment from all stakeholders. It necessitates a collective effort to overcome these challenges and pave the way for a more sustainable future for the sports industry. By recognising these barriers and proactively addressing them, sports clubs can navigate the path toward sustainability with confidence and determination.

This whitepaper is crafted with a singular aim—to equip sports clubs with the knowledge, insights, and actionable strategies needed to seamlessly integrate sustainability into their operations. Through an in-depth exploration of key sustainability areas, coupled with real-world best practices, we endeavor to empower sports clubs to not only meet but exceed, their sustainability goals.



## Sustainability Perspectives in Sports

Implementing sustainability measures in sports clubs is not without its challenges. One significant hurdle is the initial investment costs associated with adopting eco-friendly technologies and practices. While these investments yield long-term benefits, the upfront expenses can be a deterrent for some clubs. Logistical complexities also pose a challenge. Coordinating sustainable practices across multiple facets of club operations, from facilities management to event planning, requires meticulous planning and coordination.

### Operational Hurdles

One prominent concern lies in the excessive energy consumption associated with powering stadiums, arenas, and training facilities. From the dazzling lights that illuminate the field to the climate control systems that ensure spectator comfort, the energy demands are substantial. Waste generation is another pressing issue. From single-use plastics to food waste generated during events, the sheer volume of waste produced in the sports industry is staggering. Finding sustainable solutions to manage and reduce this waste is a critical aspect of the industry's journey towards greater environmental responsibility. Transportation emissions further contribute to the industry's ecological footprint. The movement of players, staff, and fans to and from events, as well as the logistics involved in organising tournaments and matches, all have an impact on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. Even the very infrastructure that supports sports, such as stadium construction and maintenance, poses its own set of environmental

challenges. The sourcing of materials, the energy required for construction, and the long-term environmental implications of sports clubs, and stadiums all play a role in shaping the industry's sustainability landscape.

### Around the Stadium, on the Field and in the Stands

In the social sphere, issues of inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility have come to the forefront. Ensuring that sports clubs worldwide are increasingly recognising the importance of prioritising the well-being and satisfaction of their employees and fans is a paramount concern. Furthermore, fostering a culture of inclusivity and diversity within the sporting community is crucial for creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. Tackling issues of social justice and equality, both within sports clubs and in the broader community, is essential for aligning with ESG principles.



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## The Rules of **Fair Play**

On the governance front, transparency and ethical practices are critical. Ensuring that governance structures within sports clubs are accountable, fair, and free from corruption is paramount. Additionally, ethical sourcing of materials, responsible financial management, and adherence to regulatory frameworks are key components of strong governance in sports. Striving for excellence in governance not only upholds the integrity of sports clubs but also sets a standard of accountability that can resonate throughout the industry.

## In the **Club House**

Individual sports clubs hold a unique position as community hubs, fostering a sense of belonging and unity. They have the potential to leverage this influence to drive positive environmental, social, and governance (ESG) outcomes. By addressing these challenges head-on, the sports industry and sports clubs in particular have the potential to not only enhance their own sustainability but also to inspire positive change on a broader scale.

Football clubs like VfB Stuttgart and Hertha BSC serve as prime examples of clubs that have made significant strides in sustainability. They have recognised the barriers and taken proactive steps to address them. VfB Stuttgart's achievement of the sustainClub Gold Label by DEKRA for 2023 reflects their commitment to reducing their environmental impact and engaging with the local community. Similarly, Hertha BSC's attainment of the sustainClub Silver Label by DEKRA for 2022 underscores their dedication to sustainable practices in sports operations, ranging from energy-efficient stadiums to community outreach initiatives. This demonstrates how certification can drive sustainability in sports clubs and serve as a valuable tool to tackle sustainability challenges.

## The Game Plan for Sustainable **Sports Clubs**

In addition to speed, power and faith, strategy often determines the winner. Just as coaches and team captains conspire to develop the best ground game by intentionally and cleverly placing tools and talents to maximise performance, club leaders must be able and equipped to enhance efforts for achieving the optimal results they need to ultimately stand on the sustainability podium



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### Suiting Up for Sustainable Success

To address the sustainability challenges faced by sports clubs, a comprehensive approach is essential. The following twelve criteria encompass a spectrum of sustainable practices clubs must adapt to achieve their sustainability goals:



1. **Management & Organisation:** Implementing a sustainable strategy and sponsorship.
2. **Compliance & Values:** Implementing a comprehensive compliance management system, fair play and rules of conduct.
3. **Stakeholder Management:** Comprehensive stakeholder management and a systematic exchange with the stakeholders take place, in which the satisfaction of the stakeholders is also analysed and information is provided about the social, ecological, and economic strategies of the club.
4. **Suppliers & Merchandise:** Choosing suppliers and partners who adhere to sustainable and ethical practices.
5. **Mobility & Emissions:** Implementing sustainable transportation options for players, staff, and fans to reduce emissions and congestion.
6. **Water, Material & Waste:** Adopting strategies to minimise waste generation and promote recycling and composting, water-saving technologies, and practices to reduce consumption and ensure that materials and products used are sourced in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.
7. **Biodiversity & Green Spaces:** Incorporating green spaces and biodiversity conservation efforts within sports facilities to promote a healthy ecosystem.
8. **Transportation & Mobility:** Implementing sustainable transportation options for players, staff, and fans to reduce emissions and congestion.
9. **Employee Development & Participation:** Fostering a culture of continuous growth and active engagement, ultimately contributing to the club's overall success and achievements.
10. **Diversity, Equal Opportunity & Health:** Embracing diversity, ensuring equal opportunities, and promoting health and well-being among members, staff and stakeholders.
11. **Fan Engagement & Education:** Educating and engaging fans in sustainable practices to create a collective impact.
12. **Social Commitment:** Demonstrating a sense of responsibility towards the broader society and fostering a positive public image, reinforcing the club's integral role in creating a positive impact beyond the field of play using its drawn-up concept in which the club defines its approach to social commitment.

**Addressing these key areas empowers sports clubs to make meaningful strides towards reducing their environmental impact, fostering a culture of sustainability within the industry.**



## Taking the Trophy

Certification provides a tangible acknowledgment of a club's commitment to sustainability and serves to be an effective tool in helping clubs recognise the challenges and barriers to sustainability. It serves as a testament to their efforts in reducing environmental impact, fostering community engagement, and upholding ethical standards. This recognition not only boosts the club's reputation but also attracts like-minded sponsors, partners, and fans who prioritise sustainability and in turn help the clubs to identify potential hotspots to work on.

Beyond the initial recognition, a sustainability certification offers ongoing advantages. It provides a framework for continuous improvement, helping clubs set and achieve meaningful sustainability goals. Additionally, it opens doors to new opportunities, such as access to sustainability-focused events, networks, and funding sources. Just like corporations and individuals, professional sports clubs should bear responsibility for their influence on sustainability. It is imperative for them to conscientiously assess the implications of their operations on our planet considering sustainability is not only an ethical choice but also a strategic one for professional sports. It brings benefits to the environment, the community, and the long-term success of the sports industry as a whole.

## sustainClub Certification

With sustainClub Certification, DEKRA offers a comprehensive sustainability audit tailored for professional sports clubs. The aim is to evaluate these clubs in integrating sustainability seamlessly into their overall strategy and implementing sustainable practices in their day-to-day operations.

sustainClub stands as the first sustainability label for professional sports, guiding sports clubs in seamlessly integrating sustainability into their overarching strategies and day-to-day operations. Established in 2019 by the Swiss non-governmental organisation, sustainable///sports, this initiative has already seen nine clubs in the 1st and 2nd Bundesliga successfully complete the sustainClub certification process. The certification enables clubs to document their sustainability standards to the outside world and to acquire the sustainClub label.

A credible certification will allow sports clubs to:

- ▶ Implement sustainable policies and practices, where sports clubs can identify areas to integrate sustainability into their operations such as energy conservation, waste reduction, responsible sourcing, and community engagement. By adopting sustainable policies, clubs can not only minimise their environmental impact but also inspire positive change in their communities.
- ▶ Encourage eco-friendly fan engagement, by engaging fans in sustainability initiatives to amplify their impact. Strategies may include organising eco-themed events, promoting public transportation to games, and implementing recycling programs in stadiums. By involving fans in the sustainability journey, clubs create a sense of collective responsibility and inspire a broader movement towards environmental consciousness.
- ▶ Demonstrate commitment to sustainability, achieving certification is a clear and visible commitment to lower ecological impact, economic sustainability, and societal progress. This not only resonates with conscious consumers but also aligns with global sustainability goals.

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## Conclusion

In this comprehensive whitepaper, we have delved into the critical role that sports clubs play in driving forward the sustainability agenda. By proactively tackling environmental, social, and governance challenges, these clubs become beacons of positive change within their communities and on a global stage. Through a combination of strategic initiatives, rigorous certification processes, and the adoption of state-of-the-art technology, sports clubs are poised to lead the charge toward a brighter, more sustainable future for all.

In conclusion, this whitepaper celebrates the pivotal role that sports clubs play in advancing sustainability. Through their unwavering dedication to environmental stewardship, social progress, and ethical governance, these clubs prove that sports can be a force for positive change. As they lead by example, we are reminded of the transformative potential that lies within sports, shaping a world where principles of sustainability are not just an aspiration, but a lived reality for all. Together, we embark on this journey towards a brighter, more sustainable future, one where sports clubs continue to be

beacons of inspiration and progress.

DEKRA is well placed to help the sports clubs meet these increasingly demanding challenges in its capacity as a sustainability builder and single source of experience in integrating sustainability in the sports world.

Become a true champion of sustainability with DEKRA guidance towards certification!



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# DEKRA Sustainability Services Contact

At DEKRA, our Sustainability Services are designed to guide and support businesses in their journey towards a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future. Our comprehensive suite of services focuses on delivering tangible sustainability improvements, helping organisations to effectively manage their environmental impact, enhance their corporate social responsibility, and ensure compliance with global sustainability standards. Whether it's through carbon footprint analysis, sustainability reporting, or developing and implementing bespoke sustainability strategies, our expert team is committed to facilitating measurable and meaningful progress. We leverage our global expertise and local insights to deliver solutions that not only meet the immediate needs of our clients but also pave the way for long-term sustainable success.

We are a service unit of DEKRA SE, a global leader in safety since 1925 with over 49,000 employees in 60 countries and five continents. As a part of the world's leading expert organisation DEKRA, we are the global partner for a safe world. We have offices throughout North America, Europe, and Asia.

For more information visit  
[www.dekra-uk.co.uk](http://www.dekra-uk.co.uk)

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