



Business for Sustainable Landscapes

An action agenda for sustainable development

Public, private and civic groups are partnering for sustainable landscapes.

Public-private-civic partnerships for integrated landscape management (ILM) are emerging to address natural resource degradation, competition, and conflict—major impediments to economic growth, social well-being, and environmental stability around the world. Where resource challenges are inter-dependent across sectors, stakeholders are finding they cannot be addressed effectively through conventional tools of government regulation, business supply chain sustainability initiatives or community management. In response, landscape partnerships are becoming a key strategy to achieve food and water security and other Sustainable Development Goals at sub-national scales, and to meet commitments like the Bonn Challenge, the Aichi biodiversity targets, the Paris Climate Agreement, land degradation neutrality, the Consumer Goods Forum sustainable sourcing goals, and the New York Declaration on Forests.

To achieve these critical sustainability goals globally will require a sharp increase in the total number of these partnerships, and in the rate and quality of business participation. In most productive landscapes, small and large businesses have a major impact on natural resource use and management, so landscape-wide goals are difficult to achieve without their action. Yet, out of 428 multi-stakeholder landscape partnerships documented around the world in studies conducted between 2013 to 2015, only a quarter involved private companies.

This report draws widely from the diverse experience of landscape partnerships to analyze the challenges and opportunities for businesses and their partners. And it lays out critical actions needed by businesses themselves, and by financial institutions, governments and landscape programs, to improve the effectiveness of landscape partnerships and replicate the approach in many more places.



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There is a strong business rationale for engaging in landscape partnerships.

Landscape partnerships are commonly championed by those who have a direct and long-term stake and resource stewardship responsibilities in a landscape, such as farming communities, NGOs and governments. Agribusiness, food industry and other resource-dependent companies participate in these partnerships in response to corporate sustainability commitments, and to the growing local business risks of natural resource degradation, climate change, and community relations in their operations and sourcing regions. Businesses with fixed assets in an area, or those that must secure a critical supply of a resource that cannot easily be sourced elsewhere, especially benefit from such partnerships. Collaborative landscape approaches align stakeholders in a particular place to resolve complex issues such as water scarcity, biodiversity decline, deforestation, or farmer adaptation to climate change—because these challenges cannot be successfully resolved by actors working alone or through farm or supply chain interventions.

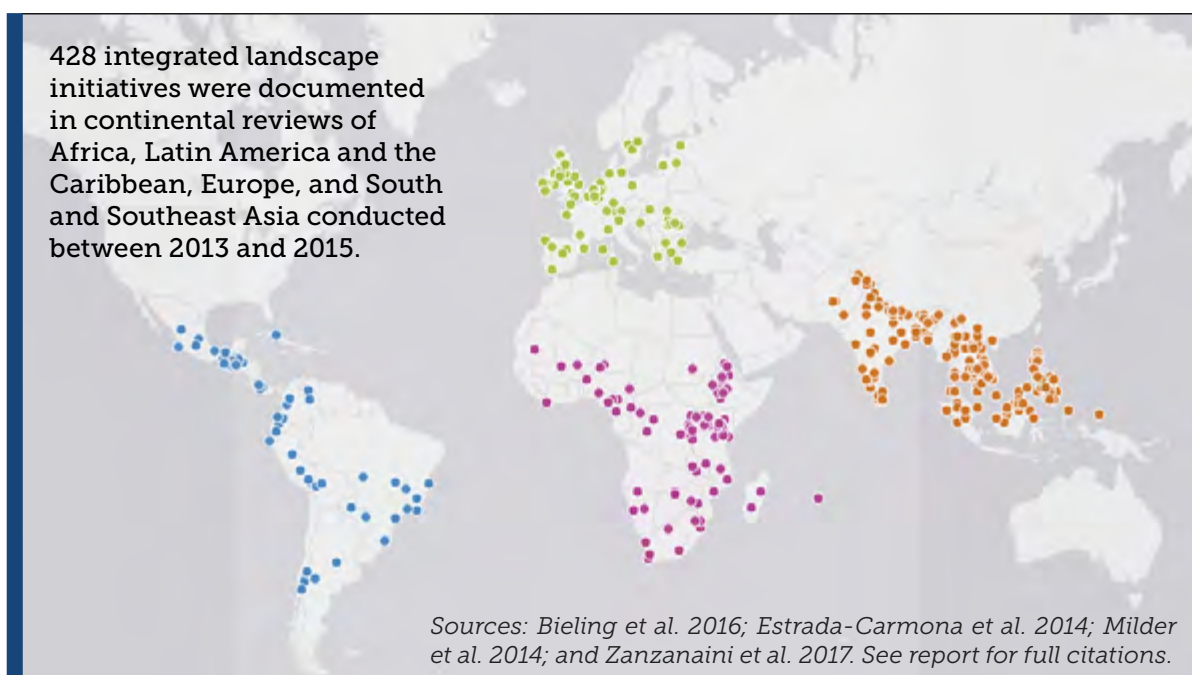
Their interest reflects a growing recognition that long-term business success is tied to healthy communities and ecosystems. Initiatives for landscape restoration, deforestation-free sourcing, jurisdictional REDD+, climate-smart agriculture, watershed management, and natural capital accounting have offered entry points for mutually beneficial public-private-civic cooperation. Businesses that participate appreciate the opportunity for sharing or saving costs, resource mobilization, market differentiation, joint policy advocacy, value creation, risk reduction, or strengthening of local relationships.

Even where there is a strong business imperative, major hurdles exist.

Landscape partnerships can be complex. They involve collaborative governance with multiple stakeholders; bring together social, environmental and economic dimensions; and call for land uses that generate not only economic production but other values as well. There can be high transaction costs, and tangible results may take some time to materialize. Implementation requires new planning methods and investments, and puts new demands on business managers. The short-term business case for these partnerships, and an appropriate role for the business, may remain unclear. Businesses and landscape conveners often lack adequate skills to facilitate landscape partnerships when business interests are strong, or the appropriate knowledge and tools to design effective interventions.

Financing for investments is often narrowly defined and uncoordinated, and there is a mismatch in terms of the timing and scale required. Available landscape metrics and monitoring systems are focused on narrowly defined dimensions of sustainability. Public policies often ignore or create barriers for landscape action, especially business participation, and sectoral agencies are not aligned.

428 integrated landscape initiatives were documented in continental reviews of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and South and Southeast Asia conducted between 2013 and 2015.



Sources: Bieling et al. 2016; Estrada-Carmona et al. 2014; Milder et al. 2014; and Zanzanaini et al. 2017. See report for full citations.

A targeted and ambitious action agenda is needed to scale up benefits.

Businesses: Prepare to engage in effective landscape partnerships.

Businesses need to look beyond their fence lines. Those dependent on sustainable natural resources should invest in analyzing, in specific sourcing regions, the business benefits and trade-offs of engaging in landscape partnerships. These insights can then be used to evaluate how engaging could be an effective strategy to meet commitments to environmental and social standards, and seize new opportunities. Company staff need to become skilled landscape collaborators. In implementing commitments to sustainable landscapes, companies may need to engage more directly with smallholder farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises in their supply chains. Business associations should help their members more systematically, and high-profile business people with experience must share more widely what they have learned.



Landscape partnerships require everyone to look beyond their fence lines to solve sustainability challenges.

Financiers: Accelerate innovation for coordinated landscape investment.

Financial instruments are needed that meet the needs of landscape investments that have components in multiple sectors, and involve institutional and spatial coordination among actors. Innovations should advance opportunities for blended private-public-civic finance for investments prioritized in landscape action plans, and for local farmers and resource managers to access capital. Incubators are needed to help design profitable investments with strong landscape benefits. Landscape partnerships themselves need to develop coordinated financing strategies for their action plans. The limited available grant funding should emphasize enabling investments (in institutions, policy, market innovations, capacity building); mechanisms to catalyze private investment, and seed funding for agreed innovations. Organized efforts are needed to build a landscape finance community of practice and to make financial institutions aware of investment opportunities related to landscape partnerships.

Governments: Integrate landscape strategies with business in national and sub-national policy.

Effective business engagement in landscape partnerships requires stronger enabling public policy. It is essential for policymakers in all sectors and levels to better understand the economic, ecological and social interconnections in the landscape, and the potential benefits from multi-stakeholder landscape partnerships. Governments should convene public-private-civil society dialogues to embed sustainable landscape strategies into government plans for inclusive growth, economic transformation

and rural employment. Landscape frameworks should be incorporated into national policies to meet international sustainability commitments around the SDGs and nationally-determined commitments to the Paris Accord. At the operational level, governments need to make explicit policies facilitating equitable landscape partnerships and develop more effective modes for inter-agency coordination. Policymakers should invest in their own learning communities to share experience about policy instruments that work.

Landscape Programs: Enhance tools and services to address business challenges in landscape partnerships.

Integrated landscape management programs of NGOs, multilateral institutions and others should build the institutions, tools and capacity-strengthening services needed by businesses and their partners to support sustainable sourcing. They should also support strong leadership by farmer and community organizations in ILM, including in negotiations and partnership development with private companies. To reach scale, leading organizations should invest in national, regional and international networks of landscape partnerships. These should support knowledge-sharing, finance and governance support, and provide catalytic funding to mobilize private, public and civic investment. A collaborative initiative should be established to advance the science and practice of methods and tools to credibly assess landscape partnerships and improve landscape outcome metrics.

This Action Agenda emerged from a diverse set of actors—global business associations and economic fora, multinational food and retail brands, governments, smallholder farmer and social development organizations, and conservation groups—who see landscape partnerships as an important tool to advance sustainability. Many of them are pioneering innovations that improve and scale landscape partnerships in diverse contexts around the world. The agenda calls for mobilizing these innovations at scale to meet the business and sustainability challenges of our time. There is immense opportunity in its implementation: for companies, for communities, and for the planet. The time for action is now.

This brief is based on the Executive Summary in: Scherr, Sara J., Seth Shames, Lee Gross, Maria Ana Borges, Gerard Bos and Andre Brasser. 2017. Business for Sustainable Landscapes: An Action Agenda to Advance Landscape Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Washington, D.C.: EcoAgriculture Partners and IUCN, on behalf of the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature Initiative.

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Action Agenda, briefly

Business leaders: Prepare your business for effective landscape partnerships

- **Get informed and analyze your business case**
- **Consider landscape strategies to meet commitments and seize new opportunities**
- **Become skilled landscape collaborators**
- **Connect with the smaller businesses in your supply chain**
- **Share what you learn**

Financiers: Accelerate innovation in financing for coordinated landscape investment

- **Develop a landscape financing strategy**
- **Get creative in blending finance**
- **Heat up the incubators**
- **Ensure finance reaches the farmers and resource managers**
- **Leverage the grant funds**
- **Socialize innovations among peer institutions**

Governments: Incorporate landscape partnership strategies into national and sub-national policies

- **Link landscapes to sustainable economies**
- **Meet international commitments through integrated landscape management**
- **Get the rules right**
- **Coordinate and collaborate across government**
- **Learn from fellow policymakers**

Landscape Programs: Enhance tools and services to address business challenges

- **Invest in networks to get to scale**
- **Provide guidance resources for businesses**
- **Strengthen farmer and community leadership**
- **Make metrics that matter**