



SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE APPROACH

Forests offer a valuable solution for combating global climate change: Halting tropical deforestation and degradation and allowing tropical forests to continue sequestering carbon and regrowing at current rates can provide at least 30 percent of all mitigation action needed to limit warming to 2°C.¹ Unfortunately, deforestation is threatening the health of these ecosystems and the societies that depend on them.

Deforestation contributes 11 percent² of total greenhouse gas emissions, with conversion of land from forest to agriculture responsible for roughly 80 percent³ of forest loss. By definitively integrating ecosystems into larger scale land-use strategies through a sustainable landscape approach, countries can position themselves to achieve targets for sustainable agricultural and forestry production, conservation of natural capital and improvement of human well-being—while also tackling the complex, cross-sectoral challenge of climate change.

SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE APPROACH: DEFINITIONS AND ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Land-use planning efforts are moving away from sectoral approaches and are embracing the more integrated, holistic approach of a landscape as a series of interdependent natural and human systems. With this transition, definitions are needed to determine what a sustainable landscape approach is and what it is not. Conservation International offers these definitions to the global dialogue:

A **landscape** is a jurisdictional planning area which includes areas of essential natural capital and key production systems. These must be large enough to capture both production and conservation goals, yet small enough to make implementation feasible. Examples include a watershed and its surrounding communities, or a whole country in the case of small island states.

In a **sustainable landscape approach**, essential natural capital is maintained by promoting the use of best practices in production, planning and local decision-making processes to ensure the healthy provision of ecosystem services and the improvement of human well-being. Over the long run, a sustainable landscape is characterized by zero net deforestation, with all land under some form of management regime, leading to quantifiable improvements in local human well-being. This includes sustainably-financed protection of essential natural capital and development of sustainable production areas.

¹(a) McKinsey & Company. 2009. Pathways to a low-carbon economy. McKinsey & Company.

(b) Le Quere, C., et al. 2013. Global Carbon Budget 2013. Earth Syst. Sci. Data Discuss., 6, 689–760 (averaged for 2003–2012);

(c) Grace, J., et al. 2014. Perturbations in the carbon budget of the tropics. Global Change Biology (data from 2005–2010);

(d) Houghton, R.A. 2013. The emissions of carbon from deforestation and degradation in the tropics: past trends and future potential (data from 2000–2005). Carbon Management.

² Goodman, R.C. and Herold, M. 2014. Why Maintaining Tropical Forests Is Essential and Urgent for a Stable Climate. Center for Global Development working paper No. 385.

³Kissinger, G., et al. (2012). Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation: a synthesis report for REDD+ policymakers.: Lexeme Consulting.

IMPLEMENTATION: SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES PARTNERSHIP

A sustainable landscape approach directly targets broad drivers of deforestation such as land conversion to agriculture, and is focused on a specific kind of rural economic development that depends on and values natural capital as a core principle. This approach can be implemented through a Sustainable Landscapes Partnership (SLP)—the set of activities and strategies needed to achieve a sustainable landscape that will result in long-term solutions to interrelated challenges.

A focus on the following themes is key to a successful SLP:

Theme	Examples of Best Practices
<i>Protection of natural capital</i>	Identify and delineate the landscape boundaries, essential natural capital, drivers of deforestation, etc., to guide implementation strategy
<i>Sustainable production along key commodity value chains</i>	Production practices: expand agriculture to degraded lands, minimize waste, intensify production; Build capacity, promote information exchange, incentivize change in production practices
<i>Governance and policy alignment at all levels</i>	Build governmental capacity to develop, monitor and enforce sustainable landscape policies, including transparency and accountability platforms
<i>Sustainable finance</i>	Create a long-term funding plan for the landscape, mainstream conservation incentives into government budgets, attract private sector investment, consider financial mechanisms including potential carbon market demand, debt swaps, green/REDD+ bonds

Guiding principles and processes for implementation of an SLP:

Principle	Examples of Associated Processes
<i>Science-based decision making</i>	Identify essential natural capital and create capacity and incentives for protection by local community
<i>Multi-stakeholder participation</i>	Implement stakeholder roundtables and advisory groups to guide implementation, build awareness and support for the program, and promote rights-based policies
<i>Continuing improvement through monitoring and evaluation</i>	Design and implement a Landscape Accounting Framework that will guide continuous measurement of key indicators and progress toward a verifiable end-goal
<i>Implementation through partnerships</i>	Develop partnerships to drive long-term change in the landscape, with a basic funding model that uses donor funds to catalyze change, sustained through local actors and funding mechanisms

REDD+ AND SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES

As REDD+ has expanded beyond an exclusive focus on avoided deforestation, it provides the basis for a more holistic approach that aligns with the sustainable landscape approach. This broadened definition of REDD+ has helped spur the creation of new multilateral funds that seek to harness sustainable landscape approaches as routes for achieving REDD+ objectives at scale. This has also created a shift in which sustainable agriculture and low-emissions development are prioritized alongside forest conservation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

To realize the full potential of the sustainable landscape approach, operationalization is needed via well-designed policy at local, national and global scales. Countries are encouraged to employ and integrate sustainable landscape approaches into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which will comprise the new global climate agreement.

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