

# Integrated Community Forest Management Position Paper

Preserving Forests and Improving Livelihoods Through Community Forestry

The Rainforest Alliance is an international non-profit organization working in 70 countries at the intersection of business, agriculture and forests. We are building an alliance to create a better future for people and nature by making responsible business the new normal.





# Introduction

Forests cover one third of the world's land surface. They play a key role in regulating the water cycle, storing carbon, preventing soil erosion, and hosting over 50 percent of the Earth's terrestrial biodiversity, mostly in tropical rainforests. Preserving forests—along with other natural climate solutions such as reforestation, sustainable forest management, and agroforestry—could help us achieve up to 37 percent of the emissions reductions needed to limit global heating to 1.5°C<sup>1</sup>. Yet we are still losing forests at a high rate by converting them to other land use, mostly agriculture. In 2019, we lost a football pitch of tropical forest every six seconds<sup>2</sup>. We also degrade forests through unsustainable forest management, leading to “death by a thousand cuts”; unsustainable wildlife management and poaching, emptying forests of large fauna; and mining and human infrastructure, resulting in fragmentation<sup>3,4</sup>.

Forest degradation—defined as human-induced changes that significantly and negatively affect a forest's species composition, structure, function, and capacity to provide goods and services<sup>5</sup>—is likely to increase as temperatures rise due to climate change, and will in turn impact the climate. As well as releasing carbon into the atmosphere, reducing biodiversity, and impacting soil stability and water cycles, forest degradation increases the risk of transmission of emerging infectious diseases<sup>6</sup>. Degradation is often

a precursor to forest conversion<sup>7</sup>, and is largely underestimated as it is difficult to measure.

Over millennia, people and forests have developed a deep relationship, and local communities continue to play an important role in forest stewardship. Forest flora and fauna are vital sources of raw materials for food, feed, energy, construction, clothing, handicrafts, medicines, and other daily livelihood needs. Approximately 1.6 billion people worldwide still depend directly on forests for timber and harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs)<sup>8</sup>, with a gross annual value approaching US\$1.3 trillion<sup>9</sup>, making this activity collectively the biggest private sector. Almost one third of the world's forest area is under some form of community-based/smallholder management, and the area is increasing with the devolution of rights to local and indigenous communities in several countries<sup>10</sup>.

Throughout its 30+ year history, the Rainforest Alliance has worked to halt forest degradation and deforestation, while supporting the livelihoods and rights of producers and forest-dependent communities around the world. Building on this experience, we have published [a position paper on deforestation](#), presenting our approach to halting agriculture-driven deforestation and the conversion of natural ecosystems. This complementary position paper presents the Rainforest Alliance's approach to addressing forest degradation through integrated community forest management, including the principles that we believe must guide the global community's broader efforts.



*A man is harvesting ramon nuts from the forest floor at a harvesting site near Yaloch, Guatemala. Photo: Sergio Izquierdo*

## THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE'S POSITION

Over the past decade there has been a notable shift from a dichotomy between industrial concessions and protected forest areas, towards “rights-based” community forestry and biocultural conservation building on the deep interdependence between local cultural heritage and the environment. The rights-based approach is most commonly rooted in tenure policies that recognize collective community ownership or fixed-term use rights over natural forest<sup>11</sup>. The Rainforest Alliance has long been a proponent of this rights-based approach. But, while it is an important first step, this alone cannot halt deforestation and forest degradation, or improve livelihoods<sup>12</sup>. We are convinced that local communities and indigenous peoples, if given secured rights to land and resources, and supported with technical capacities, incentives, and market access, play a critical role in preserving forests. For years, the community forestry concessions in the Maya Biosphere Reserve have provided living proof of this approach (see Box 1).

The multiple benefits of the rights-based approach are apparent in countries with a long history of secured community forest rights, such as in the Maya Biosphere Reserve; in Mexico<sup>13,14,15,16</sup>; and in Bolivia, Brazil, Niger, Tanzania and Nepal<sup>17</sup>. Several research papers show that well-managed community forests contribute to most, if not all, of the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>18</sup>. Strong and effective community forest enterprises demonstrate the capacity to withstand internal and external shocks, which is critical in times of economic crisis and climate change<sup>19</sup>.

To develop successful community forests, the Rainforest Alliance is convinced of the need for partnerships between communities and other organizations—government, NGOs, and private companies. Successful outcomes from community forestry can be explained partly by whether there is a community of practice linking local people to exter-

nal forest professionals for mutual learning<sup>20</sup>. Companies play an important role in securing access to markets for responsibly produced community forest products; creating partnerships with local communities to develop new value chains and address supply chain challenges, and connecting end-consumers to producers.

Recognizing the deep interdependence between forest communities and the environment, we support a socially just pathway to preserving forests. To achieve this aim, and depending on the level of forest degradation (see Figure 1), the Rainforest Alliance's position is to:

- support the preservation or restoration of natural forests<sup>21</sup> through responsible community forest management
- promote restoration of natural vegetation in agroforests<sup>22</sup> and degraded forests
- support no-deforestation smallholder agriculture production<sup>23</sup> and restoration to agroforests
- promote socially beneficial and ecologically sound planted forests<sup>24</sup> through reforestation
- maintain strictly protected areas within a wider matrix of other uses and practices.

While any type of intervention in a natural forest can be considered a form of degradation, well managed forests provide important ecosystem services and goods, especially for the communities who depend on them. The Rainforest Alliance promotes and helps communities strive towards sustainable forest management, defined by the United Nations<sup>25</sup> as a “dynamic and evolving concept [that] aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests, for the benefit of present and future generations”. Sustainable forest management is critical to prevent forest degradation due to unsustainable forestry practices.

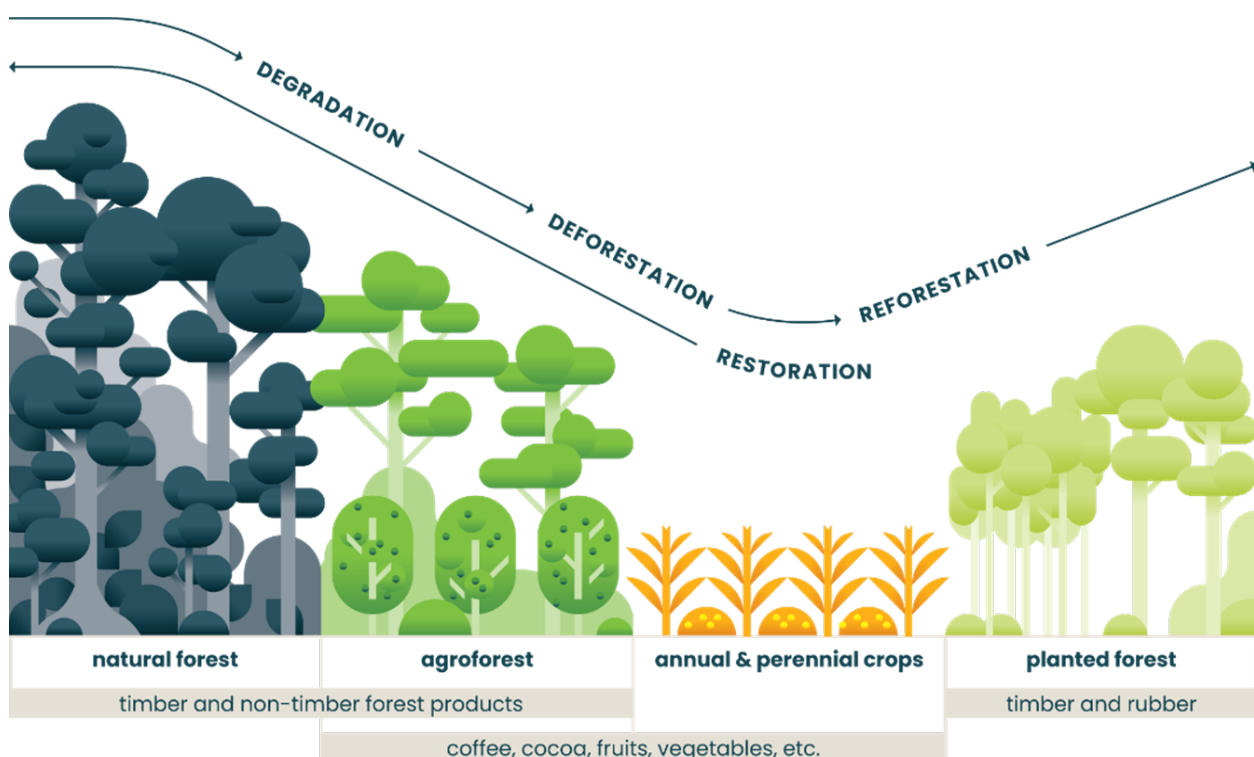


Figure 1: Forest transition curve and related interventions in tropical areas



## Box 1

### The Maya Biosphere Reserve

Our flagship project is the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala, where the Rainforest Alliance leads USAID's Climate, Nature and Communities in Guatemala initiative, in partnership with the Association of Forest Communities of Petén. For more than 15 years we have supported Community Forest Concessions and created a broad alliance between forest communities, local and national government institutions, companies, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and implementing partners, to catalyze transformation in a landscape once known for crisis-level deforestation rates and poverty. Today, the deforestation rate in the forest concessions where we work is near zero, while protected areas and buffer zones nearby suffered high deforestation levels. Poverty rates in the concessions are also significantly lower than in other parts of Guatemala, making migration away from the concession communities virtually unheard of<sup>26,27</sup>.

## THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE'S STRATEGY ON FORESTS

### Our vision for forests and core interventions:

*Our vision is thriving communities and forests, where the interdependency of local communities' livelihoods and their natural environment is recognized and valued, and the enabling conditions for local communities to be the stewards of forests are encouraged and enforced.*

To achieve this vision, we have supported community forest enterprises, particularly in Mexico and Guatemala. Due to their success, the development of community forest enterprises has taken center stage in our strategy, and the strategies of a range of donors and civil society organizations seeking to address interrelated issues around rights, economic opportunities, deforestation, and climate change. But not all contexts enable successful community forest enterprises. A strong focus is often needed on more fundamental issues, such as tenure security, land use, and social governance as building blocks.

To be effective at scale and truly address the many interconnected drivers of deforestation, degradation, and biodiversity loss, we believe community forest enterprises need to be supported beyond the implementation of best practices. For this reason we have reframed our work within a broader concept of **integrated community forest management**.

Embodying our vision of people and nature thriving in harmony, integrated community forest management contributes to the integrated landscape management approach<sup>28</sup>, engaging multiple actors at multiple scales. Integrated community forest management enables robust environmental policy structures and active market participation to exist alongside practical, field-based

strategies to strengthen forest management, while boosting the long-term economic and social resilience of rural communities.

This is achieved by placing forest communities at the heart of safeguarding and restoring our world's forests.

Integrated community forest management:

- **supports community forest enterprises** through training, tools, and knowledge to provide sustained economic development and foster strong social governance and inclusion, providing equitable benefits to households, incorporating young people in activities, and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment
- **implements sustainable forest management, restoration or reforestation** in order to reduce forest degradation and deforestation, and to increase forest cover, biodiversity, and carbon capture
- **manages the forest in harmony** with other crops and ecosystems in the landscape
- **fosters secured rights to forests**, and access to alliances, finance, and markets, to create an enabling environment for successful community forest enterprises at scale.

Based on our experience and a learning inventory of our work over the past 15 years, we have defined an implementation pathway (Figure 2). Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach or single model for community forestry, this pathway serves as guidance which needs to be tailored to local contexts using a participatory approach.

This pathway is deployed within the Rainforest Alliance along our **four core organizational interventions**: certification program, landscape management, tailored supply-chain services, and advocacy.

Our **certification program** is an important vehicle to raise awareness, recognize conversion-free producers, and provide incentives for farmers not to convert natural ecosystems. In 2020 the program covered more than 6.8 million hectares and reached more than 2 million farmers in 70 countries. In the Farm Requirements of our 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard<sup>29</sup>, we promote agroforestry as a buffer to standing forests at the same time as enabling more resilient and productive agricultural production systems that discourage further forest encroachment and degradation.

To reach scale and inclusivity, the Rainforest Alliance is implementing and supporting 68 **landscape management** projects, the majority of which safeguard, responsibly manage, or restore forests in priority landscapes. We engage and train local communities around the world in methods designed to conserve forests and biodiversity, protect workers, and—critically—to support their efforts to earn a living as responsible forest stewards through community forest enterprises. We also implement landscape approaches, such as supporting the establishment of fair governance structures, or developing enabling tools such as a digital data management platform as well as financial innovation within the "[1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People](#)" initiative.

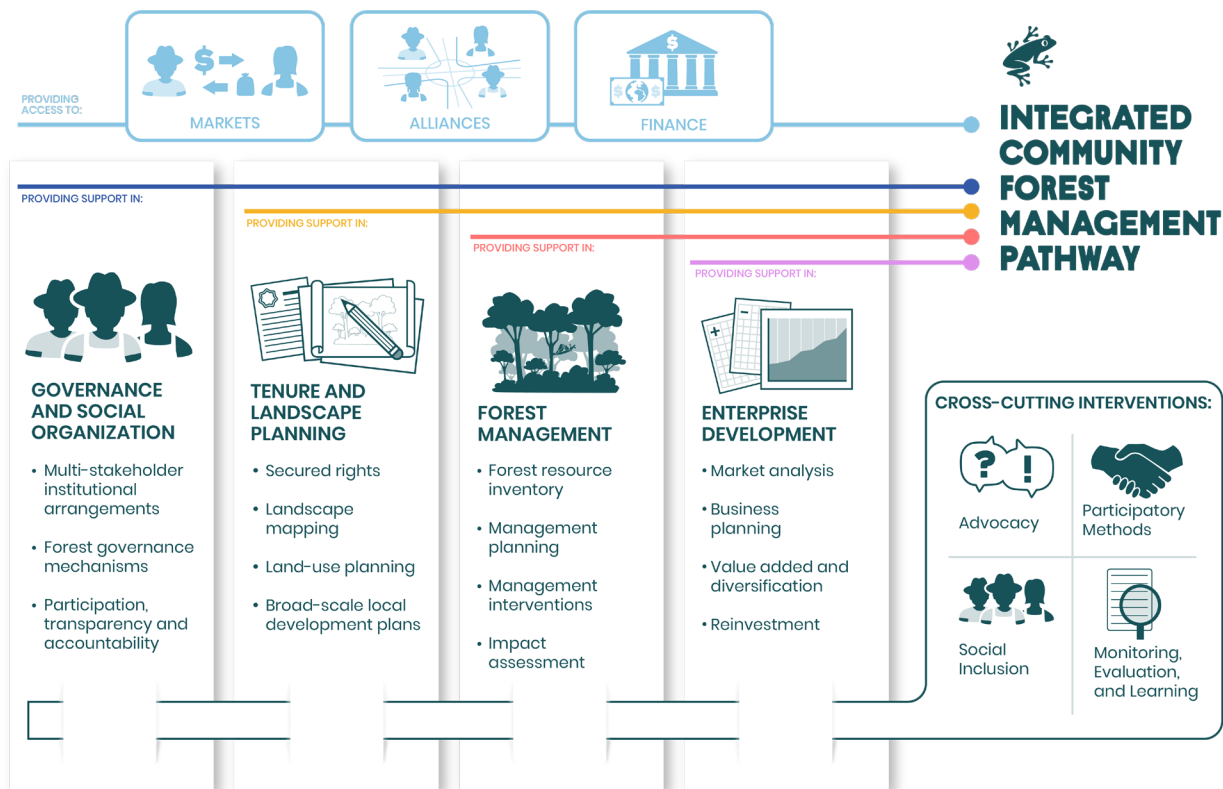


Figure 2: The Rainforest Alliance's integrated community forest management (ICFM) pathway

Through **tailored supply-chain services** the Rainforest Alliance supports actors in supply chains to build corporate policies that address their sourcing of forest-risk commodities or forest-related products (such as pulp and paper, timber, rubber, and non-timber forest products). We support the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC) as the gold standard for forest certification. For commodities and product volumes for which FSC certification is not feasible, the Rainforest Alliance works with companies to devise other effective means to minimize and address deforestation and degradation risk in the supply chain.

When working with companies on forests beyond their individual supply chains, **Forest Allies** is our main vehicle. Through our Forest Allies community of practice, we bring together companies, regional civil society organizations, and forest communities to form powerful partnerships. The Forest Allies community of practice convenes twice a year to exchange knowledge, best practices, and solutions for shared challenges. Forest Allies supports the Rainforest Alliance's integrated community forest management approach by contributing to a pool of capital used to invest directly in support of community forest enterprises, and by fostering a foundation of mutual respect, trust, and a shared vision between forest communities and markets.

Working in coalitions and partnerships, the Rainforest Alliance **advocates** for secured forest access and tenure rights for communities; for effective private sector com-

mitments to deforestation-free supply chains and responsible production; and for a public policy framework that includes legislative and voluntary measures. Such a framework should ensure that companies take on their responsibility to address any adverse environmental and human rights impacts of their own sourcing practices, and that governments take the actions needed to create an enabling environment, in both producing and consuming countries, towards forest preservation and strengthened local community rights.

## PRINCIPLES OF INTEGRATED COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT

The Rainforest Alliance's own interventions are one set of contributions to the broader effort towards minimizing deforestation and forest degradation, and fostering sustainable forest management. The following five principles are crucial for guiding all efforts to meet these goals:

- Forests' values should be protected and/or restored
- Local communities must become ecosystem stewards at scale
- Responsible forest management needs to be enhanced and monitored
- Communities should be supported in adapting to and mitigating climate change
- Livelihoods from forest product value chains must be strengthened

## **Forests' values should be protected and/or restored**

- **Preserve High Conservation Values: identify, protect, manage with care**

Forests are critical for both climate mitigation and biodiversity. Primary/old-growth forests store the most carbon and contain the most biodiversity compared to other forest types. For example, after 60 years' re-growth, recovering secondary Amazon forests stored only 40 percent as much carbon as undisturbed woodlands, and had half as much biodiversity<sup>30</sup>.

Primary/old-growth forests—including their water resources, soils, plant species, and animal populations—must be preserved. The Rainforest Alliance uses the High Conservation Values<sup>31</sup> (HCV) toolkits to identify the critical areas and determine good management practices.

These critical areas are often part of the cultural and traditional life of indigenous peoples and local communities, and provide resources through timber, fuelwood, hunting, and other NTFPs. Supporting biocultural conservation, through protection and sound forest management by local communities, is the best way to preserve HCVs.

- **Restore forests: natural regeneration and agroforestry have a role to play**

In addition to ensuring existing ecosystems remain intact, this decade needs to see more progress on restoration of ecosystems, in the sense of both wide-scale restoration of forests and mosaic restoration of agricultural landscapes. This is particularly important for community forests, as communities have often received rights over degraded forests. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration<sup>32</sup>, of which the Rainforest Alliance is a member, offers an opportunity to combine efforts on this issue.

Forests that have been only partially degraded, like secondary forests, offer good potential for natural regeneration, as the forest soil and microclimate are still present. Natural regeneration should be assisted<sup>33</sup> whenever possible in restoration efforts, as it ensures species adaptation, soil conservation, and helps maintain High Conservation Values<sup>34</sup>.

Agroforestry systems can also offer a good ecological transition to natural forests, offering a buffer to more intensive land use, providing habitats, and storing more carbon than conventional agriculture.

Tree plantations, in particular enrichment planting<sup>35</sup>, can be used to accelerate the restoration of degraded forests, but this must be done in an ecologically and socially sound way, mimicking natural forest dynamics and providing benefits to local communities. While restoration practices are implemented at the forest stand or farm level, they need to be planned and thought through at a larger scale, for example to ensure connectivity of ecosystems and sustainable land use.

## **Local communities must become ecosystem stewards at scale**

- **Foster policies to ensure community rights over forests**

Secured forest access and resource use and market rights are required for communities to safeguard and restore forests. It is necessary to enable communities, through adequate policies, to realize multiple benefits from sustainable harvesting, commercialization of timber and NTFPs, increased value-added processing, and access to markets or funds for conserving ecosystem services. Community rights to forests can take several forms, such as concessions, permits, full land tenure, or tree ownership or use rights. Indigenous communities should have full rights to their forest. Most of the time, local communities who seek such rights require external support, as complex administrative procedures create barriers to accessing or implementing community forestry. Rights are often only partially devolved to communities, preventing the full potential of an equitable economic development<sup>36</sup>. Engagement at policy level ensures that legislation is strengthened based on feedback from communities and those who support them.

- **Promote sound governance and ensure social inclusion in local organizations**

For communities to achieve lasting success, they must have the capacity to manage forests sustainably and build their own local enterprises. Based on our experience, the single most important factor determining the success or failure of a community forest enterprise is social governance, using a Free Prior Informed Consent process<sup>37</sup> (see Box 2). Major investments in technical or market solutions will not be realized if the work of building capacity to create and maintain transparent, representative, functional social institutions to govern forest management and enterprise is ignored.

### **Box 2**

#### **The Rainforest Alliance's Free Prior Informed Consent process**

Indigenous peoples and other local communities have the right to make free and informed choices about the use or development of their lands and resources. Free Prior Informed Consent is implemented through a participatory process involving all affected groups that is carried out prior to the finalization or implementation of any development plans. The process ensures that communities are not coerced or intimidated; that decisions are reached through communities' own chosen institutions or representatives; that communities' consent is sought and freely given prior to the authorization or start of any activities; that communities have full information about the scope of any proposed development and its likely impacts on their lands, livelihoods, and environment; and that ultimately their choices to give or withhold consent are respected.

Strong local grassroots organizations also play an important role in community equity. In general, the more vertical integration and diversification that takes place within community forest enterprises, the more social inclusion is present, as more employment is typically created. Specific efforts are needed to engage the poor, women, and youth in improving equity in tenure, community governance, community forest enterprise management and operations, and benefit sharing, as well as to improve gender equality and women's empowerment. It is critical to ensure that both human and labor rights are respected throughout the supply chain, especially in indigenous communities where threats to environmental defenders have grown in recent years.

The forestry sector is also affected by out-migration of young people. In many rural communities, youth have limited options to study, pay for their education, and find meaningful employment. At the same time, local forestry communities hire external technical experts and consultants to support their operations because of a lack of specialists within their community. Investing in the future of community forests means investing in the next generation of leaders, community members, and technicians in sustainable forest management to work the land and keep the local economy running.

- **Enable effective alliances, governance, and funding at scale**

Deforestation and forest degradation have long been fueled by poor governance and competing claims over forest resources and land use. Functioning and successful community forest enterprises cannot be achieved over a single project cycle on a limited budget. Nowhere has there been the level of investment in community forestry seen in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, stretching over many decades and involving a wide range of donors and technical assistance agencies—except perhaps in Nepal. To develop integrated community forest management at a scale that will have a major impact at local, regional, and international levels, it is critical to have a broad alliance of public and private actors working together towards a shared long-term vision of community-controlled forests and enterprises. Building on strong community forest enterprises, increasing local community members' representation and participation in decision-making structures of jurisdictional approaches should lead to more opportunities to build such coalitions. Integrated Landscape Management<sup>28</sup> facilitates access to finance, collaborative and effective natural resource management, and commodity production at larger scale, providing the enabling environment needed for integrated community forest management.

### ***Responsible forest management needs to be enhanced and monitored***

- **Base a management plan on current science and best forestry practices**

Sustainable forestry balances the needs of the environment, wildlife, and forest communities—support-

ing decent incomes while conserving forests for future generations. Forestry operations must put into place a clearly mapped management plan that specifies the number of trees (or NTFPs) that can be harvested per hectare, and the frequency at which this can occur, based on the growth and regeneration rates of the species found in that ecosystem. The goal is to harvest in a way that allows these species the chance to regenerate and ensures that the forest's overall ecological health is maintained, restored, or even enhanced. The ideal of forest management is to mimic nature and be as close as possible to the functioning of a natural ecosystem.

Managing tropical forests to reach this balance is more complex than in temperate ones. The number of different species per hectare; limited knowledge about their interactions, particularly on tree regeneration and mortality ecology; and the susceptibility of tropical soils to erosion mean it is necessary to diverge from northern-style silviculture. Forest communities need to be provided with simple and effective management plans and harvesting techniques for timber and NTFPs from tropical forests, based on available science and best-forestry practices.

- **Monitor the forest**

The limited knowledge on tropical forests requires to use adaptive management, which involves regular monitoring and continual refinement<sup>38</sup>. For example, permanent sample plots and transects make it possible to follow the forest's evolution in terms of tree composition and diameter, species' regeneration and mortality, soil fertility, and biodiversity. Observing the health of the forest allows detection of early signs of diseases or pests, which tend to increase with climate change. Regulating fires through monitoring and early interventions is also critical as tropical forests are increasingly prone to drought.

### ***Communities should be supported in adapting to and mitigating climate change***

- **Increase ecological resilience to climate change**

Maintaining and restoring natural forests are clearly the most effective approaches to combating climate change, contributing to:

- capturing and storing additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere
- favoring biodiversity as a critical element of ecosystem and social resilience.

Forest management activities that enhance biodiversity mean forests are less affected by pests, diseases, and fires, and recover more quickly. These diverse and more resilient forests in turn provide a wider array of products to local communities, increase soil stability, and regulate water cycles, which further secure crop yields and livelihoods. Combined with strong and effective governance at community level, community forestry has proven to increase social, economic, and ecological resilience globally<sup>21</sup>.

Sustainable forest management favors resilience through climate-smart practices such as increasing tree species composition and diversity of structures; extended rotation length of tree harvesting; or reduced-impact logging. The latter became widely used in the tropics to avoid damage to soils and standing trees, but is now also recognized for its positive impact on climate. It entails a range of improved practices, including directional felling of trees; improved harvest planning via pre-harvest inventory; planning skid trails and/or mono-cable winching. These methods reduce emissions of conventional logging techniques, and also preserve soils, streams, and canopy coverage, maintaining capacity for regeneration, biodiversity, and better resilience of the forest as a whole.

- **Support climate change mitigation practices**

Protecting and restoring forests, and managing them well, are the best ways of conserving or enhancing existing carbon stocks and biodiversity. But where degradation is too severe, full reforestation might be needed.

Reforestation on deforested or heavily degraded land has gathered broad support as a carbon mitigation practice. Planted forests are much poorer than natural forests at storing carbon and supporting biodiversity<sup>39</sup>, but they are necessary in some cases to prevent soil erosion, restore ecosystem connectivity in degraded landscapes, and accelerate the re-establishment of forests that have been destroyed. The best place to plant trees is on previously forested land. Non-forested lands such as grasslands and wetlands already contribute to capturing carbon, mostly in the soil, and should be avoided. Wherever possible, reforestation should try to recreate a forest that is similar to the natural forest, and provide multiple benefits to people. Local communities should be placed at the heart of any reforestation initiative to ensure its long-term success. For all this to happen, growing the right tree species in the right place is critical, taking future climatic conditions into consideration.

### **Livelihoods from forest product value chains must be strengthened**

- **Develop market access and diversification to boost income and profitability**

Sustainable forest management is not only effective in maintaining forests and supporting communities' livelihoods. With a total contribution of more than \$1298 billion to the world's GDP, the forest-based sector generates indirectly more than twice its direct contribution<sup>40</sup>. The economic value of forests has long been measured by their timber value only, but timber production is a very small part of the goods and services provided by forests. The research estimates the economic value of forest ecosystem services at \$33 trillion per year, twice the GDP of the United States.

If we want to incentivize standing, healthy forests, it is critical to develop, with forest community partners, economic value and markets for sustainably harvested timber, NTFPs, and payment for environmental services. It is also critical to support development of dynam-

ic business strategies, skills, and progressive business entities with forest community partners. To achieve this aim, building partnerships with international buyers can boost profitability, while producing for local and regional markets will ensure that businesses will be sustainable in the long term.

Vertical integration can create value-added, in particular for high-value products such as FSC-certified lumber. Another approach is market aggregation, from robust first-tier enterprises such as cooperatives or collectively owned businesses, towards second- and third-tier organizations. This approach allows diversification in NTFPs, which is especially appropriate for smaller, more degraded, and/or fragmented forests. Diversification reduces economic risk and is a benefit multiplier, favoring inclusion of women and marginalized groups.

In trying to reach markets and build formal enterprises, aggregating and adding value at the second-tier scale is the most promising approach.

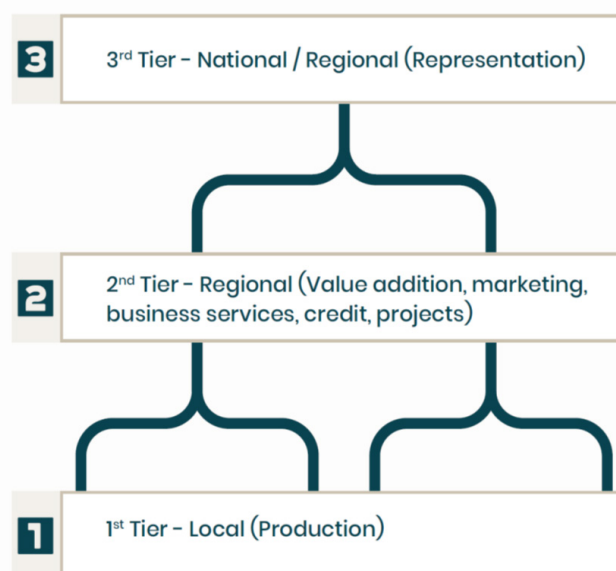


Figure 3: Investment in tiered organization

Source: Adapted from Macqueen et al. (2015)<sup>41</sup>

- **Support supply chain accountability and responsible forest management through certification and multi-stakeholder processes**

Forest certification based on a third-party, independent audit process is important to validate results and substantiate claims. Certification is a market tool that helps reward communities for their responsible forest management, and provides a means for companies and consumers to take responsibility for their purchasing and consumption. It is an important contributor to helping companies be accountable for their supply chains with regard to deforestation and forest degradation, as laid out in the [Accountability Framework Initiative](#) of which the Rainforest Alliance is a member.



In 1993, the Rainforest Alliance was a founding member of the Forest Stewardship Council®. The globally respected FSC certification standard for managing forests covers many of the themes within the Rainforest Alliance's integrated community forest management pathway. We are continuing our collaboration as active members of the the FSC's environmental chamber, and through engaging in the organization's New Approaches project<sup>42</sup> to develop new solutions for smallholder and community forestry certification.

The Rainforest Alliance is also a founding member of the [Global Platform for Sustainable Natural Rubber](#). Founded in 2019, this is an international, multistakeholder, voluntary membership organization with a mission to lead improvements in the socioeconomic and environmental performance of the natural rubber value chain.

Certification and multistakeholder processes are valuable tools for both forest communities and the market. It is critical that we continue to support their evolution based on learning from monitoring their effectiveness, strengths, and opportunities for improvement.

## WE CANNOT DO THIS ALONE

As society works to address the grand challenge of accommodating the needs of 9 billion people while maintaining a habitable and biodiversity-rich planet, there is not only space—but also a critical need—for many different strategies and solutions, addressing the specific circumstances of different commodities, localities, and companies. The Rainforest Alliance has been devoted to this challenge since its foundation more than 30 years ago, and can look back on extensive experience, impact, and learning.

Yet, progress can only be achieved collaboratively and when all actors take responsibility. If we aim to leverage forests as a natural climate solution and reverse forest degradation, we need to scale our interventions. Integrated community forest management proposes a pathway that enables local communities to become ecosystem stewards at scale. Directing the flow of public and private capital towards these efforts will be critical in achieving this goal.

We welcome feedback from our partners in forest communities, private and public sectors, and civil society to help us continue to innovate and have impact through constructively reviewing and commenting on our interventions, and holding us accountable to our principles, vision, mission, and goals. Together with you, we are inspired to make the coming years a time of successful forest preservation and restoration.

## ANNEX 1

**Definition: Natural forest** (Source: AFI (2019):

*A forest that is a natural ecosystem. Natural forests possess many or most of the characteristics of a forest native to the given site, including species composition, structure, and ecological function. Natural forests include:*

- *Primary forests that have not been subject to major human impacts in recent history*
- *Regenerated (second-growth) forests that were subject to major impacts in the past (for instance by agriculture, livestock raising, tree plantations, or intensive logging) but where the main causes of impact have ceased or greatly diminished and the ecosystem has attained much of the species composition, structure, and ecological function of prior or other contemporary natural ecosystems*
- *Managed natural forests where much of the ecosystem's composition, structure, and ecological function exist in the presence of activities such as:*
  - *Harvesting of timber or other forest products, including management to promote high-value species*
  - *Low intensity, small-scale cultivation within the forest, such as less-intensive forms of swidden agriculture in a forest mosaic*
- *Forests that have been partially degraded by anthropogenic or natural causes (e.g., harvesting, fire, climate change, invasive species, or others) but where the land has not been converted to another use and where degradation does not result in the sustained reduction of tree cover below the thresholds that define a forest or sustained loss of other main elements of ecosystem composition, structure, and ecological function.*

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