

NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Tackling the Dual Threats of Climate Change and Rural Poverty

The climate crisis is upon us. To prevent a global climate catastrophe, we must cut worldwide carbon emissions nearly in half by 2030. The good news is that we know what needs to be done. Proven and cost-effective natural climate solutions—such as forest conservation and climate-smart agriculture—can help us achieve 37 percent of the necessary reductions by increasing carbon storage, avoiding greenhouse gas emissions, and building resilience to climate impacts.

Our approach at the Rainforest Alliance combines certification with sustainable enterprise development and landscape management. By working with local communities, companies, civil society organizations, and governments to boost rural prosperity, create responsible supply chains, and influence policy, we can create an environment in which people and nature thrive together.

COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT

Through our more than 30 years of experience, we've found that the most effective strategies for protecting forests are ones that put local communities at the center. Our Integrated Community Forest Management model engages companies, governments, and donors to invest in and provide the support necessary for local communities to protect and manage their forests sustainably. Specifically, we provide climate change training to forest communities and farmers so they can better understand the unique risks threatening forests as well as climate mitigation and resilience strategies, including forest regeneration and protection. We also help connect these communities to larger markets and provide training on how they can boost their income through sustainable community forest enterprises, such as selling forest products like flowers and nuts. In everything we do, we focus on engaging women and youth as they are vital to sustainability transformation.

“Because of the training we received, we are able to use the ramón nut to feed our families and to sell.”

GRECIA MAGDALENA LÓPEZ

President of the Ramón Nut Value Chain Committee, Guatemala



Photo: Sergio Izquierdo

GUATEMALA'S FOREST GUARDIANS

In the Maya Biosphere Reserve—a dense and ancient forestland in Guatemala's northern Petén region—nine government-granted community forestry concessions (CFC) have maintained a near-zero deforestation rate for 15 years across 355,000 hectares of forestland. These communities have exclusive rights to sustainably manage the land; that is, they extract, process, and sell timber and non-timber forest products—such as ramón nuts and palm fronds—under strict requirements that ensure the long-term health and integrity of the forest. Only one tree per hectare is extracted every 40 years, while native seedlings are grown to regenerate deforested areas outside the concessions. The model consistently outperforms traditional conservation approaches. In fact, while protected areas bordering the concessions are burned at alarming rates, five CFCs have contributed to a net gain in forest recovery in the northeastern region of the reserve.

1,100

hectares of net forest-gain

12,000

jobs generated by community-owned forestry enterprises

2,800

of these jobs are for women, who were historically excluded from forest management

45,000

local people who have benefited from improved living conditions

\$69.7 MILLION

combined 2013–2021 revenues of more than 100 community-owned forest enterprises in the concessions

CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

The Rainforest Alliance works with millions of farmers to promote more sustainable growing practices designed to nourish soil health, conserve water, and improve farmers' incomes by boosting crop yields. Climate-smart agriculture expands on this by helping farmers identify their unique climate challenges—such as unpredictable weather patterns, shorter growing seasons, droughts, or heavy rains—and find the best methods to address them. This targeted approach allows them to become more productive and resilient to the harmful impacts of climate change while also mitigating climate change itself. For example, healthy soil can act as both a carbon pool (reservoir) and carbon sink (a mechanism that removes greenhouse gases from the atmosphere).

Building on sustainable agricultural practices, our integrated landscape management approach brings together local communities and stakeholders to protect and restore the landscapes they depend on and ensure better livelihoods now and in the future. In the Sui River landscape in the Western North region of Ghana, the Rainforest Alliance helped local cocoa farmers team up with other land users—including global agribusiness Olam Ghana, the Forestry Commission, and the Ghana Cocoa Board—to form two Landscape Management Boards. Their mission: to protect and restore tree cover across five incredible forest reserves.

Between 2018 and 2021, 2,600 farmers were trained on climate-smart practices such as shade tree management, soil conservation, and water management to protect their farms against increasingly harsh dry weather conditions. As a result, more than 200,000 healthy native tree seedlings were planted on and around cocoa farms. Moreover, a sample survey showed that these climate-smart practices were embraced by other farmers in the community as well, with around 4,000 farmers in the project districts reporting the adoption of climate-smart practices and more productive cocoa farms as a result.

JOIN OUR ALLIANCE

Our future climate stability depends on achieving net-zero emissions as quickly as possible, and natural climate solutions are essential to reaching that goal. The Rainforest Alliance is positioned for impact in this space—working across 70 countries and global supply chains in many of the most critically important natural landscapes throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Help us reach more landscapes and communities and drive impact by becoming a partner.



Cocoa farmers planting tree seedlings to restore tree cover and build climate resilience in the Sui-River landscape of Ghana.



The border between a severely degraded landscape in Belize (right) and a community forestry concession in Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve (left). Photo: Sergio Izquierdo

Our work to promote natural climate solutions contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, including:

<p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	<p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p>	<p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>	<p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p>	<p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p>	<p>15 LIFE ON LAND</p>	<p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p>
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