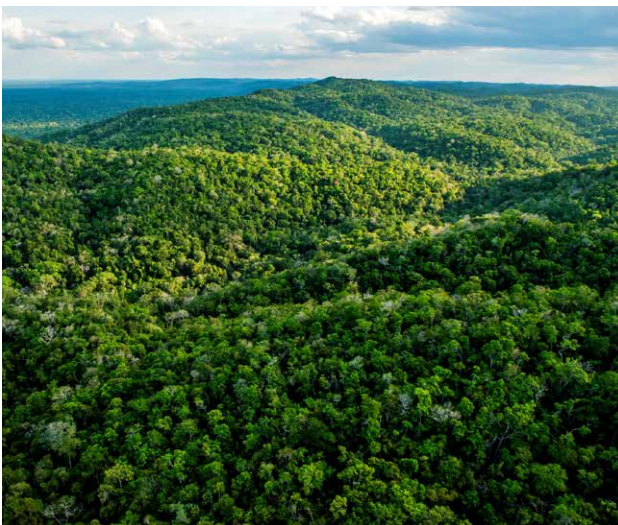


Forest Allies: Evidence-Based Claims Framework

Version 1.0



At the Rainforest Alliance, we know that those who make their living from the forest have a powerful incentive to protect it. With this principle in mind, we launched Forest Allies in 2021 to leverage corporate support for the bold local action needed to halt forest degradation and deforestation and mitigate the global climate crisis.



INTRODUCTION

Forest Allies is a community of practice (CoP) that brings together companies, regional civil society organizations, and forest communities for targeted projects that protect, restore, and enable the responsible management of tropical forests around the world. A collective investment is made by our company members into a portfolio of projects with the objective of partnering with forest communities to become effective stewards and forest guardians. Claims are a key component of our initiative, enabling our ability to elevate the visibility of forest communities through rich, data-driven communications and storytelling. In addition, credible claims acknowledge the financial and in-kind investments made by our members, allowing them to report actions and outcomes to their key stakeholders.

This framework has been developed based on best practices for landscape and collective claims in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Guidance in the form of [three position papers](#) from ISEAL's Jurisdictional Practitioner Community served as the benchmark for "best practices" in the development of this framework. As more detailed guidance and tools become available, we will evolve our approach, and as a result, this framework.

FOREST ALLIES PROJECTS

Introduction to Our Portfolio

Scope

Almost one third of the world's forest area is already under some form of community-based/smallholder management, and this number is increasing as local and Indigenous communities gain forest management rights in several countries. The Rainforest Alliance has long been a proponent of a "rights based" approach to community forestry. Local communities and Indigenous peoples—if they have secured rights to land and resources, and have the technical capacities, incentives, and market access—can play a critical role in preserving forests.

That's where Forest Allies comes in. By July 2021, we had active Forest Allies projects in six key tropical forest landscapes, from Guatemala's iconic Maya Biosphere Reserve to the biodiverse forests of Mintom in Cameroon. The main intervention implemented across our Forest Allies portfolio is Integrated Community Forest Management (ICFM).

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, which provides equitable benefits to households, involves young people in activities, and promotes gender equality and women's empowerment
- **Implements sustainable forest management, restoration, or reforestation** to reduce forest degradation and deforestation and 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.

Learn more through [our Integrated Community Forest Management white paper](#).

Forest Allies projects are selected considering the following criteria:

1. Secure land use rights have been allocated to Indigenous peoples or forest communities.
2. Sufficient enabling conditions are in place to support our interventions.
3. The Rainforest Alliance has sufficient presence in the landscape (directly or through local partners) to successfully implement project activities.

Investing beyond supply chains

Protecting, conserving, and restoring the world's remaining intact forest landscapes and key biodiversity areas is crucial to meet global climate and nature targets. Yet these important areas are the least likely to be major hotspots for commodities and international supply chains, more often serving local markets or providing sustenance and livelihoods for local communities. That's why Forest Allies projects are intentionally designed to go "beyond supply chains," giving companies a direct way to support these communities and help them address the varied and complex root causes of deforestation and degradation of these precious forest landscapes. Through Forest Allies, company members must demonstrate their commitment to deforestation-free supply chains through alignment with the [Accountability Framework](#), a globally respected roadmap to achieving responsible supply chains that the Rainforest Alliance co-led the development of back in 2019. Companies that join the Forest Allies CoP benefit from an in-depth Accountability Framework assessment to analyze any social and environmental due diligence gaps in their supply chains.



Project development and implementation

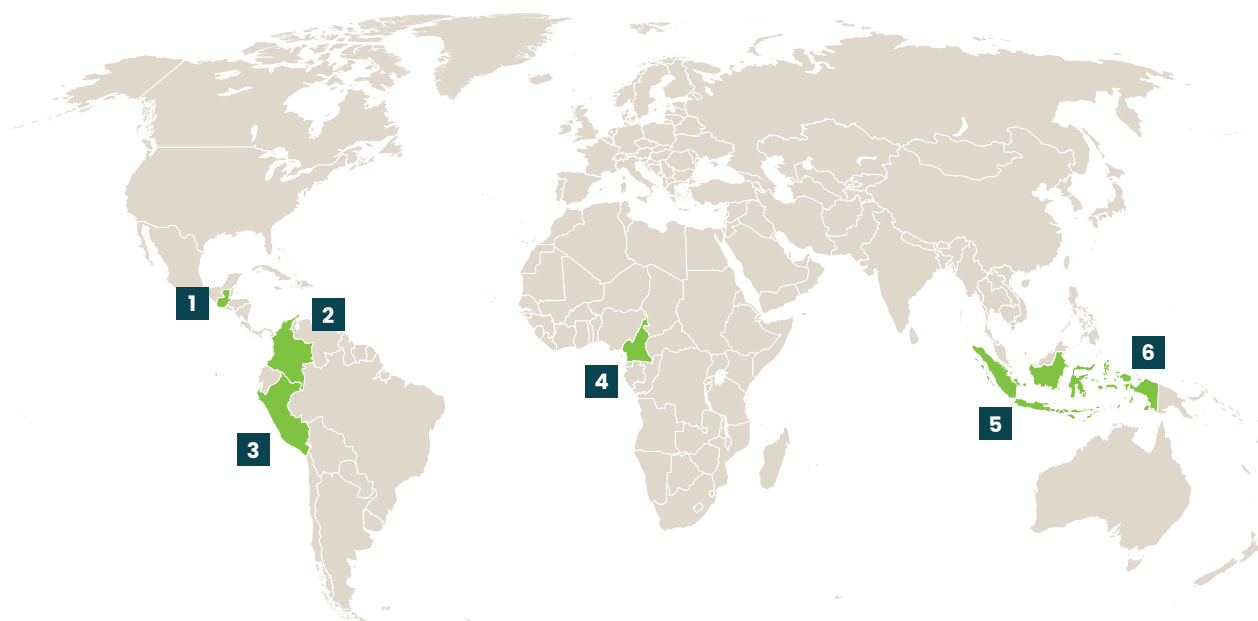
Projects activities, outputs, and outcomes are planned in three-year cycles.

Projects are managed by local Rainforest Alliance staff, and where possible, in partnership with local partner organizations. Project activities may be implemented by staff and/or partners who receive a sub-grant from the Rainforest Alliance. Engaging and supporting local civil society is an important aspect of capacity strengthening and creating an enabling environment for long-term success.

Often, Forest Allies projects are designed and implemented as complementary projects to existing or planned Rainforest Alliance Integrated Landscape Management Projects. Forest Allies funding enables the implementation of activities which complement the broader landscape level outcomes but would not be possible without the additional contribution. In some cases, Forest Allies funding is used to kick-start projects in key forest landscapes and as leverage to attract additional funding partners.

Projects are selected through the implementation of a gap analysis performed at a local level by the Rainforest Alliance. The gap analysis considers existing funding and resources, local capacity, political will and environment, risks and threats, opportunities, and applies the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. The Forest Allies Portfolio was launched in July 2021 with six initial projects. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: 2021 Project Portfolio & Activities



- 1 Guatemala:** Testing Productive Restoration
- 2 Colombia:** Chiribiquete National Park Buffer Zone Restoration, Guaviare
- 3 Peru:** Indigenous Economies Project
- 4 Cameroon:** Non-Timber Forest Products in the Mintom Landscape
- 5 Indonesia:** Smallholder Timber Project, Java
- 6 Indonesia:** An Indonesian Archipelago Approach, West Kalimantan

As new members join and invest in Forest Allies, projects will evolve and expand to meet the scale of funding. The initial focus is to deepen activities and planned outcomes in existing projects with the intention of minimizing overhead costs and maximizing impact. New activities are determined by local staff in consultation with our community partners and informed by the ICFM monitoring, evaluation, and learning process. New projects and geographies are added to the portfolio based on resource availability and need, ensuring that there is sufficient commitment to be effective in securing outcomes.



Table 1: Forest Allies roles & responsibilities

Stakeholder	Role	Responsibility
The Rainforest Alliance	Portfolio owner & CoP convener	Project management, implement and report project activities
Local partners	Implementor	Implement and report project activities, contribute knowledge, and share expertise within the CoP
Corporate members	Donor/funder & CoP member	Fund projects, contribute knowledge, and share expertise within the CoP
Forest communities	Partner & CoP member	Implement and participate in project activities, report progress, contribute knowledge, and share expertise within the CoP

Monitoring & Data Collection

Monitoring, evaluation, & learning

To measure the outcomes of our Forest Allies projects, we developed the [Integrated Community Forest Management Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning \(ICFM MEL\) Tool](#) with support from the International Institute for Environment and Development. the International Institute for Environment and Development.

The tool is structured around our four pillars of Integrated Community Forest Management:

Pillar 1: Governance and social organization

Pillar 2: Tenure and landscape planning

Pillar 3: Forest management

Pillar 4: Enterprise development

Our methodology

The tool is comprised of introductory guidelines and 80 self-rating questions on the level of progress made per pillar (scored from 0-4). In addition, nine headline indicators with accompanying sub-indicators collect primary data on reach and outcomes across the four pillars.

Responses provide a snapshot of how Forest Allies partner community forest organizations are progressing in alignment with the Integrated Community Forest Management model. Baseline assessments are completed using all 80 of the self-rating questions. After the initial baseline is complete, a subset of project-specific indicators is selected for all future reassessments based on the unique project activities and planned outcomes.

Data is collected by the Rainforest Alliance and/or local implementing partners through a participatory approach. Results are shared immediately with the participating forest community so that they may use the learnings in their planning activities.



Reassessments of the subset of project-specific indicators are implemented annually for each project and community to measure progress. Results are reported publicly in the Forest Allies annual report. See the reporting section below for more information.

The implementation of the ICFM MEL tool and public reporting of the data through the annual report forms the basis of the results-based claims which can be made by Forest Allies members. See also Table 4 below.

Reporting

There are three main reports produced by the Forest Allies initiative on a regular, ongoing basis.

Table 2: Forest Allies report types

Report	Audience	Frequency	Content
Activity report	Internal to Forest Allies members	Every 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities carried out Challenges Pictures and media coverage Next steps Project reach (e.g., # of individuals trained, trees planted, etc.)
Outcome report	Internal to Forest Allies members	Annual	Results of annual ICFM MEL assessment, including an update on project outcomes
Annual report	Public	Annual	Summary of all activities and progress of the Forest Allies initiative. Includes results of ICFM MEL assessments. Substantiates claims.

CLAIM REQUIREMENTS

Forest Allies results-based claims are established according to the following criteria:

1. **Context, scope, and boundary:** Claims are proportional to the amount of available data, accurately represent the scope of our intervention within the broader context, are not stretched, and do not omit critical information.
2. **Additionality:** Claims (in particular, performance claims) fairly represent the additional benefit generated by Forest Allies funded interventions, and the claim is directly relevant to the magnitude of the intervention.
3. **Location:** Claims are linked to a specific place.
4. **Timing/timelines:** Claims are linked to a specific timeframe.
5. **Attribution to members:** Forest Allies is a collective and collaborative investment and project outcomes are not apportioned to individual contributions. All claims are attributed to the Forest Allies as a collective. However, the scale of the claim is proportionate to the level of funding and investment members have made to Forest Allies projects over time. See Appendix B.



Definition of claims

There are three types of claims categorized under six main categories. These claim types are action, reach, and performance. The six main categories are carbon, biodiversity, livelihoods, land use, enterprise, and overall progress.

See Tables 3 and 4 below for further definition.

NOTE: Members of Forest Allies may also wish to make claims pertaining to the outcomes of their Accountability Framework gap analysis and resulting action plans. Members should follow the guidance for claims from the [Accountability Framework](#).

Table 3: Claim types & definitions

Type of Claim	Description	Examples
Action	Refers to the activities, specific actions, and investments made by the Forest Allies Action claims may be made across all five claim categories (See table 4 below)	# of nurseries established # of trainings provided # of seedlings distributed
Reach	Refers to the scope of the project	# of communities # of hectares # of products sold
Performance	Refers to a change in performance outcomes, as measured by our ICFM MEL tool, compared to our baseline data, and supported by our Theory of Change .	# of hectares under Improved Land Management % of women involved in land use planning % increase in enterprise revenue Improved rating for each ICFM pillar measured, e.g., X communities showed an improvement of their score by X% in pillar XXX.

Table 4: Claim categories & definitions

Claim Category	Measurement Tool	Indicators	Type of Claim
Carbon	Forests Integrity Assessment (FIA) Tool* (in testing TBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in above ground biomass; or Changes in carbon stock from above ground biomass 	Performance
Biodiversity	TBD**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD 	Performance
Livelihoods	ICFM MEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of community members within community forest organizations (# of women, # of youth) # of community members participating in land use planning (# of women, # of youth) 	Reach
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in % of community members with clear allocation of land use rights (# of women, # of youth) as measured from the baseline. Change in % of individuals, (#) employed (and paid) by the community forest organization enterprise(s) operations as measured from the baseline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total women (%) Total youth (%) Employed full-time (%) 	Performance
Land use	ICFM MEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total forestry and agroforestry area (hectares) under Community-Based Management 	Reach
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total community managed area under Improved Forest Management practices Total community managed area (hectares) undergoing ecosystem restoration Total community managed area (hectares) certified under the Forest Stewardship Council standard Total community managed area (hectares) in process of alignment with the Forest Stewardship Council standard or other nationally or internationally recognized standards Total area (hectares) in target community under improved agroforestry management practices 	Reach + Performance with a demonstrated change measured over time
Enterprise	ICFM MEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in % of annual sales revenue (USD\$ equivalent) of the community forest organization's enterprise(s) as measured from the baseline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of annual sales revenue reinvested in the community forest organization's enterprise(s) (i.e., working capital—current or future—savings, investments, and physical operational improvements) % of annual sales revenue invested in community forest improvements (e.g., clinics, schools, water infrastructure, etc.) % of revenue distributed among members of the community forest organization 	Performance
Overall improvements	ICFM MEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This category refers to the overall rating outcome of each forest community across each pillar of the ICFM intervention. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., X communities showed an improvement of their score by X% in the pillar XXX 	Performance

*Baseline data collection conducted in 2022 in Cameroon. Full rollout of the tool across the portfolio, and as a result, baseline data collection for all projects, is pending completion of field testing the tool. Planned for 2023/2024.

**Tools for measuring biodiversity will be assessed and tested in 2023. Baseline assessments will occur once a final tool is selected. The FIA Tool used for carbon is primarily a Forest Integrity Assessment Tool which could potentially be used for both indicators.

Eligibility and requirements for Forest Allies claims

Only active Forest Allies members with an active Forest Allies Agreement can make claims. If a member ends their participation in Forest Allies, they are no longer eligible to make claims.

Claims shall be made according to the following requirements and the requirements in Appendices A-C:

- Claims shall provide a link to the most recent Forest Allies annual report.
- All Forest Allies claims are collective claims and shall be made collectively as Forest Allies and not attributed to individual members, unless the member has made an additional investment. See Appendix C.
- New members can make action and reach claims in year one. Performance claims can be made beginning in year two of membership coinciding with the publication of the annual report which will reflect performance outcomes from their first year of membership.
- Claims shall mention the timeframe which they are in reference to.
- Claims shall indicate whether claims are made across the entire portfolio or in reference to a specific project. In the case of the entire portfolio, a link to the project portfolio shall be included (This can be through the annual report, but it needs to be clear.), and in the case of a single project, a reference to the geographical scope which they are in reference to shall be included.

- Claims shall be specific and use language which is aligned with the relevant indicators used to measure and monitor progress.
- Claims shall not imply outcomes are larger or more significant than they are.
- Action claims should include the planned outcome which the contribution is working towards.
- Companies shall refer to themselves as “members” of Forest Allies.
- The Forest Allies seal should be used alongside a claim.
- Performance claims are proportional to the individual member’s contribution to outcomes. See Appendix B for more detail.

Approval process

All results-based claims require approval prior to publication. The approval process is outlined in the [Rainforest Alliance Labeling & Trademarks Policy](#), section 9.

Use of the applicable Rainforest Alliance trademarks, which includes the Forest Allies seal, the Rainforest Alliance logo, and name for Forest Allies members, must comply with the [Rainforest Alliance Seal Graphic Guidelines](#).



EXAMPLE CLAIMS

Action claims

- Our investment in Forest Allies is part of a collective effort to restore over 1,000 hectares of degraded land. From 2021 to 2022, 200,000 tree seedlings have been distributed across two restoration projects—one in Guatemala and one in Cameroon—in support of this goal. (Link to annual report.)
- In 2022, as part of a collective investment in the Forest Allies' project, Building Indigenous Economies in the Llamas region of Peru, five capacity sharing workshops with 11 Indigenous leaders were hosted offering technical training on responsible forest management and enterprise skills with the goal of creating strong livelihoods from forest conservation. (Link to annual report.)

Reach claims

- X company is a member of Forest Allies. As part of this collective effort, since 2021, we have supported 190,000 hectares of community managed forests across six projects in Indonesia, Central and South America, and the Congo Basin. (Link to annual report.)
- As a member of Forest Allies, we support two women-owned-and run enterprises. One, established in 2022, produces and sells non-timber forest products in the Mintom landscape of Cameroon. The second, in the Llamas region of Peru, sells traditional textiles and handicrafts. (Link to annual report.)
- X company joined the Forest Allies initiative in partnership with the Rainforest Alliance in 2022. Since then, we have been part of the collective effort to support 43 forest communities in Indonesia, Central and South America, and the Congo Basin to build successful community enterprises. (Link to annual report.)



Performance claims

- Through our investment in Forest Allies, in 2022 we supported 184 hectares of productive restoration on degraded land previously used for cattle grazing in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala. (Link to annual report.)
- X company is a member of the Forest Allies initiative. From 2021 to 2022, we have supported activities which led to a 25 percent increase of non-timber forest product sales revenue for communities in the Mintom Landscape of Cameroon. (Link to annual report.)

Action words recommended for claims: supported, collaborated, contributed



APPENDIX A: ENSURING PROPORTIONAL CLAIMS

Contribution claims are proportional to the individual member's contribution to outcomes.

Forest Allies is a collective and collaborative investment, and as such, we do not apportion project outcomes to individual contributions. However, as a collective, members will join and contribute to project outcomes at different times. As such, claims need to accurately reflect the length of the membership, and as a result, the proportion of investment, for each individual member.

To address this, claims are made on an annual basis and are cumulative. For example, in year one of their membership, a company can claim the outcomes measured in that year beginning in year two. In year three, the company will be able to claim outcomes from year one and year two. In year four, the company will be able to claim outcomes from year one, two, and three.

To prevent inflated claims, the performance outcome measured and reported in our annual report each year is the change in outcome since the last period.

This approach is not to be confused with individual attribution of claims. Claims are made through the collective of Forest Allies and outcomes are not apportioned to individual members. Collective claims which can be made are proportional to the length of an individual company's membership in Forest Allies, and as a result, investment in project actions.

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS MADE BY MEMBERS

Forest Allies members are required to meet the minimum financial commitment but are welcome to make additional investments. The initial minimum financial commitment is invested into a pool of funding allocated to the Forest Allies portfolio based on local needs assessments. Additional investments may be invested into an existing project(s) selected by the member making the investment.

For these additional investments, the same approaches, methodologies, and monitoring will apply; however, actions will be tracked and measured separately from the Forest Allies portfolio. For these specific activities, claims may be attributed to the member who has sponsored them.

Exact arrangements will be discussed and agreed, and claims will be determined according to the criteria noted above as well as guidance from ISEAL on proportional claims.

APPENDIX C: ADDRESSING THE VALIDITY OF CLAIMS WHEN PROJECTS DEMONSTRATE A DECLINE IN PERFORMANCE OVER TIME

It is a priority to design and implement project activities in a way that ensures durability of performance improvements over time. We do this by focusing on stakeholder engagement and building a favorable policy environment. However, in some cases, there may be a decline in performance which may affect the validity of claims made by Forest Allies members.

In this scenario, we will be transparent about the performance levels, reporting the decline in the Forest Allies annual report, why they have declined, and what actions we are taking to address it.

In these instances, active, public claims made by Forest Allies members will be reviewed and amended as needed based on the specific scenario. Ideally, members will be required to 1) include additional information with the existing claim to cover current performance levels, reasons for the decline, and actions being taken to address it, or 2) adapt existing claims to the new reality.

In severe cases where we are not able to influence the situation or reverse the decline, members will be asked to remove any active claims.





The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.

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