

What constitutes a company landscape investment or action?

Landscape and Jurisdictional Practitioner Community - Joint Position Paper

December 2022

This joint position paper is the first in a series of collective positions from the landscape and jurisdictional practitioner community¹ that aim to provide companies and the organisations that support them with accessible and consistent guidance for effective investment and action in landscapes and jurisdictions. The series provides a common baseline set of expectations on which the practitioner community is building more detailed guidance and tools.

This first paper presents prerequisites and additional criteria that determine what constitutes a landscape² investment or action. Having a common definition aims to make it clear for companies and others when an action or investment counts towards landscape or jurisdictional outcomes.

As a practitioner community, we are collectively learning how companies can best engage in and contribute to addressing landscape or jurisdictional-scale sustainability challenges³. Further positions will focus on how companies can talk about these qualifying actions, about the resulting performance improvements, and about their contribution to those improvements.

1. See end of document for a list of participating organisations and initiatives supporting this position

2. This position paper uses 'landscape' as a shorthand for 'landscape or jurisdictional', recognizing these are different but related concepts, with a jurisdictional approach defined as a type of landscape approach that is developed within the administrative boundaries of sub-national or national governments, usually with engagement or leadership from government – see ISEAL's [Guidance on Making Credible Jurisdictional Claims](#).

3. For a first iteration of guiding practices, see ISEAL's [Effective Company Actions in Landscapes and Jurisdictions](#). The guiding practices were developed in collaboration with CDP, Proforest, TFA and WWF, with input from a range of landscape and jurisdictional initiatives.

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Characteristics of landscape investments and actions

PREREQUISITES

Two characteristics of company investments or actions need to be in place for them to qualify as contributing to landscape or jurisdictional performance.

- 1 Landscape investments and actions address critical sustainability issues in the landscape and contribute to agreed landscape goals.**

This means

- a. Goals are defined with local multi-stakeholder input,**
- b. Companies demonstrate how landscape investments and actions are going to contribute to the agreed landscape goals,**
- c. Progress towards shared landscape goals is monitored and reported.**

- 2 Landscape investments and actions aim to have impacts beyond individual supply chains.**

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

Three further criteria compound the benefits of landscape investments and actions by aligning and embedding them with other processes, programmes and actors in a given landscape.

- 3 Landscape investments and actions include support to multi-stakeholder landscape coordination processes.**

- 4 Landscape investments and actions are embedded in collective action plans, ensuring complementarity with other activities and interventions in the landscape.**

- 5 Landscape investments and actions contribute to broader systems level change, helping to create the enabling conditions for achieving agreed landscape goals.**



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Guidance

This section provides more context for why each of the five criteria are important, what they look like in practice, and how to address challenges in implementation.

PREREQUISITES

These characteristics establish the minimal steps to ensure the necessary relevance, scale and measurability of investments.

1 Landscape investments and actions address critical sustainability issues in the landscape and contribute to agreed landscape goals.

This means

a. Goals are defined with local multi-stakeholder input

Companies should focus their investments and actions on the sustainability issues and goals that are most relevant in the respective landscape. Companies should not define in isolation which issues and goals are most relevant but be informed by input from an inclusive and representative cross-section of stakeholders in the landscape, including, where present, Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Having stakeholders in the landscape agree on priority issues and sustainability goals not only ensures the relevance of proposed actions, it creates more buy-in and shared responsibility, increasing the likelihood that sustainability goals will be reached.

In landscapes where stakeholders have previously defined priority issues and sustainability goals, either through an informal or formal process (e.g. a consultation facilitated by a jurisdictional initiative), companies should defer to these. Where no prioritisation exercise has been conducted, companies should minimally seek input from a range of local stakeholders and, ideally, work collaboratively with them in a defined process to agree the long-term sustainability vision and shared landscape-level goals.

It is potentially the case that some of the locally prioritised sustainability issues or goals do not align with company priorities, e.g. with their sustainability commitments or due diligence obligations, or could involve investing beyond their primary commodity supply chain. Companies should respect local stakeholder priorities and seek to balance investments to achieve both their internal priorities and those of the landscape stakeholders.

b. Companies demonstrate how landscape investments and actions are going to contribute to the agreed landscape goals

If companies are considering communicating about the investments or actions they are taking in a landscape, it is important that they can demonstrate a reasonable and substantial link between their investments or actions and one or more of the agreed landscape goals. This link can be made based on a results chain or similar logic that shows the intended outputs of the activity and the steps by which those outputs will ultimately lead to positive changes in the landscape sustainability performance goals.

Establishing a reasonable and substantial link by building out a results chain has multiple benefits for a company. First, it enables the company to better monitor whether its investments or actions are having the intended effects and whether it needs to adapt its strategies or approach to better impact the prioritised performance goals. Second, it helps the company communicate with local stakeholders about how it is supporting achievement of agreed landscape goals. Third, it puts the company in a stronger position to communicate more broadly about the actions it is taking and the potential contribution of those actions to prioritised sustainability outcomes.

c. Progress towards shared landscape goals is monitored and reported

As with all investments, companies seeking to contribute to landscape performance improvement should also be transparent about the scale and nature of their investments or actions, and about the results of these actions in relation to the shared landscape goals.⁴ Those results should be derived from robust monitoring of outputs and performance outcomes.

2 Landscape investments and actions aim to have impacts beyond individual supply chains

A key differentiating factor of landscape investments and actions is that they seek to improve conditions in the landscape as a whole, rather than for a specific set of producers or enterprises. When investing in production landscapes, companies at all stages of the supply chain prioritise support for those enterprises that are producing their raw materials, whether that is focused on improved productivity, quality, or livelihoods. These are necessary and important investments. Landscape investments and actions complement supply chain investments by creating a more resilient environment and better conditions for the long-term well-being of local communities.

4. More information on expectations around transparency is provided in the second collective position in this series.

A wide range of investments and actions⁵ can potentially contribute to improved landscape performance. These include both direct and indirect actions that operate at different scales, from production landscapes or 'supply sheds' to local administrative units to broader sub-national units. As noted above, the choice of investment or action should consider the sustainability issues and goals that are most relevant in the respective landscape. Landscape investments and actions can include support to supply chain enterprises where it is clear how this will deliver on the agreed landscape goals and have impacts beyond a company's supply chain. For example, supporting producers to ameliorate or protect riparian zones for waterways on their properties can have wider impacts on water quality, while restoration of natural ecosystems on farmlands contiguous to natural areas of high conservation value will strengthen the resilience of that ecosystem.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

These further criteria compound the benefits of landscape investments and actions. These focus on aligning and embedding actions and investments with other processes, programmes and actors over time, in a given landscape. The degree to which these criteria can be fulfilled is highly dependent on the local context, but they should be prioritized where and when possible.

3 Landscape investments and actions include support to multi-stakeholder landscape coordination processes

There is a natural tendency for companies to focus investments on activities that will deliver sustainability outcomes directly, such as training of farmers, restoration or conservation activities. However, the durability and effectiveness of these activities will be limited without a coordinating process or initiative to ensure the benefits of actions are retained and enhanced beyond the lifetime of a project. Practically, this means that companies should balance their investments between those that show contribution directly to prioritised outcomes and those that strengthen the long-term durability of those investments by enhancing local capacities and governance.

Initially, this investment (which can be in-kind or financial) can take the form of participating in landscape or jurisdictional planning, supporting the development of collective action plans, participating in governance structures, establishing and monitoring performance baselines, building community capacity to engage, or supporting the development of multi-stakeholder processes or institutions. Over time, this is about ongoing investment in performance monitoring, local government and stakeholder capacity, and continued support and participation in multi-stakeholder processes. A key expectation is that companies, or the initiatives they are supporting, contribute to and engage in the (multi-stakeholder) process with a long-term vision, in order to achieve the agreed landscape and jurisdictional goals over time.

4 Landscape investments and actions are embedded in collective action plans, ensuring complementarity with other activities and interventions in the landscape

Landscape investments and actions are appealing in part because of the potential for greater impact through coordinated action. Coordinated action ensures the complementarity of activities and reduces transaction costs, leveraging individual efforts to make more effective and aligned progress towards defined sustainability goals. In some cases, co-financing of specific activities, of partnerships, or of collective action plans as a whole can enhance the collective nature and impact of investments.

Ideally, company investments or actions will be informed by some form of collective action plan that supports complementarity of activities. Collective action plans or similar frameworks can help to identify the types of investments or actions to prioritise and can support coordination and complementarity of those investments. If companies already want to start taking action while these plans are in development, at minimum, they should have knowledge of the activities and types of interventions happening in the landscape so they can build on these. For investments and actions that seek to mitigate and reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, more specific guidance and rules are already being developed to ensure investment and actions are adequately nested in existing jurisdictional processes.

5 Landscape investments and actions contribute to broader systems level change, helping to create the enabling conditions for achieving agreed landscape goals

One of the key benefits of investing or acting at a landscape scale is that it enables companies to address broader systems level change by aligning incentives, policies, and actions to drive improved sustainability performance at scale. Whereas prerequisite #2 refers to actions that lead to improved landscape performance, in this additional criteria, we refer to actions that strengthen enabling conditions.

For companies, this means understanding the system conditions that are preventing widespread progress, the root causes of these constraints, and the types of actions that can help to create or strengthen the enabling conditions for improved sustainability performance. Practically, this means that in addition to focusing on the relevance, scale, coordination and collective nature of actions, companies will engage in broader, strategic actions both with producers, local authorities, and other stakeholders that change the enabling conditions across the landscape or jurisdiction.

Depending on what are identified as the critical constraints to progress in a landscape, the levers to influence enabling conditions will be different. Actions can include supporting government policy and capacity, providing specific services, or enabling innovative financing mechanisms. Systemic investments and actions can also be implemented at different scales and are effective if carried out in collaboration with other stakeholders and embedded with local or regional governments in particular.

5. See the WWF, Proforest, TFA [Landscape Scale Action Guide for Companies](#) for a description of the range of potential landscape investments and actions

Organisations and initiatives supporting this position



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