Effective Company Actions in Landscapes and Jurisdictions

Guiding practices – draft v0.4 for consultation

OCTOBER 2021

This document applies to all companies seeking to improve sustainability performance through their actions or support to sourcing landscapes or jurisdictions. It assumes that companies are already taking action to improve sustainability performance within their supply chains.

The guidance outlines a short set of practices that companies should be aiming towards as their engagement in landscape approaches and jurisdictional initiatives matures. These practices, structured around four guiding principles, can be used as a reference by companies to inform how their actions and support can best contribute to improved sustainability performance in a landscape or jurisdiction and how they can communicate about the results of those actions.

Diagram 1: Summary of guiding practices

1. PRIORITISE ACTION
   a) Identify priority landscapes
   b) Identify critical issues in the landscapes
   c) Take actions that address the issues

2. MAXIMISE IMPACT
   a) Determine your scale of investment
   b) Focus on aligned actions where you can have most impact
   c) Embed your actions

3. MEASURE PROGRESS
   a) Develop a collective monitoring framework
   b) Monitor your results and support collective monitoring

4. COMMUNICATE RESULTS
   a) Ensure integrity of the data
   b) Make relevant and proportionate claims
   c) Avoid attribution claims in most cases

This document is a consultative draft that will be revised and finalized in December 2021. To share your feedback and learn more about our work, please contact landscapes@isealalliance.org by Friday 10 December 2021. For further background information, please visit our webpage.
1. Prioritising Action

Company actions address critical sustainability issues

A. Companies prioritise landscapes or jurisdictions to engage in based on where they are potentially well-placed to have positive impacts.

i. Assessments of where to engage can consider company sourcing footprint, current and future sourcing risks, presence of high social or environmental values and threats to these values, priority issues or regions for the company’s broader strategy and with its buyers, existence of collective action initiatives, and the company’s potential to drive positive outcomes beyond its supply chain. (Note: This is not an exhaustive list. Companies can also determine how to weight these factors in assessing where to engage, recognizing that some factors may be more relevant than others for specific contexts.)

B. Companies use a sustainability assessment to determine which sustainability issues are critical to address in the prioritised landscapes or jurisdictions.¹

i. The sustainability assessment should consider the relevance of different issues based on status, trends, drivers, risks, specific vulnerabilities, etc.

ii. The assessment takes into account the views of a variety of landscape or jurisdictional stakeholders through a participatory process. Landscape and jurisdictional stakeholders that should be engaged include producers, community and indigenous groups, local NGOs and civil society, local government, funding partners, and supply chain companies, among others.

C. Actions supported by a company aim to contribute positively to addressing these critical issues.²

i. Company actions should be consistent with and contribute directly to locally agreed landscape or jurisdictional action plans. Where these do not yet exist, actions should be based on consultation with local stakeholders to ensure the actions address priority issues and contribute to prioritised outcomes.³

ii. A company defines how its issue-focused actions or support are expected to address the root causes of one or more critical issues, and the intended contribution of those actions to prioritised, landscape-wide performance outcomes. To avoid duplication and strengthen alignment, companies can adopt the theory of change or results logic of landscape or jurisdictional initiatives in which they participate, where these exist.

iii. In addition to issue-focused actions, companies should also consider supporting process and governance aspects that help to embed landscape or jurisdictional initiatives, such as co-developing action plans or building collective monitoring frameworks.

¹. The assessment is not specific to a company and can be undertaken by any stakeholder or landscape initiative. Ideally a single assessment informs the collective actions of multiple companies engaged in a landscape or jurisdiction.

². The Practical Guide for Company Landscape Scale Action is a useful resource for this purpose as it provides a menu of potential actions companies can take.

³. Consulting with local stakeholders enables companies to take account of knowledge of the local context to ensure the relevance of their actions. Consultation also helps to ensure that actions supported by a company are not likely to have unintended negative impacts on other critical issues in the landscape or jurisdiction.
Maximising Impact
Companies focus on actions that have the greatest opportunity to effect significant sustainability improvements.

A. The scale of all sustainability investments supported by a company across its sourcing regions aims to be at least commensurate with the total volumes it sources.

i. A company determines its global sourcing footprint per commodity and the implications this has for the scale of its actions and investments (financial and in-kind contributions).

B. Companies focus on actions that have the greatest opportunity to effect significant sustainability improvements.

i. An assessment of the enabling context in prioritised landscapes determines who is doing what, where are the critical risks and levers of change, and what actions are most needed.¹

ii. Companies seek to align their actions and support with activities of other companies and stakeholders in the landscape or jurisdiction, ideally through a collective action plan that includes performance goals and time-bound targets against which progress is measured.

C. Companies embed actions or results within landscape or jurisdictional initiatives that engage local or sub-national government, to strengthen resilience and durability of outcomes.

i. Where these initiatives or collaborative structures do not yet exist, companies should work collectively with other stakeholders to encourage their development.

TOWARDS SYSTEMIC LANDSCAPE INVESTMENTS

Determining the relationship between volumes sourced and scale of actions or investment is subjective but, ideally, companies sourcing a commodity can align on what constitutes a proportionate investment. Company transparency on sourcing volumes and investments made will help to establish norms against which to compare scale of investment.

Sustainability investments in landscapes and jurisdictions can complement actions, financing, or preferential sourcing that the company is implementing through its direct supply chain. Practically, companies will ramp up landscape investments over time. A company has the flexibility to determine where to invest and can choose to focus its resources in one or a number of landscapes or jurisdictions.

As companies are beginning to invest and generate results, transparency in communicating these is key, specifically that any reports or claims about inputs, outputs or results should be made in relation to the overall scope of the supply base. (See also Principle 4)

¹ The context assessment can be carried out collectively under the auspices of a landscape or jurisdictional initiative. Where relevant, insight gained from the jurisdictional prioritisation exercise can be used to inform this context assessment. For further guidance on this, see Proforest Info Note ‘Engaging with landscape initiatives’ (2020)
3. Measuring Progress
Results of actions and performance on critical issues are monitored

**A. Companies work with landscape or jurisdictional stakeholders to develop a collective monitoring framework.**

i. The monitoring framework defines metrics and identifies relevant, high quality data sources for measuring performance against specified targets, as well as defining the structures needed to support both measurement and data management.

ii. Metrics are designed to be consistent with the needs of the jurisdiction, feasible to measure (i.e., relevant, high quality data sources exist), and appropriate to monitor success of the actions taken and to measure performance improvement.

**B. Companies monitor the results of their actions and support implementation of the collective monitoring framework.**

i. Companies monitor the immediate outputs and short-term outcomes resulting from their actions and support coordinated monitoring and data collection on landscape or jurisdiction-wide performance (financially or in-kind).

ii. Companies aim to share aggregated and anonymised data sets and data layers with the landscape or jurisdictional initiative, where this adds value to the collective monitoring. Any data sharing should follow good data governance practices including data use agreements and respecting data privacy and confidentiality.

**COLLECTIVE MONITORING FRAMEWORKS**

Where a collective monitoring framework is already in place, a company can choose to support implementation of that framework. Monitoring frameworks should build off the collective action plan and existing change logic and are ideally developed as a collective undertaking of the landscape partnership or jurisdictional initiative. **LandScale** is an example of a collective monitoring framework that can be adopted by and tailored to the needs of any landscape or jurisdiction. Where possible, stakeholders should also seek consistency between landscape and jurisdictional initiatives on the metrics measured, referencing international frameworks such as **LandScale** and **SourceUp**.
Communicating Results

Claims and communications are truthful and proportionate

A. Companies prioritise data quality and transparency so that stakeholders can trust the integrity of data and information about company actions and jurisdictional performance.

i. Companies regularly make results publicly available about progress on their actions and provide evidence to substantiate the results that is sufficient for stakeholders to interrogate the veracity of those results.  

ii. Companies support landscape or jurisdictional initiatives to make timely data on performance outcomes from the collective monitoring framework publicly available.

B. Company claims of contribution to landscape or jurisdictional sustainability are relevant, proportionate to their actions, and presented in the context of overall landscape and supply chain progress.

i. Companies make information available about how their actions or support are intended to contribute to landscape or jurisdictional initiatives or to prioritised performance outcomes, drawing on their results logic or theory of change.  

ii. Companies link actions to one or more specific performance outcomes only if the actions contributed to those performance outcomes, are timely (leading to improvements in a timely manner), and are at a scale to meaningfully impact performance.

iii. The portion of the sustainability performance outcomes that a company can claim is commensurate with the scale of their actions relative to other actions or enabling conditions in the landscape or jurisdiction.  

iv. Companies recognise in their communications that performance outcomes are being achieved through collective efforts in the landscape or jurisdiction, including giving visibility to the stakeholders that are implementing the actions on the ground, e.g., using statements such as ‘Through working with others, we are collectively achieving these results.’  

v. Companies put claims and communications about contributions into context by including information about relative progress (e.g., timeframe, scale, previous performance, confidence levels, etc.)

C. Companies should generally avoid making attribution claims (e.g., we are responsible for this performance outcome), as this overlooks the actions or influence of others in achieving the performance outcomes.

i. Where a company plans to make attribution claims, they need to be able to show a direct cause and effect relationship between their actions and the specific results achieved.

---

5. See also Accountability Framework initiative (AFI) Core Principle 12.3 and Operational Guidance on Reporting, Disclosure and Claims (Sec 4.1.2)
6. See also AFI Operational Guidance on Reporting, Disclosure and Claims (Sec 4.1.1 and Sec 4.2.2)
7. Companies can make contribution claims about multiple performance outcomes where the action is relevant to those outcomes.
8. This is a subjective exercise, but the aim should be to avoid that a company’s claims are disproportionate to its actions. Ideally, landscape or jurisdictional stakeholders assess shared progress and agree the relative contribution of different actions towards that progress.
9. Attribution is generally only feasible when determining links between actions and immediate outputs or short-term outcomes, as there are otherwise almost always multiple causes and contributors to longer-term outcomes. See also AFI Operational Guidance on Reporting, Disclosure and Claims (Sec 4.1.1, element 5)
ISEAL SUPPORTS AMBITIOUS SUSTAINABILITY SYSTEMS AND THEIR PARTNERS TO TACKLE THE WORLD’S MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES. WITH OUR GROWING GLOBAL NETWORK AND OUR FOCUS ON CREDIBLE PRACTICES, WE DRIVE IMPACT AND MAKE MARKETS A FORCE FOR GOOD.

From the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis to human rights and persistent poverty, the world needs scalable and effective solutions. Our convening power and thought leadership accelerate positive change on these critical challenges, so companies and governments can meet their sustainability commitments and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We work by:

- defining credible practice for sustainability systems based on emerging global consensus
- convening forums for collaboration, sharing of experience and collective action
- delivering expertise, advice and training
- facilitating and promoting innovation to strengthen sustainability systems.

Together, we can deliver real and lasting change for the benefit of people and planet. Join us.

IMAGES

Page 2: Landscape auditing by drone © ISEAL Alliance
Page 3: Banana plantation, Montenegro, Colombia © Toniflap/Shutterstock
Page 4: Forest, Columbia © ISEAL Alliance