

# Four Dimensional Systemic Change

Alignment and connectivity in reducing deforestation

A framework to organize and understand systemic change



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**Four dimensional systemic change:  
Alignment and connectivity in reducing deforestation  
A framework to organize and understand systemic change**

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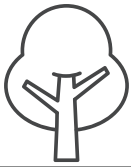
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# Executive Summary

Reducing deforestation in commodities production has been the focus of numerous initiatives and approaches for decades. Yet, year on year, net forest loss continues. This report proposes a four-dimensional solution.

Addressing commodity-driven deforestation is hugely complex. Numerous actors, programs and standards operate at international, national and sub-national levels, and within and across geographical scales, often in disconnected ways. What is needed is a framework, a typology, to organize and understand these myriad actions.

Through decades of experience, the UNDP has developed a deep understanding of how achieving system-level change requires these diverse stakeholders to align, collaborate, and collectively learn, innovate, and act in a changing environment. With greater alignment, the impact of practitioner efforts at all levels of the system can be amplified and scaled. The system can be changed, rather than treating the symptoms of our current problems.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration for systemic change provides a framework for future progress in commodities. This report examines levers that offer opportunities for systemic transformation - through cooperation, coordination and integration of actors within and across different levels - in four key dimensions.

Systemic change involves working with complexity to help people see the whole system, to recognise their agency within it and the opportunities to contribute to positive change through collaborative and innovative processes. The recommendations in this report identify preconditions and levers to initiate those processes. Ultimately, systems-level transformation will also require structural changes and broader shifts in mindsets and practice to become a reality. This report therefore represents one element of an ongoing dialogue that the UDP and its partners are committed to continue with all stakeholders in the sustainable commodities system.



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Systemic change is complex, emergent, and unpredictable. The range of potential actions can seem overwhelming. This report presents a framework with four dimensions (Figure 1) which classify the effective actions:

**1: INCREASING COHESION BETWEEN LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE AND ACTION**

– The vertical axis

**2: STRENGTHENING HORIZONTAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN ACTORS**

– The horizontal component

**3: INCREASING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY FOR SYNERGISTIC ALIGNMENT**

– The “fuel” for the system

**4: INTEGRATING AND DIVERSIFYING FLOWS OF RESOURCES AND INCENTIVES**

– Reducing the “friction” in the system, by better alignment and action towards systemic solutions.

4 main axes of action are presented, with 13 individual recommendations.

## DIMENSION 1.

### INCREASING COHESION BETWEEN LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE AND ACTION

**THE CHALLENGE:** Without national, regional and international coordination, success in some places leads to deforestation in others, and priority regions for interventions can get overlooked. These challenges are heightened by lack of knowledge exchange, and the divergent or conflicting outcomes that result from varying standards and targets.

**HOW ALIGNMENT CAN HELP:** Building stronger vertical connections between subnational approaches and national platforms and policies, and, in turn, with international standards or climate and commodity-related initiatives can help to build trust and engagement around a shared vision, unblocking flows of resources and best-practice.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Establish cascading platforms that connect separate levels of governance.
- Make jurisdictional approaches a key thematic area in National Platforms.
- Create conditions for bottom-up transfers of innovation from sub-national initiatives.

## DIMENSION 2.

### STRENGTHENING HORIZONTAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN ACTORS

**THE CHALLENGE:** Initiatives operating at a similar political or geographic level utilise different methodologies, with varied characteristics and outcomes. Dialogue is limited because of competition between stakeholders; few connections between actors at national and sub-national level, and definitional tensions between actors.

**HOW ALIGNMENT CAN HELP:** Greater cooperation, partnership and exchange between actors at similar levels can lower the barriers to entry for other organisations like the private sector to contribute to greening commodities production. Dialogue and shared definitions of processes and outcomes can help success to spread more quickly.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Foster platforms and incentives for horizontal cooperation and exchange.
- Ensure marginal stakeholder groups are fully able to participate in processes.
- Instigate cross-sectoral dialogue to articulate definitions of success.

### DIMENSION 3.

## INCREASING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY FOR SYNERGISTIC ALIGNMENT

**THE CHALLENGE:** Changes in jurisdictional or national government can reverse political agreements and action plans instantaneously. Where commitment exists, national and sub-national governments often lack the internal capacity to create an enabling environment for change.

**HOW ALIGNMENT CAN HELP:** New actions that support investment in capacity at all levels, or models for collaboration which help to insulate progress and commitments from political disruption, can increase the resilience of programmes and ensure longer lasting change. Capacity to facilitate meaningful stakeholder exchanges while building understanding of system change and creating buy-in and trust is vital.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create agreed and shared methods of capacity building and support.
- Build a bank of facilitators and stakeholders to support systemic dialogue.
- Create independent national and sub-national platforms with diverse ownership.

### DIMENSION 4.

## INTEGRATING AND DIVERSIFYING FLOWS OF RESOURCES AND INCENTIVES

**THE CHALLENGE:** Despite flows of funding into the sector, many benefits are still not reaching farmers and practitioners on the ground enough to turn the tide. A lack of reporting infrastructure or evidence of impact, especially in early-stage initiatives, compounds this limited access to resources.

**HOW ALIGNMENT CAN HELP:** Connected reporting systems and public-private partnerships can unblock, redistribute or create entirely new flows of resources. As promising initiatives progress, appetite for green development models can be grown by sharing success stories and best practice.

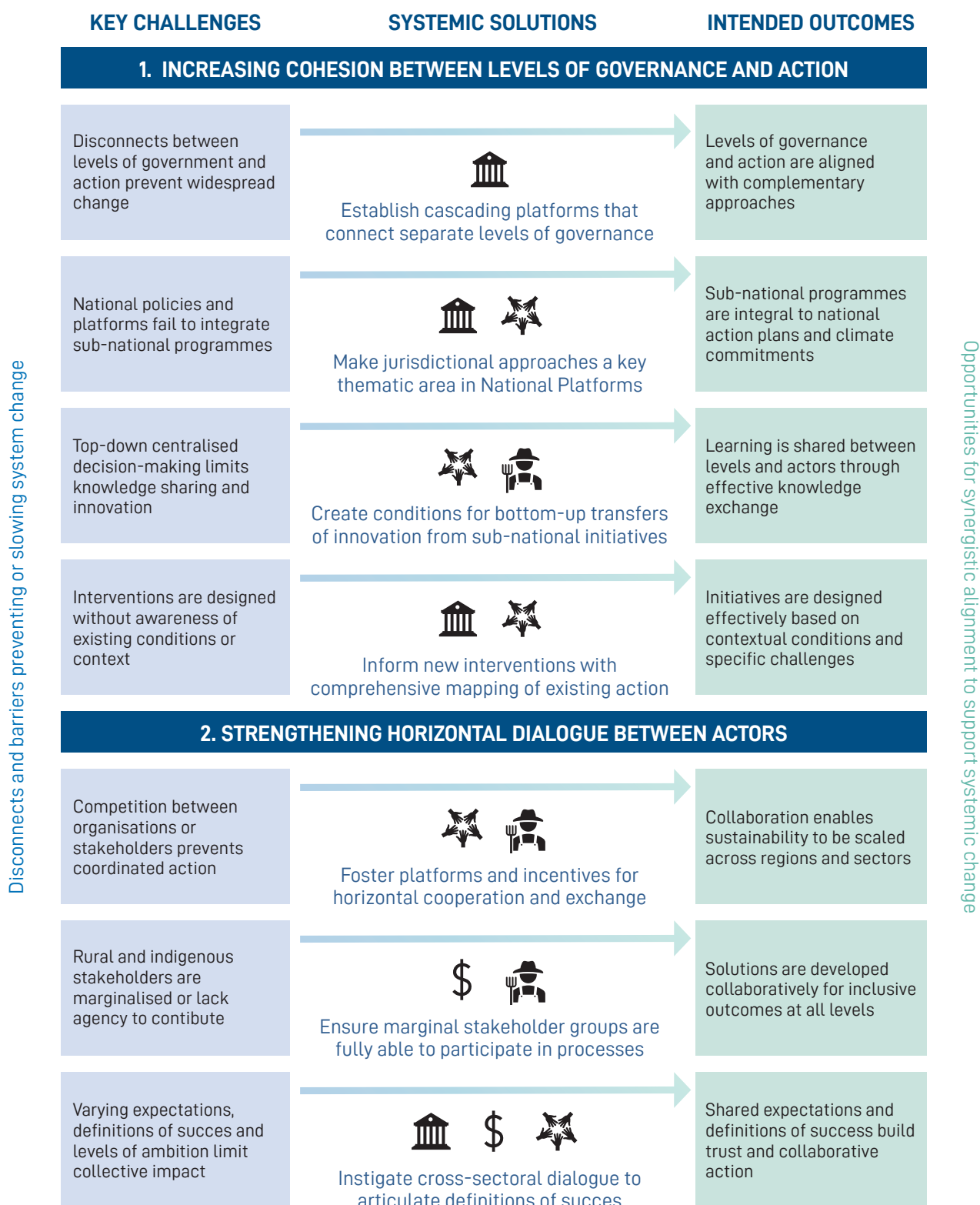
#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop criteria and systems to distribute incentives and resources to ground level.
- Capture and communicate tangible success stories and best practices.
- Develop and implement more effective public-private partnerships.



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**Figure 1:** In the four thematic areas of this report, barriers to existing ambitions for sustainable production can be addressed by better alignment and action towards systemic solutions. 4 main axes of action are presented, with 13 individual recommendations.

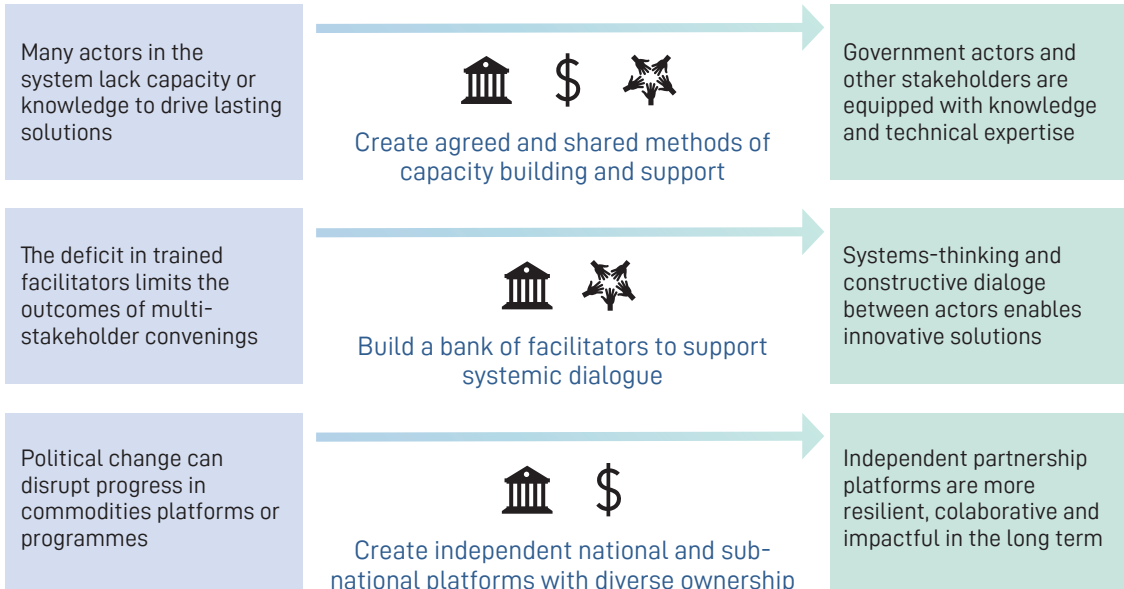


**KEY CHALLENGES**

**SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS**

**INTENDED OUTCOMES**

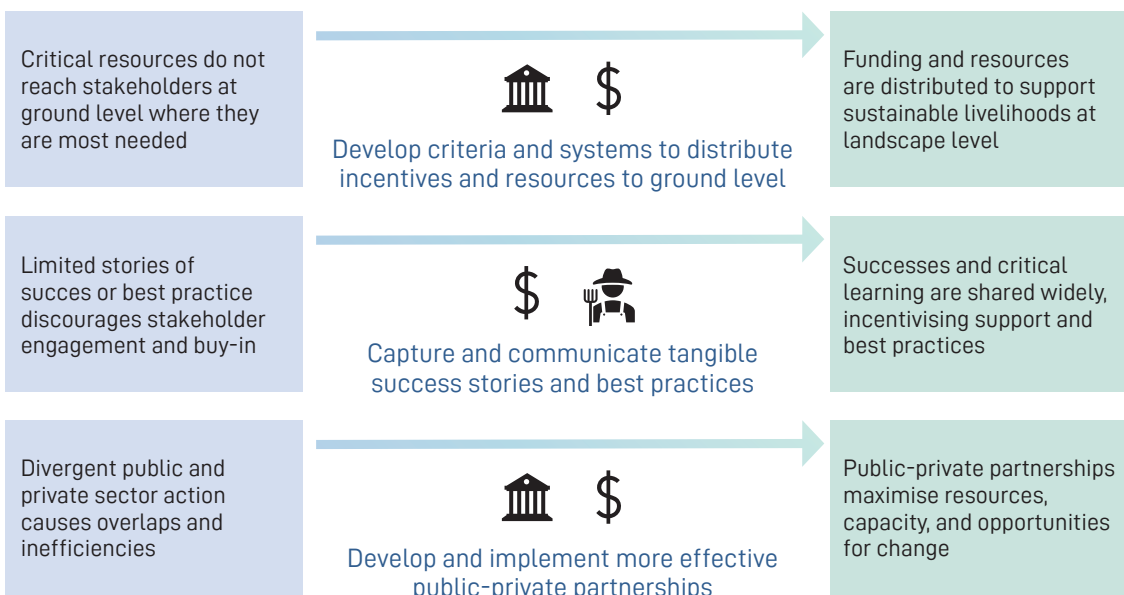
**3. INCREASING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY FOR SYNERGISTIC ALIGNMENT**



Disconnects and barriers preventing or slowing system change

Opportunities for synergistic alignment to support systemic change

**4. INTEGRATING AND DIVERSIFYING FLOWS OF RESOURCES AND INCENTIVES**





The structure of this report

For each of the four dimensions we will examine:

## 1. KEY AMBITIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE COMMODITY SYSTEM



Increasing the sustainability of commodities depends on achieving **high level ambitions for the commodities system**.

## 2. CHALLENGES TO KEY AMBITIONS



Actors promoting sustainable commodities face a variety of **challenges in achieving their ambitions** because of existing disconnects.

## 3. HOW ALIGNMENT CAN HELP



Greater **alignment presents an opportunity to address these challenges** and unblock barriers.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE



To realise this alignment, and enable systems-level change, actors in the commodities **system can undertake specific recommendations**.

# Foreword



## ANDREW BOVARNICK

UNDP's Global Head of Food and Agricultural Commodity Systems Practice and Lead Natural Resource Economist

Sustaining the world's remaining forests and their biodiversity has been a priority for environmental policy and action for decades. Limiting deforestation is vital to meeting the Paris Agreement (Article 5) and is a central component of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of many governments. Success also is critical for realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDGs 13 and 15 covering life on land and climate change. Yet despite the diverse initiatives committed to reducing deforestation driven by commodity production, net global tree cover loss has continued year on year<sup>1</sup>. In 2018 alone, 12 million hectares of tree cover were lost from the tropics of which 3.6 million hectares were primary forest<sup>2</sup>.

At the same time, the commodities that drive deforestation – predominantly soy, beef, palm oil, timber, coffee and cacao – are not only critical to global food supply, but are major components of economic development in tropical countries, providing a route out of poverty for millions of poor farmers and families. These forests are also central to the cultures and livelihoods of thousands of indigenous peoples and smallholder farmers. Change cannot be achieved without the buy-in, benefit and participation of these stakeholders.

To date, neither market-driven certification and supply-chain initiatives nor regulatory 'command and control' policies have delivered widespread commodity sustainability. Efforts to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) in developing countries have achieved promising results in places<sup>3</sup>, but have not yet fulfilled their promise of systemic transformation<sup>4</sup>.

Action to prevent commodity-driven deforestation occurs at multiple levels and is led by a variety of political, private and civil-society organisations. <sup>5</sup>With myriad actors, programmes and standards operating at different levels and geographical scales, isolated players may lack authority to undertake legal or policy reforms. Competing programmes may overlap, contradict or undermine one another<sup>6</sup>. Siloed initiatives may struggle to access best practices or mobilize capacity, expertise or political support.

This lack of alignment means that projects at each 'level' of the commodity system are not as effective, efficient, and impactful as they could be. Success is largely confined to specific silos or programmes rather than effecting change at a systemic level.

<sup>1</sup> NYDF Assessment Partners. 2019. Protecting and Restoring Forests: A Story of Large Commitments yet Limited Progress. New York Declaration on Forests Five-Year Assessment Report. Climate Focus. Accessible at [forestdeclaration.org](https://forestdeclaration.org).

<sup>2</sup> Global Forest Watch Data 2019

<sup>3</sup> Roopsind, A., Sohngen, B. and Brandt, J., 2019. Evidence that a national REDD+ program reduces tree cover loss and carbon emissions in a high forest cover, low deforestation country. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

<sup>4</sup> Sills, E.O. et al., 2014. REDD+ on the ground: A case book of subnational initiatives across the globe. Cifor.

<sup>5</sup> Ostrom, E. 2010. Polycentric systems for coping with collective action and global environmental change. *Global environmental change*, 20(4), 550-557.

<sup>6</sup> Pacheco, P., Schoneveld, G., Dermawan, A., Komarudin, H. and Djama, M., 2018. Governing sustainable palm oil supply: Disconnects, complementarities, and antagonisms between state regulations and private standards. *Regulation & Governance*.



## About this report

**Levels of action** refers to international, national, jurisdictional, and landscape levels where different geographical scales of decision-making or political authority apply. (fuller definitions can be found in Appendix A).

**Systemic change** implies fundamental and transformative change across the entire commodities system – the complex network of actors and stakeholders involved in the production, distribution and consumption of commodities, or in mobilising resources to enable this.

This report, produced by the UNDP in association with GIZ, outlines key challenges and barriers faced by actors seeking to reduce deforestation driven by commodity production. It seeks to identify where greater alignment could amplify the impact of individual efforts, remove obstacles and overlaps, and improve outcomes for sustainable commodities production.

At the core of this research is a deep experience-based understanding that alignment – through cooperation, coordination and, at times, integration of actors within and across different 'levels' of action – is critical to achieving systems change.

This report begins by setting out why a system with multiple levels of governance is important in the pursuit of sustainable commodity production. It then explores four thematic areas or axes in which addressing connectivity gaps in practice can contribute to reducing deforestation. These are:

- I. Increasing cohesion between levels of governance and action
- II. Strengthening horizontal dialogue between actors at the same level
- III. Increasing government capacity for synergistic alignment
- IV. Integrating and diversifying flows of resource and incentives

**Within each thematic area, the report:**

- outlines how disconnects prevent current approaches from achieving sustainability at scale
- examines opportunities for greater alignment
- offers recommendations for systemic change based upon emerging best practices

The recommendations presented in this report should be understood as part of a broader set of emerging actions that will create true momentum towards systemic change. The conclusion proposes next steps that various actors can pursue to support these recommendations.

Ultimately, this publication seeks to help changemakers better link their work with the efforts of others, to align around a shared goal of advancing systemic change in commodities production.

The recommendations presented throughout the report target four broadly defined groups of actors and stakeholders within the commodities system:



National or local governments



Private sector companies or investors



NGOs or development agencies



Commodity producers and cooperatives



## Benefits of greater alignment in sustainable commodities

# What does better alignment between levels of action look like?

## Different levels of action have different strengths.

Particular levels of intervention are best suited to addressing certain challenges or needs to prevent commodity-driven deforestation (see Appendix A). This rich variety and relative autonomy of stakeholders has clear benefits and must be fostered. These include:

**Allowing flexibility for context-specific responses:** Diverse approaches to address deforestation create models and solutions tailored to the context of a particular sector, region, or set of stakeholders.

**Providing space for innovation:** Diverse combinations of actors boost innovation and bring deep, contextual expertise.

**Insulating positive progress for continuity:** A range of agreements at different levels of political decision-making protect sustainability progress from loss of support or resources.

**Building and scaling momentum:** Achievements occurring at smaller scales, including local implementation of national policies, can be shared and scaled at larger levels after demonstrating success.

## Alignment can be created between these levels.

**Alignment** is created by practices of cooperation, coordination, and integration. These interactions between actors and levels within a complex system can be characterised broadly as **multi-stakeholder collaboration**.



**Cooperation:** deliberate relations of collaboration between otherwise autonomous units



**Coordination:** autonomous units make adjustments to their policies to reduce contradictions, accommodate for the pursuit of mutual benefits, and improve outcomes



**Integration:** boundaries are crossed to give place to joint policymaking to address crosscutting issues.

## Greater alignment can create synergistic outcomes.

Three broad categories – vertical, horizontal, and synergistic\* – describe the nature of alignment within and between levels of action. **Synergistic alignment**, created by building a shared vision around common objectives to which actors at all levels can relate, **is a key requirement for systems level change**.

**Vertical alignment** refers to linkages and contributions between international, national and subnational standards, policies, processes and interventions.

**Horizontal alignment** refers to action at a particular political or geographical level that has succeeded in creating strong connections within its own jurisdiction between various actors and stakeholder groups.

**Synergistic alignment** occurs when both horizontal and vertical linkages exist within and beyond a given jurisdiction, enabling sub-national actors to align on shared goals, secure support and combine knowledge, capacity, and efforts.

\*The terminology and definitions of alignment presented here are adapted from the examination of subnational climate initiatives conducted by the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies: Hsu, A., Weinfurter, A.J. and Xu, K., 2017. Aligning subnational climate actions for the new post-Paris climate regime. *Climatic Change*, 142(3-4), pp.419-432.

**DIMENSION I.**  
Increasing cohesion  
between levels of  
governance and action

## DIMENSION I.

### Increasing cohesion between levels of governance and action

There are opportunities to forge connections between jurisdictional or landscape approaches and key national and international climate and commodity-related initiatives. Greater cohesion could help address existing contradictions and overlaps, building trust and engagement around a shared vision to unblock flows of resources between levels and promote systemic rather than siloed change. This is the vertical axis.

#### Ambitions:

1. Achieving sustainability beyond islands of good practice
2. Increasing information flows and engagement between levels and stakeholders
3. Measuring and communicating sub-national efforts and impacts

### AMBITION: Achieving sustainability beyond islands of good practice

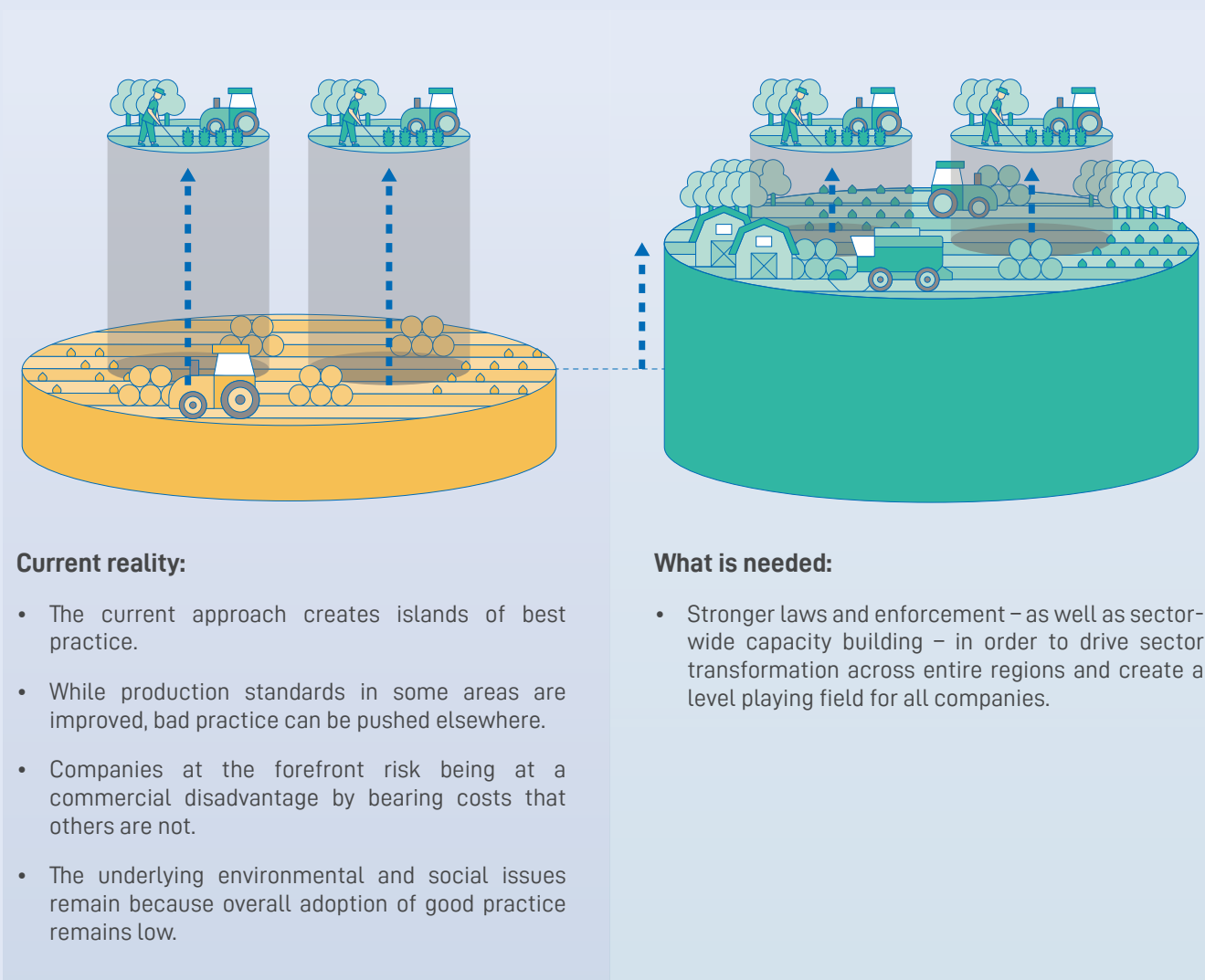
#### What challenges exist?

Preventing forest loss within a bounded territory can create an isolated 'island' of good practice but in doing so relocate deforestation and primary forest clearance elsewhere<sup>7</sup>. <sup>8</sup>This leakage has been a critique of forms of 'fortress' conservation, and creates an obstacle to net reduction of deforestation at regional, national, and global levels. Increasingly, it is also a criticism of jurisdictional approaches. In some cases, the jurisdictions that receive attention and funding are not necessarily priority forest frontiers, such as those with high conservation value forest or 'hotspots' of rapid deforestation, and this misalignment can further contribute to leakage. Some jurisdictions may show illusory success when their deforestation rates slow from historically high levels. Elsewhere, extensive cultivation can make forests more vulnerable to cumulative or accelerated deforestation. Isolated forest frontiers often lack the institutional capacity for successful sustainable development or land-use management and so landscape and jurisdictional programmes will struggle to succeed.

<sup>7</sup> Lambin, E.F. and Meyfroidt, P., 2011. Global land use change, economic globalization, and the looming land scarcity. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(9), pp.3465-3472.

<sup>8</sup> Pendrill, F., Persson, U.M., Godar, J. and Kastner, T., 2019. Deforestation displaced: trade in forest-risk commodities and the prospects for a global forest transition. *Environmental Research Letters*.

**Figure 2:** Current approaches, when not aligned and coordinated, risk creating isolated islands of best practice. If production standards in one spot – whether a producing area, a whole jurisdiction or even a nation - are improved without complementary efforts to raise standards more widely, bad practice can be pushed elsewhere.



**Source:** ProForest (2016) "Implementing responsible sourcing - using landscape or jurisdictional initiatives"



### Insight 1: Stakeholder integration in the Indonesia palm oil platform FoKSBI

Initiated by the UNDP, the FoKSBI National Commodities Platform for sustainable palm oil production in Indonesia seeks to create synergy across all levels and was instigated through three pilot jurisdictional programmes in Riau, North Sumatra and West Kalimantan. Interaction between the national government and the jurisdictional programmes is led by a steering committee tied to relevant government ministries.

Multi-stakeholder exchanges across levels are a central component of the platform. Provincial and district level meetings are attended by national government representatives, smallholder associations, district governments and private sector supply chain buyers. To coordinate private sector, buy-in and ensure resources and capacity flow to ground level, FoKSBI coordinated partnerships with international NGOs including CI, and WWF, for each of the pilot jurisdictions.



### How alignment can help

For jurisdictional programmes, stronger links with national governments and across international networks can build shared understanding of existing actions and reveal gaps. National-level coordination can include better reporting on where stronger sub-national interventions are most needed. This enables jurisdictional models of good practices to be transferred more readily to priority regions and can help prevent leakage between sub-national jurisdictions even where there is a lack of capacity or interest for action.

National policy and international support can be leveraged to limit forest loss from leakage and prevent a 'two-tiered' market. Jurisdictional interventions can be designed differently for isolated forest areas, for example with Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) to promote forest conservation or sustainable alternatives to high-input intensification. A shared recognition of the varying indicators of sub-national success could still allow for healthy competition between jurisdictions, while enabling national governments to close gaps that remain.

## AMBITION: Increasing information flows and engagement between levels and stakeholders

### Insight 2: Palm Oil Certification in Indonesia

Tensions can emerge when multiple standards and certifications are promoted in a given area or by different levels of actors. For example, proposed mandatory ISPO compliance for smallholders could affect engagement with jurisdictional programmes promoting RSPO certification, given the domestic sentiment that "The definition of a 'good palm oil company' in Indonesia is one that complies 100% with Indonesian regulation."



### What challenges exist?

Disconnects between different levels of action and intervention can result in divergent priorities and strategies. These lead to overlaps, inconsistency or conflicts between international targets, national level policies, and the objectives or practices of sub-national or supply chain programmes<sup>9</sup>. International coalitions directly involved in sub-national action may not interact with national policy processes, while practitioners implementing sustainability programmes often only engage with one or a few national ministries, resulting in limited government support. International sustainability standards and national regulations are not always aligned, creating compliance challenges for rural producers. Public sector programmes may prioritise national standards and legal compliance, while private-sector initiatives are guided by the international credentials sought by major international purchasers.

<sup>9</sup> Pacheco, P., Schoneveld, G., Dermawan, A., Komarudin, H. and Djama, M., 2018. Governing sustainable palm oil supply: Disconnects, complementarities, and antagonisms between state regulations and private standards. Regulation & Governance.

### Insight 3: Improving information sharing and coordination between levels in Peru

The UNDP is developing a partnership model for commodity production landscapes in the Amazon. Created within the framework of existing national policies for development and conservation in Peru, the model channels national and international development resources to priority landscapes. Farmers and local government are held accountable through 'Conservation and Development Agreements', and inclusion and best practices are to be monitored via a digital tool/platform. Based on a successful pilot programme, the partnership model brings together actors from all levels to engage with production at the landscape level. This includes national and regional government, development agencies and NGOs, and buyers, retailers and service providers.



### How alignment can help

Greater alignment can ensure that the proliferation and divergence of standards do not create additional costs and burdens for stakeholders. National and international standards can be accepted as different but complementary stages in a spectrum.

International, sub-national and other actors can influence national policies by participating in multi-stakeholder consultations; bearing in mind that some of the strongest innovations in policy and engagement processes are often informed by bottom-up insights from rural and indigenous populations. In some cases, effective private sector and trans-national standards have been adopted by national governments, such as the incorporation of Forest Stewardship Council standards in Bolivia's national forest code. Despite the comparatively slower pace of consensus building at national scales, often the most effective mechanism for establishing awareness and stakeholder support for sub-national action is by connecting to national government apparatus.

<sup>10</sup> Espinoza, O. and Dockry, M.J., 2014. Forest certification in Bolivia: A status report and analysis of stakeholder perspectives. *Forest Products Journal*, 64(3), pp.80-89.

<sup>11</sup> Hamilton, M. and Lubell, M., 2018. Collaborative governance of climate change adaptation across spatial and institutional scales. *Policy Studies Journal*, 46(2), pp.222-247.

## AMBITION: Measuring and communicating sub-national efforts and impacts

### What challenges exist?

Without alignment of standards and practices across regions and levels of action, measuring the impact and additionality of programmes poses a critical challenge. This hinders informed decisions about which approaches should be replicated and scaled, and how resources should be distributed.

A variety of digital tools and assessment methodologies have emerged to support the monitoring, reporting, and impact evaluation of programmes at landscape level. For example, Conservation International's comprehensive Landscape Assessment Framework<sup>12</sup> integrates social, economic and environmental criteria. This has been piloted in several countries including Liberia and Indonesia in collaboration with the Good Growth Partnership.<sup>13</sup>

Although such measurement tools and frameworks are increasingly used by corporate supply chain actors and NGOs, there is significantly less integration of measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) systems at national and sub-national levels.<sup>14</sup> This results in inadequate reporting of sub-national impacts to inform national and international decision-making.

### How alignment can help

Data can be harnessed to map the effectiveness and additionality of approaches, and to share critical insights across levels of governance. Establishing widespread MRV practices can support governments' capacity to calculate their NDCs accurately. Methods such as a High Carbon Stock (HCS) approach or High Conservation Value (HCV) designation could be aligned with national and sub-national land use planning. Establishing widely agreed counterfactuals will also be critical.

#### Insight 4: A converging picture in Paraguay and Peru

Informed by international standards such as those promoted by the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, both Paraguay and Peru are seeking to reduce livestock-driven deforestation by developing national level strategies, cultivating private sector consensus, and increasing access to sustainable finance. In 2019 the Paraguayan government signed a 5-year partnership agreement with the World Resources Institute to create a national 'Forest Atlas', increasing transparency around forest and land use management. Establishing national systems for monitoring forest loss reinforces government accountability for meeting international expectations. With commitments and practices strengthened, these national governments can better align their efforts to maximise regional impact, supported by partnerships with international development agencies and NGOs, REDD+ results-based payments, and initiatives like the Bonn Challenge.



<sup>12</sup> <https://www.conservation.org/projects/landscape-assessment-framework>

<sup>13</sup> Working across production, financing and demand, the Good Growth Partnership convenes a wide range of stakeholders and initiatives to reduce deforestation and enable sustainable development in three global commodity supply chains: soy, beef and palm oil. Launched at the United Nations New York headquarters in 2017, the Partnership is funded by the Global Environment Facility, led by the United Nations Development Programme and implemented in collaboration with Conservation International, the International Finance Corporation, UN Environment and World Wildlife Fund. See here: <http://goodgrowthpartnership.com/about/>

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

### 1. Establish cascading platforms that connect separate levels of governance

To maximise compatibility between national and sub-national activities, multi-stakeholder platforms at each level could participate in platforms at other levels. Landscape or jurisdictional initiatives should seek to participate in multiple national-level convenings, that may be, for example, commodity-specific or development-focused. In Indonesia, this multi-layered convening has been piloted in three districts that interact directly with the national FoKSBI platform and could be extended to other districts and initiatives. This can increase information flows between levels of action.

### 2. Make jurisdictional approaches a key thematic area in National Platforms

Jurisdictional and landscape programmes can be integrated as a key thematic pillar of National Commodity Platforms or their equivalents. Collaborative working groups involving stakeholder representatives could address the challenges faced by and innovations stemming from sub-national initiatives to inform national policy, such as identifying priority regions or creating clearer pathways for incentives and investment to reach constituents or areas most in need, helping to avoid progress being limited only to islands of good practice.

### 3. Create conditions for bottom-up transfers of innovation from sub-national initiatives.

Landscape and jurisdictional approaches hold tremendous potential to serve as laboratories for innovative practices in sustainable production and forest protection, with many pilot projects subsequently scaled. However, not all good practices are as visible. Understanding the preconditions, processes and key characteristics of initiatives recognised as sources of good practice will enable more consistent identification of the best sub-national innovations and support the measurement and communication of subnational impacts and practices.



### 4. Inform new interventions with comprehensive mapping of existing action

Initial project scoping should involve comprehensive mapping of relevant existing programmes and policies, along with the stakeholder groups who will be impacted by interventions, to ensure they are engaged. Such mapping exercises undertaken in jurisdictional approaches in Indonesia and Brazil have been cited as enabling private sector participation and eliminating wastage and overlap. This too can increase the spread of sustainability beyond limited areas and increase awareness of subnational action.



<sup>14</sup> Stickler et al. 2018. The State of Jurisdictional Sustainability. San Francisco, USA: Earth Innovation Institute/Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry Research/Boulder, USA: Governors' Climate & Forests Task Force Secretariat

**DIMENSION II.**  
Strengthening  
horizontal dialogue  
between stakeholders

## DIMENSION II.

### Strengthening horizontal dialogue between stakeholders

Greater coordination and partnership between sustainable commodities actors at similar levels or in equivalent roles can lower the barriers to entry for other organisations to contribute to greening commodities production, spur deeper knowledge exchange, and clarify the parameters of success, while still leaving room for innovation and variety. This is the horizontal component.

#### **Ambitions:**

1. Coalescing around clear definitions for sub-national initiatives and commitments
2. Balancing competition and pre-competitive engagement
3. Creating shared and realistic definitions of success

### AMBITION: Coalescing around clear definitions for sub-national initiatives and commitments

#### **What challenges exist?**

The range of sub-national approaches labelled 'jurisdictional' or 'landscape' can vary widely in their methodology, priorities and objectives, leading to proliferation fatigue, additional costs, misunderstandings about good or bad practice, and barriers for private sector organisations and financial institutions seeking to support or invest in sustainable commodities.

A number of jurisdictional programmes seek to align sub-national territories with sustainable sourcing agreements, to ensure private sector engagement. Still, the proliferation of standards and sub-national methods may trip up stakeholders and should be balanced against the benefits of contextual flexibility.<sup>15-16</sup>

A number of jurisdictional programmes seek to align sub-national territories with sustainable sourcing agreements, to ensure private sector engagement. Still, the proliferation of standards and sub-national methods may trip up stakeholders and should be balanced against the benefits of contextual flexibility.

The lack of definitional clarity around terms used in commitments and programmes, such as 'deforestation-free', 'zero gross deforestation', or even 'forest', , leads to implementation gaps and erosion of confidence in the effectiveness of commitments. Further, ambitions may vary between actors seeking only to end illegal deforestation and those looking for progress well beyond that.

<sup>15</sup> UNEP. 2019. Signatories of the UN Principles for Responsible Banking. [Accessed here on 20/11/2019].

<sup>16</sup> To be published (2018) 'Enhancing accessibility of information on jurisdictional approaches to reducing deforestation and sustainable development.

<sup>17</sup> Neeff, T. and Linhares-Juvenal, T., 2017. Zero deforestation initiatives and their impacts on commodity supply chains. Rome, FAO. [Accessed here January 15th 2020]

<sup>18</sup> Reid, J.L., Fagan, M.E., Lucas, J., Slaughter, J. and Zahawi, R.A., 2019. The ephemerality of secondary forests in southern Costa Rica. *Conservation Letters*, 12(2), p.e12607.

<sup>19</sup> Garrett, R.D., Levy, S., Carlson, K.M., Gardner, T.A., Godar, J., Clapp, J., Dauvergne, P., Heilmayr, R., de Waroux, Y.L.P., Ayre, B. and Barr, R., 2019. Criteria for effective zero-deforestation commitments. *Global environmental change*, 54, pp.135-147.

### Insight 5: Sustainable District Association Lingkar Temu Kabupaten Lestari (LTKL)

The LTKL is an example of strong horizontal alignment. The association of sustainable districts was founded in 2017 by 8 districts from 6 Indonesian provinces, along with 12 supporting partners including the Association of Indonesian District Governments (APKASI), as a forum for dialogue and information-sharing around the development and implementation of green growth plans. The forum supports the districts in creating development scenarios which balance economic, social, and environmental indicators, and provides a platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration - including engagement with commodity buyers, national and global development partners, and academics.



#### How alignment can help

Several organisations and platforms, including the Global Landscapes Forum, seek to create a stronger shared understanding of the key components of jurisdictional and landscape approaches, including the implications of commitments led by different definitions of success. The stories they tell of innovation and impact can advance awareness of the potential of jurisdictional programmes and their best practices. A clear cataloguing of approaches can incentivise other actors to contribute.



### Insight 6: Transformation of supply and demand for Colombian coffee by the FNC

Often, only the wealthiest farmers and larger landowners are able to afford or access eco-certification. The Colombian Coffee Growers Federation (FNC) overcame this challenge with a national platform connecting networks of regional cooperatives and linking private-sector incentives with national policy (the 2002 Cafés Especiales strategy) and sub-national action. The FNC provides nation-wide extension services, facilitating access to credit, low-cost technologies, and information and knowledge sharing. A traceability system for cooperatives ensures coffee can be traced back to the farmers, enabling certification of smallholders. This approach works best when consumers can directly discern the quality of a certified commodity. For commodities such as palm oil, which are inputs into other supply chains, marketing relies on a sustainability emphasis and the FNC approach would need to be adapted.



## AMBITION: Balancing competition and pre-competitive engagement

### What challenges exist?

Some private sector organisations perceive sustainability and deforestation commitments as restricting economic activity and market competitiveness. Their resistance to change, which reinforces and is reinforced by limited evidence of the business case, impedes private-sector engagement and the sustainable transformation of commodity supply chains. In parallel, numerous practitioners cited competition for funding, or project 'ownership' between NGOs and implementing partners, as a barrier to more formalised partnerships, collective action and information sharing.

Leading organisations are increasingly conceding the need for stronger collaboration to realise systems-level change, reflected in partnerships and coalitions such as the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA) or the Accountability Framework Initiative (AFI).<sup>20</sup> Some sourcing companies are starting to coordinate their interventions at landscape level, to improve the overall quality and value of commodities originating from particular regions.<sup>21</sup>

### How alignment can help

Market leaders must promote and mainstream longer-term strategic and ethical considerations to achieve supply chain transformations which generate demand from buyers and consumers while improving production practices. This may require a clearer pathway for pre-competitive collaboration between commodity buyers and between producers, led by evidence of the business case, to achieve a global shift to sustainable purchasing.

Interaction between actors and stakeholders at the sub-national level is essential to inclusive outcomes. Cooperation rather than competition between local producers or producing regions can improve both livelihoods and sustainable production, yet typically only a small fraction of sub-national government workers or other stakeholder groups ever get the opportunity to interact with practitioners and producers from different regions or parts of the world. Even more so, smallholders, indigenous peoples and other marginalised and rural voices may lack visibility and agency.<sup>22</sup>

To engage stakeholders from the Global South and encourage genuine collaboration between them, greater effort and outreach are needed to ensure marginal stakeholder groups are fully able to participate in processes. Formal processes such as Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) can help to ensure that indigenous groups are fully consulted in advance of decisions which will affect their environment, livelihoods and communities.

## AMBITION: Creating shared and realistic definitions of success

### What challenges exist?

Achieving ambitious expectations of deforestation-free or wall-to-wall certified jurisdictions is challenging, especially when seeking to balance rural economic and social needs with international climate and forest objectives, or uncertainty surrounding actual impact. Fear of failure and reputational damage can make companies reluctant to support or source from jurisdictions with ambitious targets, yet their support is essential.

Some organisations argue that to allow the time needed for jurisdictional innovation to thrive, success should be understood as an incremental process rather than a fixed vision of sustainability. This would require advocacy groups to accept a transition period in which companies continue sourcing from areas where deforestation is occurring, while new commitments take root. Others argue that 'naming and shaming' is essential to hold companies to account.

Underlying these debates is the paradox that sustainable commodity production cannot be intensified and scaled in pristine forest landscapes. Until these tensions are resolved, jurisdictional and landscape approaches may struggle to gain private sector buy-in and support.

<sup>20</sup> See here: <https://www.tropicalforestalliance.org/> and here: <https://accountability-framework.org/>

<sup>21</sup> WWF & ISEAL. 2019. 'Credible assurance at landscape level: a discussion paper on landscape and jurisdictional assurance and claims'

<sup>22</sup> Krings, M., 2020. Climate change NGOs from rich countries dominate online conversation, study shows' Scienmag. [Accessed here January 15th 2020]

### Insight 7: The Accountability Framework Initiative

To support further clarity for the private sector, The Accountability Framework Initiative is a model to address divergence and the lack of transparency in corporate supply chain commitments. The AFI was created as a single-stakeholder platform, to assemble a critical mass to build consensus on principles, definitions and guidelines around which to anchor their activities and engagement.



### How alignment can help

Achieving consensus on 'successful' outcomes and aligning these with pre-existing standards and targets will require ongoing dialogue and repairing of trust between stakeholder groups. Aligning sub-national with national or trans-national action may require reconciling different definitions of success; for example, by clearly defining how to connect supply chain certification systems with socio-economic and conservation criteria for jurisdictional or landscape initiatives, as outlined by ISEAL and WWF.<sup>23</sup> As a start, both advocacy NGOs and private sector organisations must recognise the potential of sub-national approaches as an important component of systemic change, and a foundation upon which to build dialogue and cooperation.

<sup>23</sup> WWF & ISEAL. 2019. 'Credible assurance at landscape level: a discussion on landscape and jurisdictional assurance and claims'

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

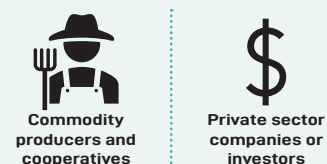
### 5. Foster platforms and incentives for horizontal cooperation and exchange

Facilitating localised in-country or 'South-South' cooperation could be a priority for organisations that support the design and delivery of interventions with shared definitions of success and sub-national practices. With effort and thoughtful design, virtual platforms also have potential to facilitate the South-South cooperation of jurisdictions and countries, to foster deep connections and exchanges that reach well beyond senior stakeholders. Greater visibility could also be given by Northern NGOs to colleagues from the Global South.



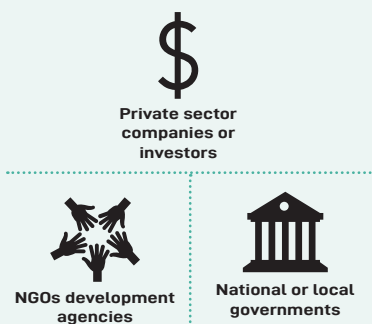
### 6. Ensure marginal stakeholder groups are fully able to participate in processes

Formalised cooperatives or localised commodity-producer networks help smallholders overcome the barriers of entry to certification, and access markets for premium products. They can function as a **pre-competitive pathway to generate added value** for all stakeholders. The process of engaging indigenous groups should also abide by principles of free, prior and informed consent. National platforms which support regional cooperative networks (Insight 8) provide infrastructure to enable horizontal alignment between producers.



### 7. Instigate cross-sectoral dialogue to articulate definitions of success

Organisations developing multi-stakeholder platforms and sub-national action plans should work together to articulate the expectations and implications for participants, including co-creating the definitions of sub-national activities and commitments. This includes engaging with civil society actors to outline the timelines and key features of expected results, to allow space for progress to emerge with private sector support. In particular, the positions of advocacy NGOs and private sector organisations need reconciling to unblock private sector engagement.



Safe spaces are needed for trust-building and dialogue to flourish, so that competition and pre-competitive engagement can be better balanced. This requires a shared commitment to facilitation to enable inclusive and high-quality dialogue between stakeholders.

### Insight 8: UNDP - Facilitating South-South Cooperation

A key objective of UNDP's work on Climate & Forests is to support South-South cooperation between countries to adapt lessons on transformational approaches in the forest sector and improve institutional arrangements for REDD+. The UNDP has facilitated South-South knowledge exchanges with countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Costa Rica, Cambodia and Ecuador to create new institutional knowledge and practice.

These knowledge exchanges have allowed participating governments and political leaders to better understand the institutional context and political instruments that drive national forest sector development. South-South and triangular cooperation has helped to maximise creative solutions and become a steppingstone towards partnerships and bilateral memorandums of understanding (MOUs) aimed at facilitating effective exchanges of technologies and best practices and creating an enabling environment for designing and implementing REDD+ initiatives.



## **DIMENSION III.** Increasing government capacity for synergistic alignment

## DIMENSION III.

### Increasing government capacity for synergistic alignment

Bolstering government capacity at all levels underpins stronger horizontal dialogue and vertical cohesion. Innovative platforms and partnerships that establish shared methodologies can enhance direct support for government commitments to sustainability. New models of collaboration, and clear communication of expectations can increase the resilience and longevity of political commitments. This is the “fuel” for the system.

#### Ambitions:

1. Addressing deficits and disconnects in government capacity
2. Insulating progress from political change
3. Allowing time and opportunities for diverse stakeholder input

### AMBITION: Addressing deficits and disconnects in government capacity

#### What challenges exist?

Many national and sub-national governments in tropical regions are restricted by limited capacity and resources. This results in a lack of technical expertise or ability to coordinate policy processes across ministries and departments. Even where conservation or sustainable land use policies exist, a lack of capacity limits enforcement, especially in remote regions.

Designing and delivering government capacity-building programmes is costly and lengthy. Some initiatives already exist. For example, the UNDP supports the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force to build the capacity of its member governments and civil servants. Partnerships with NGOs, private sector, or other external organisations can directly support government capacity-building or can fill short-term gaps and distribute the costs of promoting sustainable production. Yet selective engagement with only some government actors, or the differing methodologies of NGOs with varying experience and expertise, can lead to divergent training of different regional civil servants or ministries. In many of the world's tropical regions capacity remains an acute challenge, especially at sub-national levels.

### Insight 9: Community-based Production-Protection-Inclusion Agreements in Liberia

To address the Liberian government's limited capacity to provide extension services and finance to farmers, in 2015 an innovative model for 'public-private-community' partnerships was developed by the Forest Development Authority (FDA), the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), and holder Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL), with support from Norway. With Production-Protection-Inclusion agreements, communities committed to conserving five hectares of forest for each hectare of palm developed. GVL committed to provide extension services to farmers, purchase offtakes, and co-finance plantation development via loans, closing gaps in government capacity.

To date, little data is available on the programme's implementation and success. GVL has been criticised for infringing on indigenous territories and strikes have occurred in the region, illustrating the need for deeper engagement with local stakeholders for collaboration to be effective between communities, private sector companies and government.



#### How alignment can help

To advance such efforts, greater understanding and alignment regarding good practices and processes is needed. Governments themselves must take the lead in identifying the training and capacity they need. Without commitment across ministries and levels of government, interventions risk creating the perception that policy processes are co-opted by external agendas.



## AMBITION: Insulating progress from political change

### What challenges exist?

The timescales needed for interventions to deliver positive sustainability outcomes in production landscapes are at odds with policymaking processes and timescales of the political cycle. Designing and implementing policy changes for widespread reform is a slow process, and reliant on the existence of ongoing political support. Yet with a single change in national or sub-national government and associated political priorities, existing policies, operational programmes or multi-stakeholder platforms building formal action plans can be neglected, revoked or rapidly disbanded.

### How alignment can help

Cross-sectoral partnerships, which engage with governments but are not dependent on them, can create greater resilience to political or economic upheaval, and diversify costs and risks. They enable access to a broader range of stakeholders who can leverage different forms of capacity or expertise.

#### Insight 10: The new PCI Institute of Mato Grosso, Brazil

In a recent development for the Produce, Conserve, Include (PCI) strategy of Mato Grosso, the state secured a public development loan from the World Bank, which required the creation of an independent financial mechanism and structure for the platform - the PCI Institute. The Institute is an independent legal entity with the state government on its board, alongside local stakeholder representatives, private sector, and civil society leaders. This independent structure insulates the PCI strategy from political change in the state. It is anticipated this will increase transparency and compliance, reduce risk for investors and donors, and enable the PCI Institute to operate in a more agile manner.



## AMBITION: Allowing time and opportunities for diverse stakeholder input

### What challenges exist?

Multi-stakeholder and local consultation take time, but both are necessary to inform policy processes and create buy-in. Reforms rushed through without diverse stakeholder input risk alienating some stakeholder groups, driving public mistrust of government and creating political opposition.

Similarly, international organisations supporting interventions are less likely to achieve long-term success in their programmes without dedicated in-country personnel working with local stakeholders at sub-national and national level. Achieving lasting sustainability remains a challenge when programmes are designed and funded to run for a limited time, especially if misaligned with political cycles within a policy environment subject to unpredictable change.

### How alignment can help

Recognition of temporal challenges in the design of policies and programmes is a critical step to enabling lasting change. International NGOs and other agencies that support interventions in commodity producing countries are increasingly acknowledging the importance of maintaining an in-country presence. This enables continued dialogue with political actors and policy processes. Partnerships with local NGOs are becoming integral to many sub-national interventions, contributing critical ground-level insights and capacity.

#### Insight 11: Building resilient 'agro-environmental' policy in Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, led and financed by the government, the national Payments for Ecosystem Services programme and protected areas cover 35% of the country and 70% of its forests. technical and institutional capacity characterise both PES and REDD+, and the government has created a cohesive policy framework to unite the ministries of agriculture and environment with in-country initiatives. An action plan was developed in 2016 to overcome land-use competition, access markets through certification, and share technical knowledge, by engaging stakeholders from different sectors. There remains a need for more inclusive stakeholder collaboration, more sustainable sources of finance for PES, and improved systems to ensure the longevity and environmental value of restored forest lands.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

### 8. Create agreed and shared methods of capacity building and support

Strengthening government capacity to convene stakeholders and develop shared plans, remains essential to sustainable commodities interventions and to allowing time for stakeholders to deeply interact. Clear guidelines and methodologies are needed to train and empower government staff to deliver systemic change. A growing number of virtual platforms and sub-national initiatives provide routes for the private sector to participate in government-led or supported interventions. These platforms will be more effective if they incorporate clear guidance and best-practice examples that governments can follow, increasing their capacity for change.



### 9. Build a bank of facilitators and stakeholders to support systemic dialogue

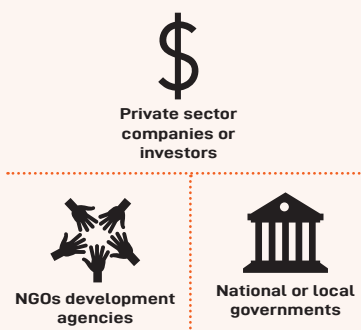
Actors at all levels need the capacity to facilitate and participate effectively in multi-stakeholder dialogues, in ways that enable transfer of knowledge and insights to inform lasting solutions. The UNDP is developing a global 'bank' of facilitators trained in systems methodologies who can convene workshops and provide training. These facilitators would serve as an international resource to build government and practitioner capacity, equipping them with the technical skills to train others. These skills are essential to creating time and opportunity for diverse stakeholder input. Open-source online libraries and forums to centralise resources and share learning would provide further opportunities for collaboration and innovation.



### 10. Create independent national and sub-national platforms with diverse ownership

Platforms can be insulated from political change through partial or full autonomy from the governments that established them. Such independent bodies interact and cooperate with government, civil society, and private sector, but do not depend on political endorsement. The state of Mato Grosso took this step in 2019, evolving its PCI strategy into the independent PCI Institute. The UNDP is exploring best practice for this in its methodology for national commodity platforms.

This transition can only be achieved by mature platforms which have broad buy-in and clearly articulated action plans, such as monitoring agreements and identification of priority areas. This 'collaborative independence' approach should be closely tracked to understand its potential. The model could offer a route towards addressing many of the political and resource-related challenges discussed, including lower perceived risk for international and private investors.



### Figure 3: Critical components of a national 'enabling environment'

Multiple scales and levels of action are important to driving change in commodities production. However, national governments, even in highly federalised countries, must fulfil certain roles in order to create an enabling environment in which action within their nations can succeed.



#### Land ownership and land-use laws

Without clear land ownership laws and conflict resolution pathways at a national level, activities such as payments for ecosystem services or certification are extremely difficult to implement. National governments have a critical role to play in identifying and implementing policy reforms to address issues like land use and concessions.



#### Legal compliance, governance and rule of law

National governments are responsible for maintaining a basic level of legal compliance and rule of law, including the tackling of corruption and enforcement of key private sector regulations. In nations where these conditions are not met and where governance is weak it is extremely difficult for any programme at any level to function.



#### Data-collection and monitoring

Without effective national systems that measure critical factors like forest cover, initiatives can struggle, and true success is hard to capture. These capabilities are particularly important for accessing REDD+ and other forms of results-based finance and identifying interventions in need of support or scaling. Responsibility for reporting against climate and deforestation-related agreements resides at the national level.



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**DIMENSION IV.**  
Integrating and  
diversifying flows of  
resources and incentives

## DIMENSION IV.

### Integrating and diversifying flows of resources and incentives

Stronger connections between levels of action, supported by a clear and compelling narrative of sustainable development, can aid the effective distribution of incentives throughout the commodities ecosystem. These connections are needed to create combinations of private and public incentives for key stakeholders that tip the balance towards sustainable production. This reduces the “friction” in the system.

#### Ambitions:

1. Effectively distributing finance across the commodities ecosystem
2. Delivering incentives to the ground
3. Securing sufficient support for early-stage programmes
4. Championing substantive positive development narratives

### AMBITION: Effectively distributing finance across the commodities ecosystem

#### What challenges exist?

Numerous sources of potential funding or investment exist to finance the sustainable commodity transition, ranging from international climate funds, to development finance, to private sector investment or philanthropic capital. Yet a complex system and lack of stakeholder alignment limit ability to secure and effectively deliver critical resources. Meanwhile, national authorities can only reward sub-national efforts with results-based proceeds when they are aware of the sub-national activities and account for their additionality. Even where jurisdictional REDD+ is in place, similar disconnects hamper the distribution of incentives to different sub-national scales and ultimately to farmers, indigenous peoples and rural communities.

## How alignment can help

Transferring resources held and received at a national level requires sharing information between levels of government, and alignment between certain components of national and sub-national reporting and monitoring. For example, sub-national ministries and agencies need to be aware of national time cycles for reporting back to the UNFCCC.<sup>24</sup> Further, regional contributions to NDCs must be defined for results-based payments to be calculated and delivered.<sup>25</sup>

Aligning the baselines and reporting methodologies of sub-national initiatives with national targets and reporting cycles could unlock flows of funding and increase the resilience of projects.<sup>26,27</sup> Coupled with efforts to improve downward flows of national funds, recognising sub-national actors as partners to national ambitions could provide a major boost to programmes, ensuring their stability.

## AMBITION: Delivering incentives to the ground

### What challenges exist?

Delivering incentives to farmers, producer communities and indigenous peoples is a critical catalyst to accelerate sustainable commodity production. Most resources mobilised to address commodity-driven deforestation, whether material or in the form of capacity building or knowledge transfer, currently do not reach ground-level landscapes where deforestation is physically occurring.

Jurisdictional approaches hold promise to address this but are not being applied in many places experiencing high forest loss.<sup>28</sup> Even where they exist, most jurisdictional programmes are in their early stages and have not yet collected conclusive evidence to make the business case for both producers and buyers.<sup>29</sup> As a result, there is a risk that jurisdictional and landscape initiatives may achieve only limited scale in driving transformation.<sup>30</sup>

### How alignment can help

The TFA, Consumer Goods Forum, and others are leading working groups on these topics and establishing coalitions for companies to provide combined incentives in jurisdictions and landscapes. Such pre-competitive pathways not only encourage private sector engagement and collaboration but can also be a conduit for national and international finance and other incentives to flow to farmers and other groups on the ground. Greater engagement of private sector companies on their longer-term impact is needed to foster the willingness of both buyers and end consumers to pay the true price of deforestation-free commodities. Ultimately, multiple levers are needed for a systemic shift to realise the business case for sustainability.

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<sup>24</sup> Miller D., Lujan B., Schaap B. 2017. Collaboration toward zero deforestation: Aligning corporate and national commitments in Brazil and Indonesia. Environmental Defence Fund & Forest Trends

<sup>25</sup> Stickler et al. 2018. The State of Jurisdictional Sustainability. San Francisco, USA: Earth Innovation Institute/Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry Research/Boulder, USA: Governors' Climate & Forests Task Force Secretariat

<sup>26</sup> Streck C. (2019) 'Shades of REDD+: Bridging the national vs project divide' EcosystemMarketplace.com [Accessed here: October 22nd 2019]

<sup>27</sup> Lee D. & Pedroni L. (2019) "Shades of REDD+ Nesting: A Good or Bad Piece of Swiss Cheese?" Ecosystemmarketplace.com [Accessed here on February 1st 2020]

<sup>28</sup> TFA2020., 2019. A 'commodity-first' approach to identifying landscapes for private sector engagement. Report by TFA2020 and AlphaBeta. WEF Publications.

<sup>29</sup> Stickler et al. 2018. The State of Jurisdictional Sustainability. San Francisco, USA: Earth Innovation Institute/Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry Research/Boulder, USA: Governors' Climate & Forests Task Force Secretariat

<sup>30</sup> de Freitas, A. (2017) 'It is time to recognize the limits of certification in agriculture (commentary)' MongaBay News (Accessed here; October 1st 2019)



## AMBITION: Securing sufficient support for early-stage programmes

### What challenges exist?

At both national and sub-national levels, early-stage platforms and programmes require both financial and social capital to establish shared goals and commitments, and the preconditions for achieving them. The long timelines at these early stages are often at odds with the expectations of private sector companies and donors. Companies need to be engaged systematically around opportunities to support early stage programmes, for example with sustainable sourcing agreements and contracts. Similarly, financial institutions must also be engaged early so financing conditions can be adjusted to enable early-stage implementation.

### How alignment can help

Some examples of successful **public-private partnership** (PPP) models exist, such as the approach employed in Alto Mayo in the San Martin region of Peru (**Insight 12**).<sup>31</sup> For sub-national approaches to flourish, establishing more of these public-private partnerships could help to transform traditional dispersed supply chains and corporate purchasing practices.

To mobilise international finance for sustainable commodities production, including REDD+ for sub-national and early-stage projects, clear definitions and risk mitigation strategies are needed. There are indications that funding will grow as definitions coalesce, success stories emerge, and as 'blended finance' approaches gather pace.<sup>32,33</sup>

#### Insight 12: Incentive-based conservation agreements and early REDD+ in San Martin, Peru

When Conservation International (CI) began working in Alto Mayo, San Martin, they identified poor smallholders under pressure to produce high yields of low-value coffee as the main cause of rapid deforestation. Initially, CI leveraged philanthropic capital, then negotiated with the national government and relevant ministries to implement an early REDD+ programme. Conservation agreements with individual farmers were established in exchange for training and certification, and support organising into a cooperative. Over time, sources of funding shifted from philanthropic to public to private, as a partnership and sourcing agreement later established ensured a consistent buyer of high-quality coffee and regular income. Through partnership and alignment between private, multilateral and NGO actors at the international level, the national government, and with a local NGO *Amazonicos por la Amazonia* and farmers at the landscape level, this initiative achieved a 75% reduction of deforestation and now operates as a Green Business District.



<sup>31</sup> Conservation International. Conserving forest in Alto Mayo. [Accessed here on November 12th 2019]

<sup>32</sup> See UN Environment. Unlocking private finance for sustainable land use. [Accessed here on September 12th 2019]

<sup>33</sup> Murray J. (2019) 'European Investment Bank: 'We will stop financing fossil fuels'' businessgreen.com [Accessed here at November 16th 2019]

## AMBITION: Championing substantive positive development narratives

### What challenges exist?

Successful narratives around sustainable commodities production focus on creating incentives rather than constraining regulations, with development opportunities and the business case presented as a core argument for sustainable commodities production. The language and terminology employed by government actors has shifted from environmental responsibility to 'green agri-business' in places such as Acre, Brazil. This resonates with a dominant political narrative of economic development and encourages buy-in from local constituents and private sector interests.

At jurisdictional level, true 'shining examples' of successful programmes - with clear evidence of low-carbon commodity production, national and international recognition, and private sector engagement with sustained economic benefits - are yet to emerge.

### How alignment can help

Storytelling about tangible successes, which focuses on the economic and social benefits accrued by nations and, as they emerge, specific jurisdictions, can foster greater appetite for sustainable development models.

However, nuanced narratives are needed to balance both rewards for the most progressive actors and enforcement of standards to motivate the laggards.

#### Insight 13: Raising revenue for sustainability in Colombia with a national carbon tax

In 2017, the government of Colombia enacted a carbon tax on liquid fossil fuels and tax breaks for companies that reduced carbon pollution. This prompted many companies to invest in reforestation and other mitigation projects. Revenues were directed to the Colombia in Peace Fund. In May 2018, Colombia's former president Santos announced that 5% of the carbon taxes would be directed to the Herencia Colombia programme, which aims to protect 20 million hectares of natural areas. The combination of measures has successfully encouraged companies to invest in the promotion of sustainable agriculture. The government is now shifting its focus to ensuring that companies' mitigation efforts are transparent and certified. The tax has been lauded as an initiative that could unlock new resource streams for preventing deforestation in other commodity-producing countries, and a model for long-term finance for conservation.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

### 11. Develop criteria and systems to distribute incentives and resources to ground level

Systems and infrastructure are needed to effectively distribute resources and incentives to ground level and to priority regions. Tracking forest cover change through digital platforms, combined with the development of MRV infrastructure and ground level reporting, can help accurately account for ecological impacts, emissions reductions and additionality – and provide critical information on where resources are most needed. National government methodologies to direct incentives can then be aligned with both ground-level needs and international priorities. The 'commodity-first' approach to identify landscapes for private sector engagement could also be employed by governments to support initiatives in deforestation 'hotspots' with greater commodity sourcing potential.<sup>34</sup>



### 12. Capture and communicate tangible success stories and best practices

As promising jurisdictions and national commitments bear fruit, communicating these successes will be key to building momentum. Crucially, success stories need to be tailored to specific constituencies and speak to the interests of different levels of action. The benefits of a successful jurisdictional approach or national action plan vary for smallholders, international buyers, and local governments. Successes should be translated into stories that resonate with national governments in commodity-producing countries, as well as international donors. These positive development narratives can help accelerate change, with support from wider group of stakeholders.



### 13. Develop and implement more effective public-private partnerships

Ambitious public-private partnerships can help direct resources to the right levels and actors across the commodities ecosystem. Such models create opportunities for the private sector to engage with and complement government efforts in the countries they source from, with benefits for both trade relations and supply chain transparency. Effective public-private partnerships are a keyway through which early-stage programmes can gain sufficient levels of support.

Public-private partnerships can harness injections of development funding or green investment to mobilise further commercial or public finance, and ultimately enable programmes to sustain themselves. To accomplish this, their timeframes must align with the varying paces of political, socio-economic and ecological change, and they must be designed and managed to ensure that all stakeholder groups benefit.



<sup>34</sup> TFA2020., 2019. A 'commodity-first' approach to identifying landscapes for private sector engagement. Report by TFA2020 and AlphaBeta. WEF Publications.



# Conclusion

## BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

### Stronger alignment and collaboration are preconditions to systemic change

This paper contributes to an action-oriented dialogue about the existing disconnects across the vast global community of authorities, organisations and individuals working to reduce or eliminate deforestation from commodities production.

Many existing solutions and commitments hold promise, including sub-national jurisdictional and landscape approaches and the ambitious commitments of some private sector companies and national governments. Yet there are currently critical barriers to progress. Solutions are often siloed in ways that limit their impact, reach or longevity and create overlaps, wastage and leakage. **The core findings and recommendations of this research highlight opportunities for a more connected and mutually reinforcing network of action, to realise and fulfil shared ambitions for a systemic shift to sustainable commodity production.**

Distinct parts of the system need to move together. This will require greater **synergistic alignment and multi-stakeholder collaboration**; between international actors and national governments, and between national governments and the actors operating within their boundaries.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is not a new concept, nor are calls for it unprecedented. However, in practice, multi-stakeholder dialogue is often limited to perfunctory consultation and selective participation, with crucial perspectives and interests withheld or misunderstood. Consequently, pledges to change or new processes don't deliver the deep commitments and solutions needed.

As actors working in this space, we must continuously challenge ourselves to interrogate the processes we lead and participate in. Are these creating the conditions where true collaboration and transformation can occur? Are we ambitious enough in the types of connection we are seeking to establish between our work and that being undertaken by other groups? Could the work we are supporting be integrated with existing programmes, to avoid overlaps?

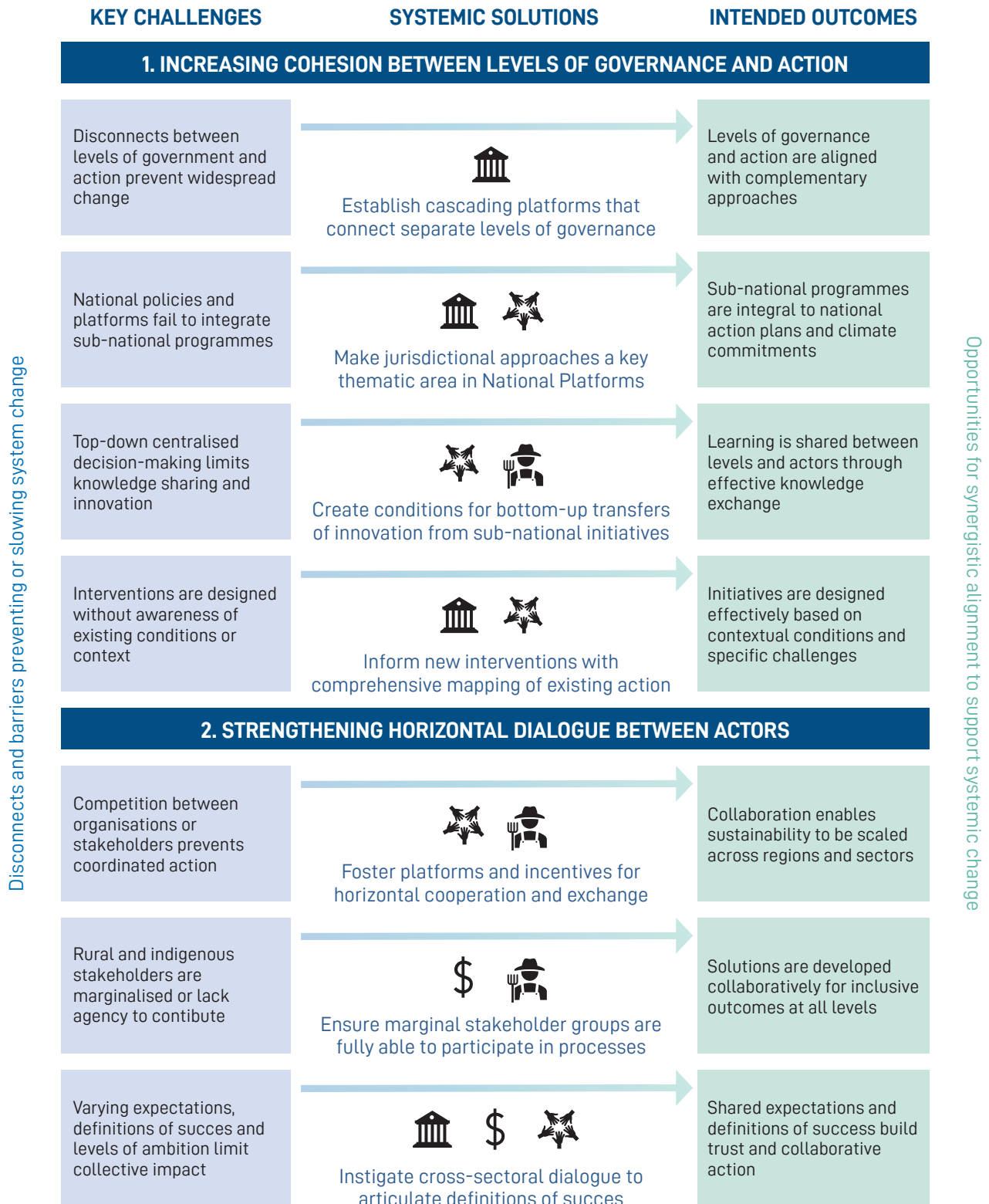
True collaboration requires listening, learning and reflective action to be extended in its depth and breadth. It requires that we are open to the possibilities for **cooperation, coordination and integration**, not just consultation. This must with trust and commitment to change at the foundation.

The recommendations presented in this report illustrate some of the actions that can enable alignment and collaboration for systemic change in commodities production.

### Where do we go from here?

Informed by decades of experience working with stakeholders in developing nations around the world, the UNDP has developed a framework called **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Systemic Change (MSCFSC)** to address the complex challenges of the commodities system through collaboration. The recommendations listed are enablers or preconditions of this framework.

**Figure 4:** In the four thematic axes of this report: barriers to existing ambitions for sustainable production can be addressed by better alignment and action towards systemic solutions.

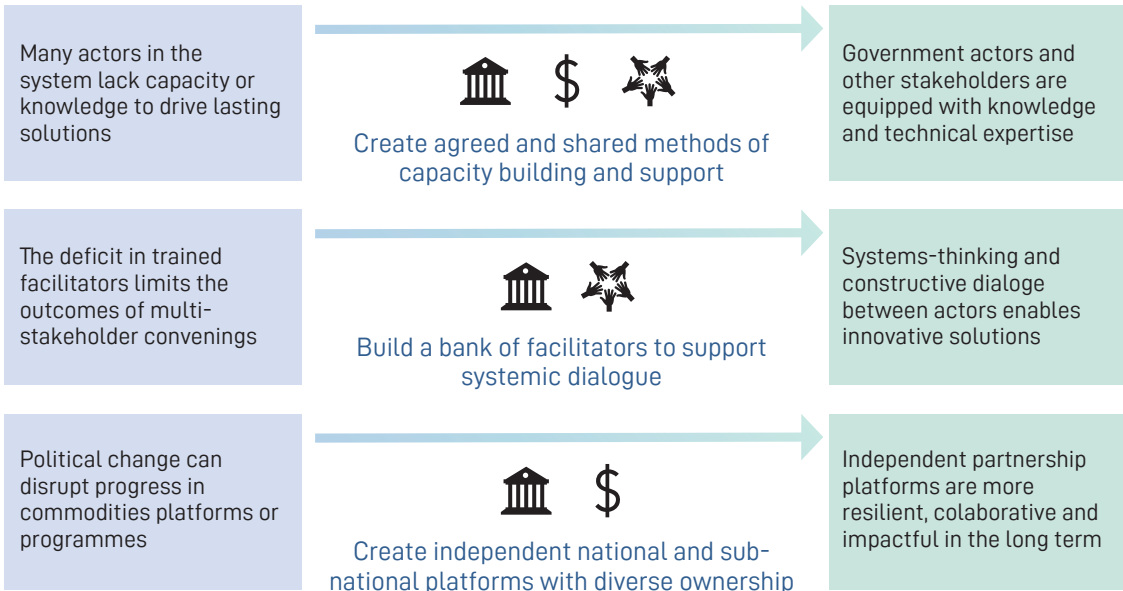


**KEY CHALLENGES**

**SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS**

**INTENDED OUTCOMES**

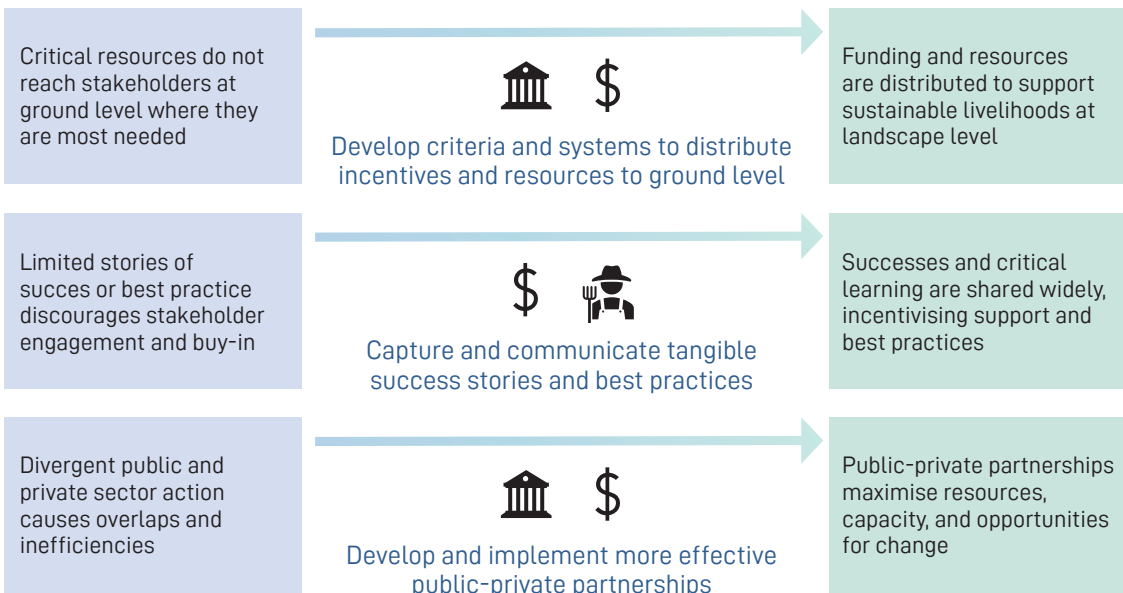
**3. INCREASING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY FOR SYNERGISTIC ALIGNMENT**



Disconnects and barriers preventing or slowing system change

Opportunities for synergistic alignment to support systemic change

**4. INTEGRATING AND DIVERSIFYING FLOWS OF RESOURCES AND INCENTIVES**



**Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Systemic Change (MSCFSC)** seeks to bring together all the stakeholders in the system, from smallholder producers to private sector corporations, to build a shared vision and work together to transform the whole commodities system. MSCFSC enables stakeholders with interconnected sustainability problems and ambitions, but often differing interests, to collectively innovate and build resilience in the face of emerging risks, crises and opportunities of a complex and changing environment. **Systemic change** involves working with the complexity, to help people see the whole system, and to recognise that change will often be an outcome of an unpredictable and surprising process.

The UNDP, along with its partners, intends to build upon the mandates for collaborative action outlined in this paper. Aligned with the MSCFSC methodology, the UNDP will:

- **Convene stakeholders and facilitate dialogue** to identify concrete coordination and collaboration measures that can be taken together, ensuring knowledge and good practices gained through these dialogues are shared between commodity-producing nations and regions.
- **Continue to undertake research** to profile promising approaches to building alignment to programmes delivering results as they emerge.
- **Work with governments, civil society, private partners and donors** to enact the recommendations of this paper.

The vast size and complexity of the forest conservation and commodities system calls for continued research and dialogue to produce further recommendations, critical insights, and agendas for action. All stakeholders have a collective responsibility to capture and share emerging success stories, knowledge and lessons learned. Seeking and making use of these lessons, whilst recognising and adapting to the multiple scales of action and different contexts in which this work takes place, is critical to delivering resilient and sustainable solutions on the ground.

Evidence from across the field reveals that there is only so much we can achieve if practitioners operate independently from each other. While we must continue to value autonomous, diverse and innovative approaches, we must also realise that **collectively we have greater capacity to accelerate and achieve systemic transformation**.







## Appendix: Summary of roles and constraints of levels in the commodities production system

# Summary of roles and constraints of levels in the commodities production system

Amongst the multiplicity of actors and levels of decision-making relevant to the pursuit of sustainable commodities production and low-emissions development, specific actors occupy unique roles. Particular levels of intervention are best suited to addressing certain challenges or needs.

## INTERNATIONAL

International level' action in sustainable commodities is extremely varied. It can include multi-stakeholder-led certification systems; inter-industry or commodity-specific roundtables; sources of finance including national and multilateral development agencies, climate finance institutions and dedicated financial mechanisms such as REDD+; international NGOs engaged in investigation and advocacy; the activities and agreements of international corporations and; political agreements that affect national and international market demand and criteria for sustainably produced commodities.

### STRENGTHS

- Internationally agreed declarations or standards **create strong demand signals to commodity producing nations**, providing **common frameworks** from which to base targets and actions, and against which the **global progress can be measured**.
- International funding mechanisms - including national and multilateral development agencies - **provide critical capacity and incentive to commodity producing nations**.
- International actors **provide critical capacity and expertise**, particularly to innovative sub-national landscape and jurisdictional initiatives.

### WEAKNESSES

- International agreements **can also create perverse incentives for short-term action in commodity producing nations**.
- National governments can **reject standards developed by consuming nations**, leading them to produce their own and fragmenting the regulatory landscape.
- **The scale of market demand for sustainable commodities is still low**: under a fifth of palm oil produced in 2017 was certified sustainable, and only about half was sold as such.
- Relying on market demand and financial incentives may **leave important gaps**: Buyers may only source from certified areas or producers, excluding groups like smallholders.

## NATIONAL

The primary actor at a national level is the government and its ministries. At the highest level, national governments are responsible for setting the level of ambition to tackle deforestation and to create an enabling environment that facilitates progress and action on the part of all actors operating within its boundaries. Other actors include national industry associations, finance institutions and civil society bodies

### STRENGTHS

- \* National governments have the **legitimacy and legal capabilities** to affect changes across their nations, addressing issues such as land ownership, to land-use and production standards.

### WEAKNESSES

- National level engagement and commitment is **vulnerable to political change**, whilst agreements and **legal changes occur over very long timescales**.

## STRENGTHS

- National governments are responsible for **ensuring alignment across the agendas of government ministries and allocating budgets** to support sustainable production priorities.
- Laws and policies enacted at a national level have **full coverage of commodities production and related areas**, which can influence local producers that are not engaged with international standards or that sell to local or regional markets that do not prioritise sustainable practices.
- National governments are **key interlocuters with international actors and sources of funding**, particularly REDD+ funding, and for reporting against NDCs to the Paris Agreement.

## WEAKNESSES

- Often, national actors **lack political will or incentive** to make positive legal changes due to other priorities or, at times, due to vested interests or corrupt practices, or may be **unable to make or enforce laws** due to the political environment or deficits in capacity.
- National governments may **struggle to identify what existing laws or practices need to be changed or enacted** to have a positive impact on production.
- Governments are **not always motivated to promote sustainable commodity production consistently**. At times, leakage by land-use zoning may occur where well-known regions are well protected while others are less protected despite their importance to climate mitigation.
- **Funding available for extension services have declined** in past decades, placing more onus on private sector companies, often to the exclusion of critical groups such as smallholders.
- National level action can be a crude instrument **that fails to account for local specificities**.
- Standards or initiatives promoted by national governments can be criticised (and shunned) by international actors **for not going far enough or ignoring key issues**.

### JURISDICTIONAL (SUBNATIONAL)

Jurisdictional initiatives, which are similar to landscape initiatives but aligned with sub-national political boundaries, are commonly understood to have five key features: multi-stakeholder processes, shared understandings, collaborative planning, monitoring and implementation. Collaborating with civil society and the private sector, they drive change by engaging directly with subnational and national political actors. Such initiatives, including many the UNDP supports, are not new, but have lately gained notice as a promising and increasingly important part of sustainability toolkits.

## STRENGTHS

- Jurisdictional approaches **reduce leakage** within a region as success is measured "wall-to-wall", including the full range of activities, production systems, ecosystems and actors.
- Multi-stakeholder governance processes mean jurisdictional programmes take better **account of specific conditions, competing interests and priorities**, integrating and involving the concerns of groups such as indigenous peoples and other marginalised communities.
- Local governments and their staff **can benefit from expertise and capacity** from international practitioners, NGOs and private sector companies.

## WEAKNESSES

- A focus on jurisdictional action **risks creating a two-tier system**, divided between areas competing on sustainability, accounting for only a small proportion of overall land used in commodities production, and those which do not (see figure X - pg. X).
- Jurisdictional approaches risk **rewarding jurisdictions with poor past records of deforestation**, whilst failing to channel incentives for sustainability to forest frontiers.
- Some jurisdictional programmes **contradict or overlap with national standards and programmes** creating **coordination issues, duplicated effort and cost inefficiencies**.

## STRENGTHS

- They have the potential to **create a critical mass of sustainable and certifiable production** in one area, reducing costs for farmers and for private sector companies.
- This can also benefit communities and regional governments, as **high-performing regions attract more investment**.
- Jurisdictional initiatives can serve as 'innovation laboratories' that can **uncover new and impactful modes** of intervention that can be scaled or implemented across multiple areas.

## WEAKNESSES

- Jurisdictional programmes can be **overly reliant on the engagement and enthusiasm of individual sub-national political actors** and therefore vulnerable to political change.
- **Inconsistent understanding, definitions and poor communication** of jurisdictional initiatives can hinder the participation of private sector companies and limit support from national governments.
- Many international private sector organisation **supply chains do not align with jurisdictional or landscape boundaries**, and they have limited experience or capacity to enact location-based preferential sourcing.

## LANDSCAPE

The landscape approach typically encompasses a geographic space determined by ecological boundaries. With a landscape approach, objectives, interventions and measures of success are developed through multi-stakeholder consultations and encompass the full range of activities and interests in an area, beyond only commodities production. landscape approach aims to ensure the realisation of local level needs and action (i.e. the interests of different stakeholders within the landscape), while also considering goals and outcomes for stakeholders outside the landscape, such as national governments or the international community.

## STRENGTHS

- Landscape initiatives are able to **extract, discuss and reconcile trade-offs** between competing ecological, economic and social interests of various actors in an area, enabling them to tackle deforestation that is linked to but not directly tied to value chains.
- The **capabilities and expertise of experienced actors**, including international NGOs which often support landscape initiatives, increase the likelihood of positive ecological outcomes.
- Landscape initiatives promote **sustainable methods of intensification** that prioritise the overall ecological and economic impacts of intensification and sustainable production efforts.

## WEAKNESSES

- Can be **misaligned with existing political and economic structures**, where the existence of **functioning government** institutions is needed to address critical aspects such as land use planning and to convert initiatives into legal agreements.
- May **lack the capability to overcome disparities in power**, making it difficult to establish common objectives or instigate optimal trade-offs between governments and other actors.
- **Best-practice approaches are inconsistently applied** in landscape programmes, affecting the consistency of long-term performance and preventing further actors from joining.
- Landscape approaches face extra challenges in **measuring impact and attributing causality** to specific actions when measuring progress.
- Cost savings are limited in real scenarios: Unless a landscape can make a claim that all production within its boundaries meets certain criteria **companies will have to complement landscape-level claims with more specific claims tied to their own supply chains** to satisfy civil society organisations and their own commitments.



## About the authors of this report

The **UNDP Green Commodities Programme** helps address the sustainability challenges of highly traded commodities. The Green Commodities Programme supports governments to take the lead in creating national environments where sustainable commodity sectors can grow. This means facilitating neutral spaces where stakeholders can collaborate on a shared vision and agenda for action. It means building public-private partnerships. Decades of experience of working with governments makes UNDP the natural partner for working with government led processes, bringing together all the right partners in platforms for systemic change.

Visit [www.greencommodities.org](http://www.greencommodities.org)

The **UNDP Climate and Forests Team** manages or implements a diverse range of initiatives to deliver technical assistance, policy advice and quality assurance to support national and subnational REDD+ readiness, implementation, and financial mechanisms. The work of the UNDP Climate & Forests Team contributes to both SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 15 (forest ecosystems), addressing their close linkages.

Visit [www.climateandforests-undp.org](http://www.climateandforests-undp.org)

The **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)** works with private sector companies, national and supranational agencies and national governments to advance sustainable commodities practices and policies. The GIZ's main commissioning party is the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Through partnerships with international agencies, they assist in both policy implementation and analysis, and educational activities to improve capacity and governance in developing and commodity producing nations.

Visit [www.giz.de](http://www.giz.de)

## About the Good Growth Partnership

Working with a full range of stakeholders, from small-scale producers to national governments and global corporations, the Good Growth Partnership promotes a holistic approach to sustainability that encompasses entire commodity supply chains. Instead of treating production, demand and investment interventions as separate tracks, the Partnership looks at where the layers of the supply chain integrate and overlap to enhance financial incentives and demand for sustainably produced agricultural commodities. By combining forces, the Good Growth Partnership aims to provide a model of wide-scale systemic reform which capitalises on the strengths of each partner. See here: <http://goodgrowthpartnership.com/about/>



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