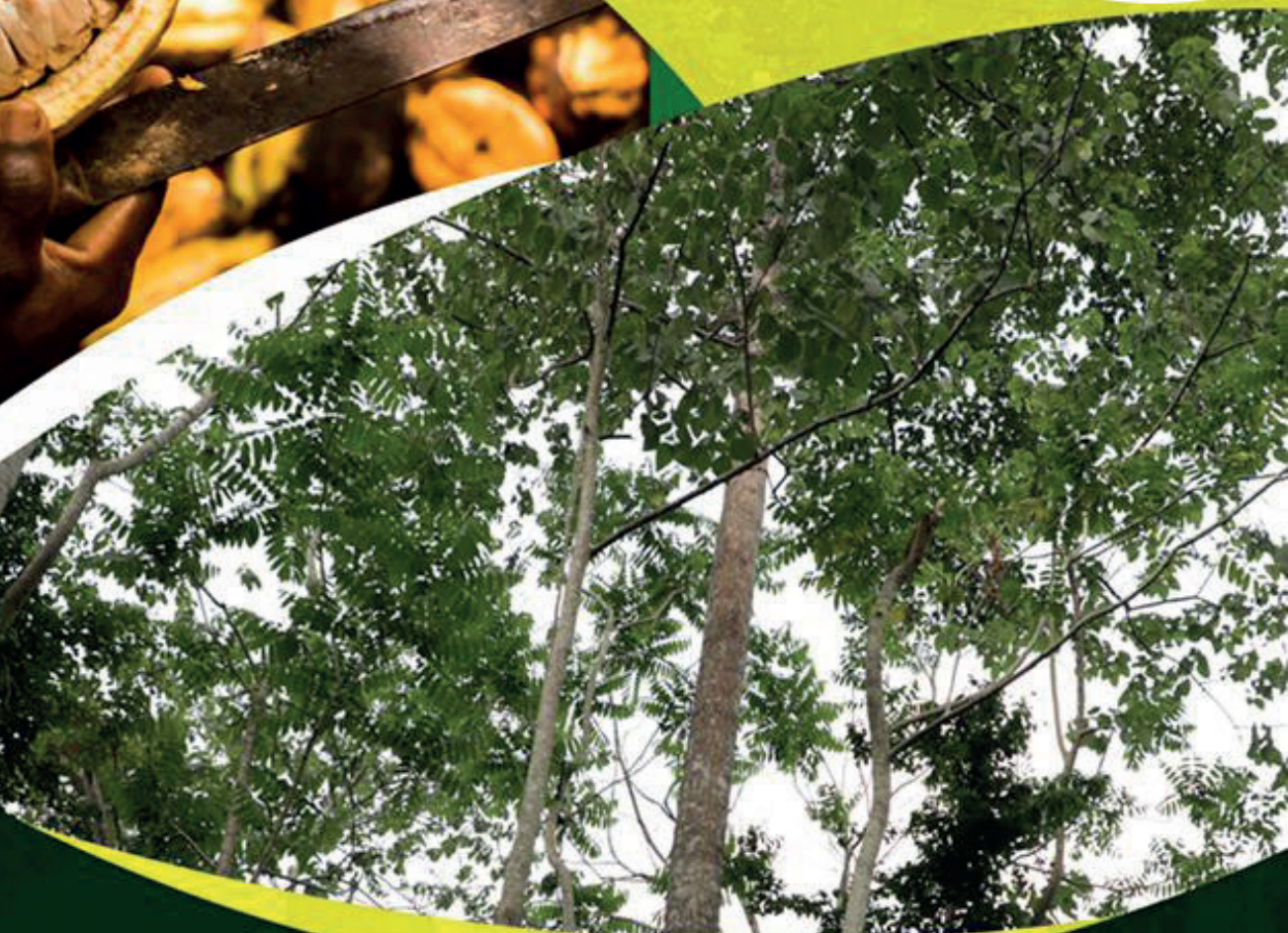




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ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES FOR THE GHANA COCOA FOREST **REDD+** PROGRAM

About Proforest

Proforest is an independent organisation working with natural resource management and specialising in practical approaches to sustainability. Our expertise covers all aspects of the natural resources sector, from sustainable forestry and agricultural commodities production to responsible sourcing, supply chain management and investment.

Proforest works to transform commodity supply chains and sectors through developing awareness about sustainability, helping to generate commitment to better practice, supporting implementation of these commitments in practice and working with the wider community to increase positive impact.

Proforest Ghana leads on delivery of Proforest activities in West and Central Africa, including direct support to companies implementing responsible production, sourcing and investment for agricultural and forest commodities together with long-term programmes to support capacity building and multi-stakeholder initiatives in the region. Proforest also has offices in Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and the UK.

Our team comprises specialists in forest management, agricultural commodities (such as palm oil), conservation and sustainability initiatives and certification. We have extensive experience in Africa and internationally, and we can work in English, French and Portuguese.

Briefing notes from our Production Landscape Programme are available here:

<https://proforest.net/en/publications/production-landscape-briefings>

Forestry Commission and the National REDD+ Secretariat

The Forestry Commission (FC) under the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resource of Ghana is an agency of state established by the Forestry Commission Act of 1999 (Act 571), with the mandate to manage the forest and wildlife estates of Ghana effectively and sustainably, and in a manner that ensures socio-economic development and environmental integrity for the benefit of all segments of the Ghanaian society.

The Forestry Commission comprises a Corporate Headquarters, three main Divisions (Forest Services Division, Wildlife Division and Timber Industry Development Division) and two Centres (Resource Management Support Centre and Forestry Commission Training Centre), performing the functions of protection, development, management, and regulation of forest and wildlife resources utilization.

In the Commission's quest bequeath richer, better, and more valuable forest resources to the future generations and their communities, its revised Forest and Wildlife Policy of 2012, promotes the implementation of mechanisms, strategies, action plans and policies to mitigate the effects of Climate Change by restoring degraded forests, establishing/formalizing community governance structures, providing alternative/additional livelihood options as well as sustainable agricultural production.

This is reflected in the programmes outlined in the Ghana REDD+ Strategy (GRS) of 2016 which features the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP) as its premier Emission Reductions Programme. The Programme is coordinated by the National REDD+ Secretariat which is housed at the Climate Change Directorate of the Commission.

Ultimately, the Commission's active work is aimed at building ecosystem resilience whilst enhancing Forest Landscape Restoration.

Relevant documents of the GRS and the GCFRP are available at: www.reddsis.fcghana.org

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Cover photo: **Climate Change Directorate (CCD)** of the National REDD+ Secretariat
of the Forestry Commission

Foreword

After a decade of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) implementation in Ghana, the country has entered a results-based payment phase with the Carbon Fund of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and its premier sub-national Emission Reduction Programme. The Climate Change Directorate (National REDD+ Secretariat) of the Forestry Commission (FC) and Ghana Cocoa Board jointly coordinates the programme, which is dubbed the 'Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme' (GCFRP). The programme seeks to reduce expansionist agricultural production that causes deforestation and forest degradation and restore forest cover by introducing climate smart agricultural practices and other livelihood enhancement packages. The approach to implementation is to activate proposed interventions, including onfarm shade trees, landscape planning and zoning, rural enterprises, improved governance, and reforestation, amongst others, in six initial Hotspot Intervention Areas.

The logic and strength of the GCFRP is based on the core concept that cocoa cannot be sustainably produced, and deforestation and degradation drivers cannot be reduced significantly at a project or singular institutional level, which has been the practice to date. Rather, these issues and challenges necessitate a large-scale, integrated approach to foster the massive transformational changes in farming practices and land use decision making required to reduce deforestation and degradation and to drive forest/tree growth in the landscape. Consequently, the move to implement the GCFRP requires a coordinated landscape approach that targets all stakeholders as a strategy to change the 'business as usual' approach and reduce emissions from the landscape while producing the world's first ever climate smart cocoa bean.

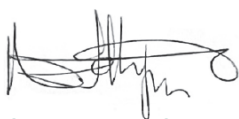
The GCFRP has established an implementation framework through which the government, private sector, civil society, traditional authorities, and local communities can collaborate. The GCFRP therefore serves as Ghana's main route for the private sector and/or all allied institutions to achieve their commitments towards ensuring deforestation-free commodity supply chains.

Through the Production Landscape Programme, the FC, Proforest and other key stakeholders have developed this 'Guidance on Engagement Principles for Landscape Initiatives', with the GCFRP as a case study, to guide potential partners who are willing to invest in the GCFRP.

This Guidance gives an overview of the environmental and social issues inherent in the production of agriculture and forest commodities in the production landscape. It also gives associated risks and the potential benefits of engaging in landscape initiatives. With the GCFRP as the case study, this Guidance takes potential partners through a step-by-step process of programme engagement, including the modalities of engagements, the types of investments, communications on the engagement, and the necessary monitoring and evaluation processes to undertake.

In line with the landmark Paris Agreement, this Guidance, which focuses mainly on the GCFRP, has been developed at the right moment to give guidance to the many institutions (private sector, etc.) who have committed to initiatives/programmes/alliances towards achieving deforestation-free commodity supply chains and landscapes.

As the Chief Executive of the FC, I can confidently say that the REDD+ is Ghana's pathway to safeguarding the integrity of Ghana's forest while ensuring sustainable development. This GCFRP Guidance, therefore, gives a clear pathway to all potential partners.



JOHN M. ALLOTEY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, FORESTRY COMMISSION

Executive summary

Ghana, as with many other tropical forest countries, is experiencing a high deforestation rate within its agro-forest mosaic landscape. Agricultural expansion in forest frontiers has been identified as one of the major drivers of the deforestation in Ghana. In view of its direct linkage with climate change and loss of biodiversity, deforestation has attracted global attention, with calls on governments and supply chain companies to take pragmatic actions to address the threats of deforestation, particularly those driven by commodity agriculture. Analyses of the drivers of deforestation under the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) programmes have stressed the role of commodities in deforestation and the importance of working with the private sector in commodity supply chains to address the situation.

As part of the Ghana government's response and commitment to global efforts at addressing climate change, the National REDD+ Secretariat at the Forestry Commission (FC) has developed and launched the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP): a commodity-based, landscape-level Emission Reduction Programme. The GCFRP represents an innovative and highly ambitious approach that seeks to significantly reduce emissions by reducing the high rates of deforestation and forest degradation in the 5.9 million ha of agro-forest mosaic landscape within Ghana's High Forest Zone.

Agro-commodity companies and organisations are committed to acting to reduce deforestation, enhance community livelihood, remove forced/child labour, and improve labour conditions, gender equality and smallholder inclusion in production landscapes. Addressing the environmental and social challenges inherent in agro-commodity production are often beyond the control of any single stakeholder, and hence, collaboration among companies and organisations with common interest may be necessary. This includes joining or supporting landscape and jurisdictional approaches where collaboration with other actors, particularly government, provides scope to support change across a landscape/jurisdiction. Increasingly, the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration for large-scale impact is becoming clear and rapidly being embraced by production landscape actors to achieve wider and more transformational impact.

Multi-stakeholder jurisdictional initiatives are being developed in many locations, but how does a company decide which initiative to support, on what issues and where? As the largest fully functional multi-stakeholder jurisdictional programme, GCFRP provides the framework for engaging multiple government institutions, the private sector, civil society, traditional authorities and community representatives when addressing the key socio-economic and environmental issues at the landscape level.

Proforest is implementing the Department for International Development-funded Production Landscape Programme, which helps to align private sector actions on deforestation and other sustainability issues with national and sub-national policy processes and initiatives at the landscape level in Ghana. As part of the programme implementation, Proforest has collaborated with the National REDD+ Secretariat of the FC to develop the 'Guidance on Engagement Principles on Landscape Initiatives' for the GCFRP and associated initiatives through a multi-stakeholder participatory approach. The Guidance comprises ten unique steps designed to help companies and organisations engage effectively with the GCFRP and associated initiatives. It provides the opportunity for companies to identify the risks inherent in the landscapes of interest and the opportunities to derive maximum benefit from engagement, including their responsible production and/or sourcing policy commitments.

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1. General introduction

1.1. Aims and objectives of the principles: why do we need this Guidance?

A preliminary deforestation trend analysis carried out as part of the baseline study for the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP) using the Hansen Global Forest Change data, showed very high deforestation rates across Ghana's High Forest Zone, with significantly increasing deforestation in the GCFRP area. Deforestation within the data period was the highest in the Western (Western and Western North) and Ashanti regions, but the other three GCFRP regions (Central, Eastern and Brong Ahafo) maintained relatively low annual deforestation. The moist evergreen forest and the moist semideciduous forest types (i.e. the main agro-commodity production landscapes) were identified as the most affected areas in Ghana. Another worrying trend observed in the deforestation analysis was the increasing deforestation within protected areas, with the Subri River and the Jimira Extension forest reserves being the most deforested.

The deforestation trend analysis estimated an annual deforestation rate of 3.2% or 138,624 ha/year within Ghana's 5.9 million ha agro-forest mosaic landscape. Agricultural expansion was identified as the main driver of the deforestation, with over a quarter of the deforestation accounted for by agricultural (mainly cocoa farms) expansion into forest frontiers. This makes commodity production the single biggest driver of deforestation in the landscape. In view of its direct linkage with climate change and loss of biodiversity, deforestation has attracted global attention, with several global initiatives being launched to tackle it.

The New York Declaration on Forests, a voluntary and non-legally binding political declaration, which grew out of dialogue among governments, companies and civil society, was spurred on by the 2014 United Nations Secretary-General's Climate Summit, and it is one of the recent global efforts towards addressing deforestation. The Declaration pledged to halve the rate of deforestation by 2020, to end it by 2030 and to restore hundreds of millions of acres of degraded land. A voluntary Action Agenda accompanying the Declaration provides "a guide to governments, companies, and organisations regarding the diverse set of actions that can achieve the Declaration's transformational goals".

In December 2015, 196 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted the Paris Agreement: a new legally binding framework for an internationally coordinated effort to tackle climate change. The Agreement requires countries to formulate progressive climate targets consistent with the goal of keeping global warming below 2°C on pre-industrial averages. To achieve this goal, all Parties to the Paris Agreement need to make profound changes to their economies. The Paris Agreement defines a universal, legal framework to "strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change" and establishes the obligation of all Parties to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Agreement requires all countries to develop plans on how to contribute to climate change mitigation and communicate their "nationally determined contributions" to the Secretariat of the Convention. The Paris Agreement emphasises processes rather than defined mitigation goals.

In line with the Ghana government's commitment to global efforts at addressing climate change while ushering the country to a pathway of low carbon sustainable development, the National Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) Secretariat, under the Forestry Commission (FC), has led an elaborate multi-stakeholder process to develop Ghana's REDD+ Strategy. **Ghana has made the first move to articulate the world's first commodity-based landscape-level Emission Reduction Programme to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Carbon Fund, and this has culminated in the GCFRP.**

Box 1: Priority programmes of the Ghana REDD+ Strategy

1. The Emission Reductions Programme for the Cocoa Forest Mosaic Landscape

- **Strategic intervention:** Improving land use and socio-economic development in the High Forest Zone and cocoa growing area
- **Level:** Sub-national
- **Eco-zone:** High Forest Zone
- **Commodity:** Cocoa, oil palm and other tree crops
- **Driver:** Cocoa expansion, sun cocoa, other tree crop expansion, illegal mining and illegal logging

2. The Emission Reductions Programme for the Shea Landscape of the Northern Savanna Woodland

- **Strategic intervention:** Addressing wood harvesting and unsustainable agricultural practices in the savannah woodland landscape
- **Level:** Sub-national
- **Eco-zone:** Savannah woodland
- **Commodity:** Shea, cashew, yam
- **Driver:** Charcoal, illegal logging, agricultural expansion, illegal mining, wildfire, etc.

3. Ghana's Programme for Policy and Legislative Reforms on Tree Tenure and Carbon Rights

- **Strategic intervention:** Policy and legislative reforms to support REDD+ and sustainable forestry
- **Level:** National
- **Focus:** Addressing indirect drivers from tree tenure and lack of carbon rights via legislative reforms
- **Leverage:** National interventions like Forest Investment Programme, Voluntary Partnership Agreement – Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, Cocoa Sector Strategy

4. Emission Reduction Programme for the Transition Forest Landscape

- **Level:** Sub-national
- **Eco-zone:** Dry semideciduous forest type (inner zone and fire zone)
- **Commodity:** Food crops belt
- **Driver:** Wildfire, cocoa and other tree crop expansion, illegal mining and illegal logging

5. Emission Reduction Programme for the Coastal Mangroves

- **Level:** Sub-national
- **Eco-zone:** Coastal mangrove
- **Driver:** Cutting mangroves for fuelwood, settlement expansion, development and pollution

6. Emission Reduction Programme for the Togo Plateau

- **Level:** Sub-national
- **Eco-zone:** Dry semideciduous forest (Togo Plateau)

1.2. Aims and objectives of Proforest's Production Landscape Programme

Companies and organisations in the agro-commodity production landscape are committed to a wide range of actions to increase the sustainability of their supply chains. These include working towards production practices that are free from deforestation and exploitation of workers and local communities. Addressing these issues are often beyond the control of any single stakeholder. Further, government actions and enforcements and community engagement are also necessary to address these issues. Companies and organisations can support these actions and may be able to achieve some change, but they are unlikely to succeed in eliminating them by acting alone. Analyses of the drivers of deforestation under REDD+ programmes have stressed the role of commodities in deforestation and the importance of working with the private sector in commodity supply chains. Increasingly, companies and organisations are realising the limitations and costs of working alone and see the need for collaboration at landscape scale to achieve wider, more transformational impact. This includes joining or supporting landscape and jurisdictional approaches where collaboration with other actors, particularly government, provides scope to support change across a landscape/jurisdiction. Further, working through sectoral initiatives that aim to achieve change on specific issues across a whole sector can also be effective.

Proforest, through the Department for International Development-funded Production Landscape Programme, is working to support the alignment of private sector actions on deforestation and other sustainability issues with national and sub-national policy processes, including those led by civil society. Ghana Proforest, through the Production Landscape Programme, is helping companies and organisations align with the GCFRP by providing information on its implementation procedures and modalities. It is envisaged that, through this alignment, companies and organisations will have the opportunity to meet their commitments on deforestation and other sustainability issues while contributing to the national effort on emission reductions (ERs).

Box 2: Why these commodities?

The Production Landscape Programme in Ghana is focused on four forest-risk commodities: 1) cocoa, 2) oil palm, 3) rubber and 4) timber, with the Western region (Western and Western North) as the pilot landscape. These four commodities form a key component of the gross domestic product of Ghana but are also partly responsible for the high rate of deforestation within the agro-forest mosaic landscape. Together these four forest-risk commodities account for over 20% of the gross domestic product of Ghana and directly engage about 41% of the working population.

1.3. Private sector response to the existing and emerging environmental and social issues inherent in agriculture and forest commodity production

In recent years, supply chain companies and organisations have responded positively to the clarion call to end deforestation and other sustainability issues in agro-commodity supply chains by publicly committing to responsible production and sourcing of forest-risk commodities. Signatories of the New York Declaration and member companies of the Consumer Goods Forum have developed and committed to corporate policies that aim to address the environmental and social issues inherent in forest-risk agro-commodity production.

Significantly, governments, private supply chain companies and civil society organisations (CSOs) have endorsed a global timeline under the non-legally binding New York Declaration on Forests to cut natural forest loss in half by 2020 and strive to end it by 2030. The entities endorsing the New York Declaration have announced dozens of concrete actions and partnerships to demonstrate their commitment to implementing the New York Declaration and Action Agenda. These include commodity traders calling for public policies to eliminate deforestation and new procurement policies for several of the largest forest commodity importer governments.

Through commodity round tables, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), and voluntary certification standards, such as the Forest Stewardship Council private supply chain companies have committed to voluntary market standards that are aimed at sustainable production and sourcing of agriculture and forest commodities. The voluntary certification standards, such as the RSPO, Forest Stewardship Council, etc., enjoin member companies to comply with production standards that aim to eliminate environmental and social risks inherent in deforestation-risk agro-commodities.

The Cocoa and Forest Initiative (CFI) Joint Framework for Action is yet another key example of the response of private supply chain companies to deforestation risk in agro-commodity production. Under the CFI Joint Framework for Action, private companies in the cocoa sector, along with the governments of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, have committed to end deforestation and promote forest protection and restoration in the cocoa supply chain. Among their eight core commitments, the governments and signatory companies have committed to implement agreed actions in the context of a broader landscape-level approach and full alignment with the National REDD+ Strategy, the Ghana Cocoa Sector Development Strategy II and other relevant national strategies and plans.

With respect to forest protection and restoration, the Ghana government and signatory companies have committed to a multi-stakeholder landscape approach that will form the basis for the interventions, with an initial focus on the six priority Climate Smart Cocoa Hotspot Intervention Areas (HIAs) as defined under the GCFRP. Ghana's government and the signatory companies have also committed to the promotion of climate smart cocoa (CSC) and the national CSC standard in environmentally suitable areas.

The Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA) is one of the significant and key global public-private partnerships aimed at addressing agricultural commodity-driven deforestation. Founded in 2012 at Rio+20 by the Consumer Goods Forum, TFA is a global public-private partnership in which partners take voluntary actions, individually and in combination, to reduce tropical deforestation associated with agro-commodity production and sourcing. One of the key initiatives of the TFA is the Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI), which aims to transition the oil palm sector in West and Central Africa to become a sustainable driver of long-term, low carbon development in a socially beneficial and environmentally sustainable way. In Ghana, oil palm companies, in addition to adhering to the RSPO Principles and Criteria¹, are also actively engaged in APOI, working to eliminate deforestation and other social risks from oil palm production.

1.4. Overview of the environmental and social issues inherent in agricultural and forestry commodities production landscape

Preserving and restoring forests is critical to averting climate change dangers and achieving global climate goals. According to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, about 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions are tied to deforestation, with up to 20% of all the abatement potential identified in the land use sector. Forests are also extremely important for food security, water security and livelihoods; hence, conserving and restoring forests features prominently in the Sustainable Development Goals approved by the United Nations in 2015. Production of forest-risk agro-commodities, such as oil palm, cocoa and rubber, contributes to food security, socio-economic development and livelihood enhancement; however, these commodities are significant drivers of deforestation. In Ghana, the production of cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber are partly responsible for the high deforestation in the agro-forest mosaic landscape.

Besides the environmental challenges, the production landscape is saddled with a myriad of social issues, particularly land and tree tenure, access to land, child labour, smallholder inclusion and gender inequality. The agro-production landscape in Ghana is dominated by smallholder farmers who produce at a relatively small scale and with family labour. Consequently, the incidence of child labour is quite high. Furthermore, the widespread informal labour practice in the production landscape predisposes some people to unfair labour practices. In a mainly male dominated society, gender inequality and abuse are quite widespread throughout the production landscape.

1 The **RSPO Principles and Criteria** (P&C) are a set of stringent standards for sustainable palm oil production, which **RSPO** members must comply with.

Box 3: Why these issues?

Agro-commodity supply chain companies are committed to working towards production practices that are free from deforestation and exploitation of workers and local communities, and they have sought to achieve these practices by tracing their supply chains back to the producers and requiring them to take necessary actions. However, many issues are not under the control of a single actor in the landscape; hence, there will be greater impact if many organisations collaborate to achieve the same end. There are many different drivers of deforestation, and they are often beyond the control of existing supply chains and producers. Government actions and enforcement and community engagement are usually necessary to address deforestation.

Similarly, social issues are often sector-wide. Child labour and forced or trafficked labour can be hidden in an individual supply chain, and action taken by a single producer may drive exploited labourers to other less ethical producers. Hence, concerted efforts are needed sector-wide to address the conditions that allow exploitation to flourish, and supply chain companies are increasingly seeing the need for complementary actions at a landscape scale to achieve wider, more transformational impact.

1.5. The views of CSOs on the environmental and social issues inherent in agro-commodity production

Local and international CSOs have been at the forefront of campaigns advocating for national government and private companies to address the environmental and social challenges inherent in agro-commodity production. CSOs and international development organisations have played a watchdog role by constantly raising the red flag at both local and international levels on the negative impacts of forest-risk commodity production and the inherent socio-economic issues, such as unfair labour practices, child labour and gender inequality. Besides raising red flags, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups have also played lead roles in advocating sustainable production practices that guarantee the economic and social rights of communities and enhance gender equality across the agriculture and forestry sectors. These groups have advocated for policy directives and have been credible stakeholders in policy development processes in Ghana.

Civil society groups and NGOs, such as Civic Response, Forest Watch Ghana, Care International, World Wildlife Fund, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Tropenbos, Friends of the Earth and EcoCare, have been advocating for more sustainable, low impact forest-risk commodity production systems. These CSOs are also active in carrying out interventions that are directly aimed at avoiding deforestation and forest degradation.

Social and gender-specific civil society groups, such as Abantu for Development, WILDAF, COLANDEF, etc., have been spearheading advocacy campaigns and sensitisation and training on gender and human rights issues in the agriculture and forestry sectors. These groups have strongly advocated for gender mainstreaming in the natural resource and agriculture sectors and the elimination of practices and norms that are discriminatory against women and minority groups within the production landscape.

2. The GCFRP

2.1. Overview of GCFRP and how it aims to address the identified issues

The Ghana government's move to articulate the world's first commodity-based landscape-level Emission Reduction Programme has culminated in the Forest FCPF-funded GCFRP: one of the five programmatic interventions and a cross-cutting policy-focused initiative, which Ghana is pursuing in the implementation phase of REDD+. The GCFRP represents an innovative and highly ambitious approach that seeks to significantly reduce emissions by reducing the high rates of deforestation and degradation in the 5.9 million ha agro-forest mosaic landscape within Ghana's High Forest Zone. This is envisaged to be achieved through the promotion of appropriate climate smart cocoa production approaches, including intensification and yield enhancement throughout the agro-forest mosaic landscape with focus on six priority HIAs.

Launched on October 4 2019, the GCFRP represents the largest fully functional jurisdictional programme in Ghana that provides the framework for engaging multiple government institutions, private sector, civil society, traditional authority and community representatives in addressing the key deforestation and forest degradation issues as well as community livelihood improvement while building climate resilience. GCFRP is designed to be implemented in a manner that will secure the future of Ghana's forests and significantly improve incomes and livelihood opportunities for farmers and forest users. A results-based planning and implementation framework has been established through which the government, the private sector, civil society, traditional authorities and local communities can collaborate for the implementation of the programme. The programme articulates a wider and deeper level of integration and engagement with different stakeholders and offers the most credible and practical opportunities for all relevant stakeholders to meet their sustainability commitments, as it has an underpinning emission reduction payments agreement fully executed between the Ghana government and the World Bank.

2.2. Actual environmental and social issues being addressed by the GCFRP

The REDD+ mechanism is aimed at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and ensuring sustainable management of forests and forest conservation as well as enhancing carbon stocks. The FC has proposed some strategy options to address identified drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the country. However, the successful implementation of these strategy options may be hindered by existing challenges in the agro-forest mosaic landscape. There are also some potential environmental and social impacts that could result from the implementation of the strategy options. The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment process was used to identify the likely environmental/social challenges or risks that need to be addressed to minimise adverse environmental/social impacts during programme implementation. Key environmental and social issues that the GCFRP seeks to address are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Key environmental and social issues being addressed by the GCFRP

Key environmental issues that the GCFR considers	Context
High rates of deforestation and degradation from agricultural expansion	Low productivity, limited financial and technical support for good agricultural practices
Protection of key river/water bodies	Loss of buffer vegetation and the development of buffer zones around key rivers into forest
Loss or declining on-farm shade tree density	Insecurity of land and tree tenure
Soil and water quality concerns	From increasing agrochemical usage
Soil fertility and farm erosion issues affecting optimum productivity	Need to promote agroforestry and good agricultural practices
Key social issues	
Illegal farms/settlements in forest reserves	Compatibility with forest conservation principles
Unfulfilled compensation arrangements	Increasing shade trees in existing cocoa farms
Limited/inadequate access to land for farming	Land tenure and ownership right
Lack of sustainable alternative livelihood schemes leading to over-dependence on forests	People/farmers/communities heavily dependent on forest resources
Restricted women's access and right to tenure and ownership of land and natural resources	Challenges due to cultural, traditional norms and customs
Customary land acquisition and conflicts limiting on-farm investments	Undocumented and informal land tenure regime
Women's multiple roles in household, production and reproduction limit their free time to engage effectively in other social and economic ventures/activities	Entrenched cultural and traditional practices and orientations

2.3. Pillars and summary of activities of the GCFRP

The interventions and associated activities to be implemented for achieving the programme's objectives are organised according to the programme's six main pillars. These are:

- A. Forest reserve, rehabilitation and restoration** through enrichment planting, modified Taungya system, assisted natural regeneration and job creation.
- B. Institutional coordination and monitoring reporting and verification (MRV)** to operationalise the Joint Coordinating Committee, operationalise the Programme Management Unit, monitor activities/MRV/data management, enforce law and create climate smart cocoa (CSC) HIAs.
- C. Landscape planning within HIAs** to establish CSC consortium for HIAs, complete HIA landscape management plans, implement HIA landscape management plans and establish climate smart cocoa landscape validation in HIAs.

- D. Increasing yields via climate smart cocoa** by developing CSC good practices guidelines, CSC engagement package in HIAs, HIA CSC consortium implements with farmers and increased transparency in cocoa purchase.
- E. Risk management and finance** through access to financial credit for CSC, access to yield insurance, marketing additional ERs above FCPF, branding emission reduction cocoa and sustainable finance of HIAs.
- F. Legislative and policy reforms** through passage of legislation, reform and implementation of government policies and modification to customary norms and practices.

2.4. GCFRP implementation approach

The implementation structure of the GCFRP includes engaging multiple government institutions, the private sector, civil society, traditional authorities and community representatives.

2.4.1. Key implementation actors

Key implementation actors comprise the:

- I.** Joint Coordinating Committee, which approves overall/annual planning of the GCFRP implementation and coordinates intergovernmental collaboration and communication.
- II.** Programme Management Unit, which coordinates GCFRP MRV, safeguards data management operations and prepares annual plans and implementation reports.
- III.** HIA consortium partners (CSOs, NGOs, Licensed Buying Companies, chocolate companies) to conclude formal agreements with clear roles and responsibilities of the consortium partners.
- IV.** Landscape Management Board, which comprises farmer groups, sub-HIAs and traditional authorities, to implement landscape management plans.

2.5. The overall process of engaging implementing partners

The overall process of engaging implementing partners includes:

- I.** Signing a Memorandum of Understanding, which spells out the roles of each partner (other partners may join later).
- II.** Developing an action plan, which details the activities to be undertaken within the intervention area.
- III.** Developing an overarching management plan for the HIAs.
- IV.** Developing and inaugurating a landscape governance board.
- V.** Signing a landscape management agreement (essentially to indicate roles and responsibilities and allow government to trade transfer titles to ERs).
- VI.** Launching the HIA/project.
- VII.** Launching the sub-project(s) activities.
- VIII.** Implementing activities and actions.
- IX.** Keeping records on respecting and addressing both social and environmental safeguards.

- X. Monitoring and reporting ERs (MRV).
- XI. Distributing any payment for ERs according to the Benefit Sharing Plan.
- XII. Monitoring and evaluation.
- XIII. Reporting.

2.6. Existing policy and legal framework

The development and implementation of the GCFRP is guided by several national policy, legal and regulatory frameworks. The key frameworks are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: An overview of the national policy and legal frameworks that align with the GCFRP

Relevant national policies, strategies and development priorities	Overview
National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) (2012)	The NCCP was developed in 2012 with the vision of ensuring a climate resilient and climate compatible economy while achieving sustainable development through equitable low carbon economic growth.
National Climate Change Policy Action Programme for Implementation: 2015–2020	The purpose of the national climate change master plan is to put in place robust measures needed to address the challenges posed by climate change and climate vulnerability. Policy Focus Area 4 seeks to design and implement interventions that increase carbon sinks.
The 2012 Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy	This is the parent sector policy aimed at the conservation and sustainable development of forest and wildlife resources in Ghana.
Ghana Forest Plantation Strategy 2015–2040	The goal of this strategy is to achieve a sustainable supply of planted forest goods and services to deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits.
National Environment Policy 2014	The National Environment Policy commits to the principle of optimum sustainable exploitation of the ecosystem resources. The policy recognises serious environmental challenges facing Ghana, including loss of biodiversity, land degradation, deforestation and desertification, wildfires, illegal mining, and air and water pollution.
The National Tree Crops Policy	The policy states the vision as “a competitive and sustainable tree crops subsector, with focus on value chain development and improved technologies to create job opportunities, ensure food security, enhance the environment and improve livelihoods”.
Ghana Cocoa Sector Development Strategy (CSDS) II (2015)	The focus of the CSDS II is on sustainability through economic empowerment of smallholder cocoa farmers. The vision is to create a modernised, resilient and competitive cocoa environment where all stakeholders strive toward a sustainable cocoa economy in which farmers and their communities can thrive.
National Climate Smart Agriculture and Food	The Action Plan is an effort to translate the broad national goals and objectives in climate smart agriculture to the ground level.

Security Action Plan (2016–2020)	
The Cocoa and Forest Initiative (CFI) Joint Framework for Action (2018)	The CFI Joint Framework for Action commits the Ghana government and private companies to work together to end deforestation and promote forest protection and restoration in the cocoa supply chain in Ghana. The Framework defines core commitments, verifiable actions and time bound targets required for a deforestation-free and forest positive cocoa supply chain in Ghana. It is structured around forest protection and restoration, sustainable production and farmers’ livelihood, and community engagement and social inclusion.
Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)	The FLEGT initiative (as part of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement) and the projects under Ghana’s FIP all provide a strong set of complementary channels for addressing the major drivers of deforestation and degradation in the Emission Reduction Programme landscape and for moving forward in a performance-based and climate smart manner.
Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI)	The APOI of the TFA aims to help transition the palm oil sector in West and Central Africa to become a sustainable driver of long-term, low carbon development in a way that is socially beneficial and protects the tropical forests of the region. APOI is working with stakeholders in the oil palm sector at both national and regional levels to develop acceptable principles for responsible oil palm development in Central and West Africa.
National Gender Policy (2015)	The overarching goal of this policy is to mainstream gender equality concerns into the national development processes by improving the social, legal, civic, political, economic and socio-cultural conditions of the people of Ghana, particularly women, girls, children, the vulnerable and people with special needs (i.e. people with disability and the marginalised).
Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS)	The LCDS is to support the implementation of policies that will assess the most efficient and cost-effective way of achieving a low carbon development path. The mission of the LCDS is to provide a framework that will ensure climate resilient, equitable, low-emission economic growth and development as well as providing opportunities for sustainable development benefits in a cost-effective manner. The overall objective of this strategy is to contribute to global climate change mitigation through the development of an economically efficient and comprehensive LCDS for Ghana together with a MRV system and an action plan.
Ghana’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (GH - INDC)	Based on its national circumstances, Ghana has put forward mitigation and adaptation actions in its INDC. The inclusion of both mitigation and adaptation in the INDC resonate with the medium-term development agenda (Ghana Shared Growth Development Agenda II). In all, 20 mitigation and 11 adaptation programme of actions in 7 priority economic sectors are being proposed for implementation in the ten-year period (2020–2030). The implementation of the actions is expected to help attain low carbon climate resilience through effective adaptation and greenhouse gas ER in the following priority sectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable land use, including food security • Climate proof infrastructure • Equitable social development • Sustainable mass transportation • Sustainable energy security • Sustainable forest management, and • Alternative urban waste management. The 31 programme actions will drive the strategic focus of a “10-year post-2020 enhanced climate action plan”, which will be developed after Paris.

2.7. Major initiatives in the GCFRP landscape

There exist several initiatives within the GCFRP landscape that are aimed at ensuring increased productivity of cocoa and environmental sustainability. Although some of the initiatives predate the GCFRP, their aims and objectives are consistent with those of the GCFRP. The key GCFRP initiatives are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Some of the initiatives and interventions in the GCFRP landscape

Name of initiative	Aim/issues (deforestation, labour, smallholders, land title, gender, other)	Location	Lead organisation and partners	Timeframe	Status	Contact (link, contact person, etc.)
Mondelez Cocoa Life Programme	Deforestation, smallholder productivity enhancement, community and farmer livelihood, gender, youth and child labour	Western North, Ashanti, Ahafo, Eastern and Central regions	Mondelez, Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Vision International, Institute for Democratic Governance Abantu, Right to Play	2012–2022	Ongoing	https://www.cocoalife.org/
Forest Investment Programme	Deforestation, forest protection and restoration, landscape restoration	Throughout the High Forest Zone	FC, COCOBOD	2016–2021	Ongoing	http://www.fcghana.org/page.php?page=266&section=28&typ=1
Additional Financing for Ghana Forest Investment Programme (FIP) - Enhancing Natural Forest and Agro-forest Landscapes Project	Support for plantation development to expand holding and improve quality. Deforestation, forest protection and restoration, landscape restoration of mined out areas	Throughout the High Forest Zone	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, FC, COCOBOD	2020–2023	Ongoing	http://mlnr.gov.gh/index.php/programs-projects/ghana-forest-investment-program-fip/

Name of initiative	Aim/issues (deforestation, labour, smallholders, land title, gender, other)	Location	Lead organisation and partners	Timeframe	Status	Contact (link, contact person, etc.)
Environmentally Sustainable Practices in Cocoa Landscapes (ESP I and II)	Support for good environmental practices in cocoa landscape, carbon stock enhancement and habitat restoration in cocoa landscape, support for collaborative community resource management.	Throughout the cocoa landscape	UNDP, COCOBOD	2016–2022	Ongoing	https://www.gh.undp.org/content/ghana/en/home/operations/projects/environment_and_energy/ESP11.html
Cocoa Rehabilitation and Intensification Phase II (CORIP II)	CORIP II focuses on large-scale adoption of sustainable intensification of cocoa production by improving farmers' access to recommended inputs (planting material, fertilizer, crop protection), extension advice and other services (including finance) through small- and medium-scale enterprises.	Selected cocoa landscape in Ghana	FC, COCOBOD, Pan African Savings and Loans, Touton	2018–2022	Ongoing	

Name of initiative	Aim/issues (deforestation, labour, smallholders, land title, gender, other)	Location	Lead organisation and partners	Timeframe	Status	Contact (link, contact person, etc.)
From Full Sun to Shaded Cocoa Agroforestry (SCAFS)	SCAFS aims to establish a balanced approach to cocoa production and forest protection while supporting cocoa businesses to implement transparent deforestation-free supply chains in Ghana.	The cocoa mosaic landscapes in the western part of Bia National Park and Bia North Forest Reserve in the Bia West District of Western North	SNV, FC, COCOBOD, Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana, Bia West District Assembly	2016–2022	Ongoing	https://snv.org/project/full-sun-shaded-cocoa-agro-forestry-systems-scafs
Partnership for Livelihoods and Forest Landscape Management	Deforestation, forests protection and landscape restoration	Western region	Rainforest Alliance and Olam	2017–2021	Ongoing	https://partnershipsforforests.com/partnerships-projects/rainforest-alliance-olam-partnership-livelihoods-forest-landscape-management-western-ghana/
Partnership for Productivity, Protection and Resilience in Cocoa Landscapes	Deforestation, forest protection, landscape restoration and productivity through climate smart cocoa	Western region	Touton, SNV, Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC), COCOBOD, FC, Agro Eco Louis Bulk Institute	2017–2022	Ongoing	http://www.3prcocoalandscape.com/

3. Engagement principles for GCFRP

Agro-commodity companies and organisations are committed to reducing deforestation, enhancing community livelihood, removing forced/child labour, improving labour conditions and gender equality, and supporting smallholder inclusion in production landscapes. Increasingly, the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration for large-scale impact is becoming clear and rapidly being embraced by production landscape actors. Multi-stakeholder jurisdictional initiatives are being developed in many locations, but how does a company decide **which initiative to support, on what issues and where?**

GCFRP is the largest fully functional multi-stakeholder jurisdictional programme. It provides the engagement framework for multiple government institutions, the private sector, civil society, traditional authorities and community representatives when addressing key deforestation, forest degradation and community livelihood issues while building climate resilience. With its underpinning ER payments agreement fully executed between the Ghana government and the World Bank, the programme offers the most credible and practical opportunities for all relevant stakeholders to meet their sustainability commitments.

The 'Guidance on Engagement Principles on Landscape Initiatives' is a step-by-step guide intended to help companies and organisations engage effectively with the GCFRP and associated initiatives to deliver on their responsible production/sourcing policy commitments. The ten unique steps designed to help companies and organisations align with jurisdictional initiatives are outlined in the following sections.

3.1. Understand your landscape risks and opportunities

Governments, companies and organisations are under increasing pressure from consumers and campaigners to address the risks associated with commodity production and sourcing across regions. For any of these entities it is important as a first step to identify the main risks and the issues associated with the landscape of interest. The production of commodities, such as cocoa, oil palm and rubber, is fraught with risks and issues, such as deforestation, land tenure, dwindling resource base, child labour, low productivity and gender inequality practices.

Deforestation is inherent in the production of most agro-commodities in Ghana, as land preparation for crop production almost always involves clearing forests. The agro-forest mosaic landscape in Ghana has a relatively high deforestation rate driven mainly by farm expansion, with cocoa being the single most significant driver of deforestation in the landscape. Cocoa farm expansion into forested areas is driven by the desire to increase crop output and income levels. Smallholder farmers usually have low yields on existing farms, caused by inadequate farmer knowledge of sustainable cocoa production and limited financial and technical support for good agricultural practices.

In Ghana, land ownership is mainly customary and vested in traditional leaders and families. Different kinds of tenurial arrangements are practiced in different parts of the country. In most cases, farmers only have user rights to the land they farm on and often without tenure security. Insecurity of tenure has proven to be a great disincentive for the right investment on the land. There are issues of tree tenure and legal disincentives to maintaining trees on farms, a lack of land use planning and landscape management, and a tendency for cocoa stakeholders to work in silos.

The insecurities in land and tree tenure have been aggravated by the legal framework in Ghana, which vests all natural resources, including trees, for and on behalf of the people. Although off-reserve areas in Ghana are managed mainly for agricultural production, the government, through the FC, reserves the right to allocate naturally regenerated trees in off-reserve areas for logging, including those on farms, although with prior consent of the farm owner. Tree tenure, particularly naturally regenerated trees (as seen now in Ghana), does not guarantee any right to the farmers who nurture them. Hence, there is no motivation for farmers to retain trees on their farms. The challenges in the administration of tree user rights for land users/landowners is a key driver of deforestation and the decline in tree cover in the off-reserve areas within the main agro-forest mosaic landscape in Ghana.

Smallholder production of agro-commodities is primarily a family venture that is carried out with family labour, and hence, children becoming involved with on-farm activities is often inevitable, thereby prompting the risk of child labour. In the last decade, child labour has been a burning issue in agro-commodity production, particularly in cocoa, and the two leading producers of cocoa, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, have come under great scrutiny. Understanding landscape issues and risks is the first step in the engagement principles for landscape initiatives. It is also key to identifying existing and potential opportunities and deciding on what, where and how to engage in a jurisdictional initiative to address those risks and maximise the benefits.

Step 1 decisions: Understanding your landscape

- i.** Review policies and key performance indicators to identify the most important objectives for your commitments that align with GCFRP objectives (e.g. eliminating deforestation, child labour, supporting smallholders, enhancing gender equalities).
- ii.** Decide which locations are relevant for your specific commitment.
- iii.** Explore available opportunities in each location.
- iv.** Identify the main risks and issues that need to be addressed.
- v.** Prioritise issues to be addressed and the drivers of those issues.
- vi.** Identify relevant stakeholders and understand their intentions and interests.

3.2. Decide which scale of engagement is appropriate

The key issues inherent in agro-commodity production landscapes occur at different scales, and hence, they should be addressed at the appropriate level. While some issues cut across an entire landscape, others are locality specific and relevant to limited areas within a landscape. It is therefore imperative that socio-cultural and environmental issues are properly understood and addressed at the relevant scale to ensure maximum results and impact.

a. Under the GCFRP, landscape approaches are best suited for issues such as:

- i.** Deforestation (forest monitoring system)
- ii.** Productivity improvement
- iii.** Livelihood improvement
- iv.** Tree tenure
- v.** Gender mainstreaming
- vi.** Labour/child labour.

b. Locality-specific approaches are best suited for issues such as:

- i.** Land tenure
- ii.** Gender mainstreaming
- iii.** Low productivity
- iv.** Competing uses of land
- v.** Land degradation
- vi.** Alternate/additional livelihood options
- vii.** Market access.

Governments, companies and organisations have embarked on countless interventions to address the risks, issues and challenges that have characterised agro-commodity production in Ghana. Further, companies and organisations have typically been working in silos towards individual project goals, which are often restricted in scope, scale and time, and have only produced marginal results. However, the environmental and social issues inherent with agro-commodity production are not restricted to just one community or farmers within a restricted area. Instead, they are very often widespread throughout the production landscape, and therefore, they require interventions that transcend supply sheds/bases for maximum effect and impact. On issues such as deforestation, child labour, gender inequality and disease outbreak, change is needed across the landscape; there is need for collaboration among stakeholders through landscape or jurisdictional approaches and sector-wide initiatives to achieve impact.

This notwithstanding, some locality-specific agro-commodity production issues, such as land tenure, low productivity, competing uses of land and land degradation, may be better addressed in restricted areas within a supply shed, since an omnibus solution may not work effectively. Companies and organisations need to understand which issues within the production landscape are best addressed through collective action at landscape scale, or through action across a sector, and which are better addressed by localised supplier engagement.

Step 2 decision: Decide which scale of engagement is appropriate

For your scale of engagement:

- i. Analyse the scale of root causes of the issues identified.
- ii. Determine which approach (landscape or locality-specific) will be most effective in achieving change.
- iii. Decide which of your objectives are best addressed through collective action at the chosen scale.
- iv. Understand that where root causes involve multiple actors, collaboration will be needed to achieve impact.

3.3. Identify and assess initiatives that align with GCFRP

For a stakeholder seeking to address risks and issues in the production landscape, a key step in the engagement principles is to identify the initiatives that are working for issues relevant to your commitments.

The key preliminary question for stakeholders to ask is:

- Is there already a national, sub-national, or sectoral level initiative that addresses my specific commitments?

For stakeholders in the deforestation-risk commodities sector, there currently exist many initiatives throughout the GCFRP landscape that seek to address key social and environmental challenges associated with commodity production. These include:

- i. **Partnership for Productivity, Protection and Resilience in Cocoa Landscapes (3PRCL)** with Touton SA, COCOBOD, FC, Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), Agro-Eco and NCRC to address the drivers of deforestation. This project is being implemented in the Juaboso-Bia Landscape of the Western North region.

- ii. **Partnership for Livelihoods and Forest Landscape Management (2017–2021)** with Partnership for Forests, Rainforest Alliance, Olam, COCOBOD, FC, Wiawso Traditional Council, Local Government and farming communities.
- iii. **Mondelez International Cocoa Life Programme** with UNDP, COCOBOD and FC.
- iv. **Kakum Cocoa Agroforestry Landscape Project** with NCRC, Hershey, COCOBOD and FC.
- v. **The Asunafo-Asutifi Landscape Programme** with FC, COCOBOD, Proforest and World Cocoa Foundation.

It is important to assess and determine how closely the goals of an initiative match with your policy commitments. It is also necessary to review the governance structure of the initiatives to understand whether there is broad inclusion and buy-in from relevant stakeholders in the landscape (including local and international companies, CSOs and government) and whether there is general alignment with the GCFRP governance structure.

Step 3 decision: Identify the existing initiatives that are working on the issues relevant to your commitments and determine whether:

- i. There is general alignment with the GCFRP governance structure.
- ii. There is alignment with your commitments.
- iii. The initiative seeks to build a multi-stakeholder platform.
- iv. The initiative involves and supports GCFRP goals.
- v. There are planned activities to address the issues identified.
- vi. The initiative learns from past experiences and approaches that did not progress.
- vii. The initiative demonstrates openness to collaborate with other stakeholders.
- viii. Your goals/interests will be achieved by supporting the initiative and to what extent.
- ix. There is receptiveness in the existing stakeholder platform.

3.4. Understand the local perspectives and motivation in relation to the global agenda

Understanding the local perspective of an initiative is essential in determining whether to align with it or not. While the aims of an initiative may align with your commitments, the implementation strategy may be completely different. For example, several of the existing initiatives within the GCFRP HIAs are geared towards addressing deforestation. However, in practice, the approach to reducing deforestation may be different from the expectation of some companies and organisations, especially those downstream in the supply chain. Upstream companies undertaking landscape-level initiatives are aiming to reduce deforestation by improving productivity and livelihoods. This is facilitated by input and technical support as well as market incentives, such as premiums for sustainable production. By increasing productivity, which translates into increased income and better livelihoods, farmers are less likely to expand farms into nearby forests and deforestation is reduced.

Initiatives that aim to reduce deforestation by cutting or restraining production will have little resonance at the local level if those initiatives do not create positive outcomes for local communities (e.g. through improved livelihoods, better markets or greater security of land rights). It is important to understand local motivation and perspectives, so that there are common expectations, appropriate incentives and an alignment of objectives.

Box 4: Specific local perspective on key social issue

Another issue where local perspective is very important is child labour. For some initiatives, such as the Mondelez Cocoa Life Programme, child labour is a child welfare and development issue, and hence, their approach for dealing with this issue hinges on working with local government agencies and community leaders to provide child welfare and development facilities in the programme communities. For the Cocoa Life Programme, parents are less likely to take their children with them to work on the farm, where hazardous conditions are likely, if there is a safe child welfare facility in the community.

The Ghana Rubber Estate Limited is also addressing the issue of child labour by providing educational and recreational facilities for off-school days in their nucleus estates, to ensure children do not accompany their parents to work in the plantation during vacations and non-school days.

Step 4 decision: Understanding local perspectives of the initiative in relation to the global agenda

Through direct and indirect local engagement and research:

- i. Identify issues that matter to local stakeholders (e.g. livelihoods, productivity, health) – not only the issues that relate to your commitments (i.e. you meet your objectives by meeting the needs of the local people).
- ii. Clarify what support the initiative needs from local and external sources (including your organisation).
- iii. Understand local timeframes and planning contexts.
- iv. Be aware of local stakeholder engagement approaches and power relations.

3.5. Decide what support you can provide

At the landscape level, consortium members and collaborators are expected to pool resources (financial, technical and logistical) to carry out the programmes and activities that have been outlined in the management plan for the initiative. The support that a consortium member brings on board may depend on its position in the supply chain.

For the GCFRP, the government, through its agencies and statutory organisations, provides coordination, law enforcement, policy direction and credibility, advocacy, technical support, etc., for the proper functioning of the initiatives. Civil society partners in consortiums for landscape initiatives typically play the role of facilitator and work to ensure a level playing field for the companies that are working together pre-competitively within the landscape. Other such organisations leverage their institutional capacity to provide relevant services, such as training and capacity building.

Upstream companies with a direct or indirect physical presence in the landscape may support the initiative with local contacts, infrastructure, technical staff and on-ground investment. By contrast, downstream companies with no physical or direct presence in the landscape may support an initiative with financial investments, technical or logistical support, (including training and capacity building for farmers in best management practices), advocacy or communication on international platforms, experience-sharing and piloting new approaches, and purchasing agreements, such as buying commitments, preferential sourcing, long-term contracts and better premiums.

The effective functioning of the initiative depends on the equitable contributions and support of consortium members and collaborators, in diverse ways, based on their unique strengths and potential. Alignment with any of the ongoing initiatives under the GCFRP area provides a good opportunity and avenue for companies to meet their policy commitments at scale in a cost-effective way. Stakeholders that have signed on to the CFI Joint Framework for Action, for example, have good opportunities to meet their commitments by aligning and collaborating with ongoing landscape initiatives in any of the GCFRP HIAs.

Step 5 decision: Deciding on what kind of support to provide

Different types of support may be appropriate at different stages of the supply chain. Actions may include:

- i.** Purchasing agreements, such as buying commitments, preferential sourcing, long-term contracts, or premiums.
- ii.** Technical or logistical support, including training and capacity building for stakeholders in best management practices and alternatives.
- iii.** Development of additional livelihood models.
- iv.** Sharing experience and piloting new approaches and technologies.
- v.** Infrastructure investment.
- vi.** Advocacy or communication.
- vii.** Set up traceability systems (safeguards and MRV).

3.6. Consider how to engage (engaging on the GCFRP)

The implementation process of the GCFRP requires HIA Consortium Partners (government institutions, CSOs, NGOs, private sector companies) and the Landscape Management Board (local government, communities, and traditional authorities) to conclude formal agreements with clear roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. In practice, a stakeholder's opportunity to engage varies according to its position in the landscape in relation to its commitment. Either way, a stakeholder must firmly commit to engaging in a landscape initiative with a clear distinction of their specific role and function.

With regards to any of the ongoing and future initiatives under the GCFRP, partners are required to sign a landscape framework agreement, essentially to define roles and responsibilities. However, upstream or downstream companies may choose to play their role by proxy through another organisation with which it has an established working relationship. This may be the case of a downstream company that sources from the landscape but has no direct physical presence in the landscape.

Step 6 decision: Engaging on the GCFRP

Your engagement with stakeholders on the GCFRP may include:

- i.** Signing a Memorandum of Understanding, which spells out the roles of each partner.
- ii.** Developing an action plan, which details the activities to be undertaken within the intervention area.
- iii.** Developing an overarching management plan for the HIA.
- iv.** Developing and inaugurating a landscape governance board.
- v.** Signing a landscape management agreement (essentially to indicate roles and responsibilities, allowing government to trade transfer titles to ERs).
- vi.** Developing a safeguards action plan.
- vii.** Implementing agreed actions in a collective action plan.
- viii.** Developing a monitoring, evaluation and learning plan to monitor, measure and report project activities.
- ix.** Conducting a periodic MRV based on the National MRV system.
- x.** Providing regular feedback on process.

3.7. Discuss your specific role

Under the GCFRP implementation plan, consortium members in an HIA enter into a compact that spells out the terms of engagement and the specific role of each partner. The compact enables consortium partners to define and agree on their respective roles. A company's role should be based on their institutional capacity and expertise. Some of the key specific activities/roles that consortium partners can take up include:

- i.** Leading in the set-up of HIA structures.
- ii.** Training and capacity development in CSC standards.
- iii.** Training in sustainability and productivity practices in the agro-commodity production system.
- iv.** Forest monitoring.
- v.** Additional and/or alternate livelihood development.
- vi.** Forest protection and landscape restoration.

This should be based on the local perspectives and needs identified in Step 4 as well as the types of support the company or companies can bring on board (Step 5). A consortium member may, for instance, not have the technical expertise to lead in any of the above roles but may have the financial resources to finance some of the programme activities or use its position and network to leverage the investments needed for these programmes. A consortium partner may also take up the role of facilitator to coordinate the effective and timely implementation of the agreed programmes and report back to partners.

It is useful to set out jointly what the consortium partners expect to happen and when and to align these processes with existing programme timeframes. Distinct phases of implementation may be identified, with the expectations for delivery clearly defined at each stage. Agreeing to this can be a slow process because the multiple actors in the consortium may have contrary or competing demands.

Step 7 decision: Operationalise your role

To operationalise your role in an initiative, you must:

- i. Agree with other landscape stakeholders on how your interventions will be implemented.
- ii. Identify on which side of the supply chain you have comparative advantage.
- iii. Determine what you can leverage to make maximum impact in the partnership.
- iv. Determine the role that is best suited for you and agree with your partners how you deploy your contribution.

3.8. Coordination and communication

Government agencies, companies and CSOs operate at different speeds. Company teams often feel pressured to deliver project outputs on time and show rapid progress, for both internal and external audiences. However, for initiatives involving several partners, there is need for partners to reach consensus on all issues on outcomes of the initiative and for all partners to be clear with respect to their roles, contribution and expectation before any information is communicated to external entities. Any claims made about progress and impacts need to be agreed among all parties so that there is a common, evidence-based narrative.

At this stage, it may be helpful to develop a communications protocol for partners to agree on what should be communicated and when. The communications protocol should factor in the key performance indicators (KPIs) and timelines that partners have agreed upon and incorporated into their expectations. This way, communications about the KPIs, timelines and expectations can be shared and agreed upon.

Step 8 decision: Coordinate on communication

Try to ensure alignment among all partners – the initiative, private sector partners and CSOs – on what you communicate and when. To help achieve this:

- i. Plan communications ahead of time to allow for approvals and revision by communication teams and senior management.
- ii. Allocate a lead for communication within each partner organisation.
- iii. Ensure that all partners' claims are aligned and credible.
- iv. Consider taking on dedicated, shared support for communication.
- v. Consider a shared communications strategy.
- vi. Put in place a professional communications person if deemed appropriate.

3.9. Agree on governance structure

Companies at different levels of the supply chain are likely to have different levels of engagement in ongoing management. As part of the ongoing management, partners agree on financial management and reporting protocols. This is key and important for downstream partners, which may not be physically present in the landscape but may make financial contributions to fund collaborative landscape-level programmes. Through an investment plan, partners agree on protocols for mobilising funds and in-kind contributions to implement agreed landscape programmes. As part of ongoing management of partnerships, a dispute resolution

mechanism and other multi-stakeholder platform management systems must be developed and agreed upon amongst partners. All these systems should be clearly stated in the compact of the consortium.

Step 9 decision: Agree on governance structure

Develop management processes and protocols that set out how the partnerships will work. For example:

- i. Establish coordination processes, meeting schedules and decision-making roles.
- ii. Agree whether you need a facilitator or secretariat to administer the partnership, and if so, how this will be provided.
- iii. Develop documentation, including a non-disclosure agreement, Memorandum of Understanding, anti-trust statement, and data sharing protocols to clarify and formalise relationships.
- iv. Agree how company support (financial and practical) will be managed, accessed and accounted for.
- v. Establish a process to deal with disagreements.
- vi. Agree how data will be collected, shared and fed into management of the initiative.
- vii. Agree on reporting structure.

3.10. Monitor, evaluate and act

Different tools and approaches are being developed to evaluate progress in landscapes and jurisdictions. These include the Landscape Standard and Verified Sourcing Areas models. They are at a preliminary stage, but can provide a basis for building monitoring indicators, which can also build on companies' own KPIs for engagement in landscapes. For a landscape initiative involving several partners, there is the need for partners to agree on which tool and approach will be used to monitor and evaluate the performance. This must be agreed upon and clearly stated in the compact, which must be signed among the members and must be consistent with the MRV procedure of the GCFRP (if the initiative is aligned with the GCFRP).

Monitoring indicators need to be agreed across all partners in the initiative. Processes for progress evaluation and acting where progress is not meeting expectations should be agreed upon by all partners. In initiatives involving several companies and organisations, individual companies may have to put in place their own review mechanism of the effectiveness of the company's engagement. Further, it is important that each company or organisation carries out their performance evaluation to ascertain the effectiveness and impact of their work. A company can choose to increase its involvement to support greater progress if the initiative is not delivering or making the expected impact. However, setting clear rules to help decide under what conditions your company should disengage from an initiative can also be useful from the start.

Step 10 decision: Monitor, evaluate and act

Depending on the company's objectives for engagement in the landscape initiative, you may want to monitor specific aspects of implementation, such as:

- i. Identify who will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation.
- ii. Identify the indicators that you plan to monitor and common indicators across all partners.
- iii. Collect baseline data at the start to allow progress to be measured.
- iv. Consider using a monitoring framework that aligns with the GCFRP Monitoring Framework.

4. Conclusion

Deforestation and forest degradation are obviously major environment and development challenges confronting the world presently in Climate Change discussions. Governments, international development organizations and civil society groups all over the world are strongly united in efforts to tackle this potentially disastrous global crisis. In Ghana, the REDD+ mechanism is the government's chosen pathway to safeguard the integrity of Ghana's forest while ensuring sustainable development with a call on the private sector, development organizations, traditional authorities, local communities, and civil society groups to partner the government in the effort to stem the trend of deforestation and forest degradation. As one of the five programmatic interventions and a cross-cutting policy-focused initiative, which Ghana is pursuing in the results-based payment phase of REDD+, the GCFRP represents an innovative and highly ambitious approach that seeks to stem the high rates of deforestation and forest degradation in Ghana's High Forest Zone.

The GCFRP Guidance on Engagement Principles, provides a clear pathway for partnership among key stakeholders to support the national efforts at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. By providing the framework for engaging multiple government institutions, private sector, civil society, traditional authorities, and local communities in addressing key deforestation and community livelihood improvement while building climate resilience, the GCFRP provides a unique opportunity for key stakeholders in the agro-commodity production to engage in this important national policy process.

The ten unique steps in the guidance document are designed to help companies and organisations know how to practically engage effectively with the GCFRP and associated initiatives for mutual benefits. Significantly, the guidance provides a unique opportunity for companies and organizations to meet their corporate sustainability commitments whilst contributing to emission reductions and enhancement of livelihoods of communities in the agro-commodity landscapes. In its application, the guidance is intended to provide answers to the key question that private sector companies and organizations, particularly those without physical presence in Ghana, grapple with regarding how to practically engage and align with landscape initiatives.

Deforestation and forest degradation is a vicious cycle that has dire potential impacts on global environment, agricultural productivity, and livelihoods of local communities in agrarian landscapes. With partnership of all stakeholders including government institutions, traditional authorities, private sector companies, development organizations, civil society groups and guided by the GCFRP guidance, Ghana's ambition of significantly reducing emissions by reducing the high rates of deforestation and forest degradation would be a reality.



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