



LANDSCALE

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

August 2019

Section 1: Overview of LandScale

1. Why is LandScale needed?

The climate crisis, water depletion, biodiversity loss, and entrenched poverty are far-reaching and complex issues that affect us all. Yet no individual, community, business, or government can tackle them alone. We need to look beyond our own borders—be that of a farm, village or supply chain—to fully understand these threats and implement actions that will be effective in addressing them. We need to think bigger and collaborate between sectors and across entire jurisdictions and landscapes.

2. What is LandScale?

LandScale provides a standardized approach for assessing and communicating the sustainability performance of landscapes where key commodities are produced. Unlike traditional certification standards, LandScale does not prescribe practices. Instead, LandScale is designed to provide reliable information about the outcome of efforts to protect ecosystems, promote human well-being, improve governance, and optimise productivity at landscape scale. This information can be verified and made available via an online platform to enable credible communication of landscape sustainability performance. LandScale assessments help drive improvements in sustainability performance by informing locally relevant policies and management interventions, guiding sustainable sourcing and investment decisions, and creating market incentives for landscape sustainability.

3. What are the key components of LandScale?

- **An assessment framework:** a set of indicators and performance metrics which can be used to assess progress towards critical landscape sustainability goals relating to ecosystems, human well-being, governance, and production.
- **A verification mechanism:** a process for evaluating compliance with the guidelines for LandScale use and the accuracy of LandScale assessment results. In cases where LandScale users seek to make credible public claims about the results of LandScale assessments, LandScale will provide a process for verification by an independent, third-party entity. For situations where LandScale assessment results will be used for

risk assessment or internal decision making, other verification options will be provided that offer assurance of assessment results but with additional flexibility.

- **A data and results platform:** An online platform to store data and communicate the results of LandScale assessments. The platform may provide access to existing sources of data that can inform LandScale assessments. The platform will likely have private and public access areas.
- **Supporting tools:** Additional tools to support the various uses of LandScale are being explored. This may include tool(s) to assess a specific actor's contribution to or participation in a specific landscape or tools to support scenario modelling or risk assessment.

4. Who is behind LandScale?

LandScale is being developed and field tested by a growing coalition of global partners, led by Rainforest Alliance, Verra, and the Climate Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA), who form the Secretariat. To date, partners include EcoAgriculture Partners, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC), Proforest, and Solidaridad. A global advisory group, representing both subject matter experts and potential LandScale users, provides strategic input and guidance on the development of the LandScale initiative to help ensure it makes a significant contribution to driving improvements in landscape sustainability.

5. Who is funding LandScale?

The initiative is enabled through the support from the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the BHP Foundation's Environmental Resilience Global Signature Program.

Section 2: Value and benefits of LandScale

6. Who does LandScale aim to help?

LandScale aims to help both organizations involved in implementing jurisdictional or landscape approaches, as well as those sourcing commodities from or investing in rural landscapes. This could include: supply chain companies, donors, financial institutions, governments (national or local), producers, civil society, and local communities. The results of LandScale assessments will be particularly relevant to those involved in sectors that are highly dependent on natural resources, including agribusiness, forestry, extractives, and infrastructure.

7. How can LandScale drive improvements in sustainability at the landscape scale?

LandScale can help stakeholders with a presence or interest in a specific landscape to:

- **Identify landscape sustainability risks:** LandScale assessments will highlight critical environmental, socio-economic, and governance (ESG) issues and trends at landscape scale that may jeopardize projects, investments, or business activities in the future. This can spur timely action to address these issues.

- **Support collaborative landscape management:** Participants in jurisdictional approaches or landscape initiatives can use LandScale to measure progress towards their own milestones and adapt management interventions to achieve their sustainability goals.
- **Communicate landscape sustainability:** LandScale's standardized approach and independent verification mechanism enables credible and consistent communication of landscape sustainability performance. This can help those participating in landscape or jurisdictional approaches to communicate the impact of these efforts to key stakeholders. Credible reporting on landscape sustainability can also reassure investors and buyers that activities in a particular landscape will be sustainable.

Section 3: How will LandScale work?

8. How is the LandScale assessment framework structured?

The LandScale framework is structured hierarchically by pillars, goals, indicators, and performance metrics. The framework also facilitates alignment and comparison with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and their respective targets.

9. Who will conduct the LandScale assessment?

LandScale assessments could be conducted by a single organization, a group of actors interested in developing a formal governance structure for improved long-term management of the landscape, or an existing multi-stakeholder landscape partnership.

If the primary purpose of conducting a LandScale assessment is to identify issues and trends that may pose a risk to a particular project, investment, or business activity, then the assessment could be undertaken by an individual actor, without engagement with other stakeholders within the landscape. However, if the intention is to use the results of LandScale assessments to drive improvements in the sustainability performance of the landscape, then it is advisable for the assessment to be conducted under the auspices of a multi-stakeholder group representing key parties with a presence or interest in the landscape.

10. How much will it cost to conduct an LandScale assessment?

LandScale intends to be as cost-efficient as possible so that it is accessible to a wide range of stakeholders. Costs may include the human resources needed to collect and analyze the data required to conduct an assessment as well as the cost of independent verification, which is required if LandScale users wish to make public-facing claims. Through conducting pilot LandScale assessments in a variety of different landscapes, more information about the exact costs in different situations will become available.

11. What claims can be made?

Individuals and organizations involved in conducting LandScale assessments will likely want to communicate the results via simple statements to their stakeholders, be they donors, investors, buyers, civil society organizations, local communities, or consumers. LandScale will therefore

provide guidelines on translating the results of assessments into accurate yet easy to understand claims regarding the progress and performance of a landscape.

LandScale intends to support the following types of claims: claims about landscape performance in relation to a single LandScale indicator (snapshot claims/trends) and claims about landscape performance in relation to multiple LandScale indicators. The public consultation process provides an opportunity for stakeholders to provide input regarding claims.

Section 4: LandScale development process and timeline

12. What is the timeline for development?

- August 2019 - Launch first public consultation to capture feedback on v0.1 of LandScale framework and guidance
- Quarter 4 2019 - Test LandScale in pilot landscapes to gather feedback about application of v0.1 in diverse settings
- Quarter 2 2020 - Release of v0.2 for second public consultation
- Quarter 4 2020 - Publication of first full version for general use. Verification mechanism, data and results platform, and a variety of supporting tools available for use

13. What and where are the LandScale pilots?

Early versions of the LandScale assessment framework will be tested in several landscapes, representing a range of different landscape management initiatives, geographies, and commodities. Pilot-testing activities are led by LandScale partners, who are providing critical input into the development of the LandScale tool to ensure that it meets the needs of all key stakeholders.

The six landscapes are in Costa Rica (IUCN), Ghana (Nature Conservation Research Centre, with two landscapes), Guatemala (Rainforest Alliance & Solidaridad), Mexico (Rainforest Alliance), and Peru (Rainforest Alliance).

14. How can an individual or organization get involved in LandScale?

LandScale offers multiple ways to get involved:

- **Participate in our public consultation:** Version 0.1 of the LandScale assessment framework is open for public consultation between August 7 and October 15, 2019. You can participate in a number of ways. Find out more by visiting www.landscale.org.
- **Test the LandScale assessment framework in a new landscape:** Those interested in early stage testing are encouraged to send an expression of interest to piloting@landscale.org.

- **Share your ideas:** For any other inquiries, including interest in learning more about work in one of the existing pilot landscapes, becoming a partner, or setting up a conversation with a member of the LandScale team, please write to info@landscale.org.
- **Sign up for email updates:** Sign up to receive regular updates on the development of LandScale at www.landscale.org.

Section 4: How does LandScale relate to other programs and initiatives?

15. How does LandScale relate to traditional certification systems?

LandScale is designed to complement rather than replace traditional certification programs that assess and recognize sustainability performance at the level of production units (e.g., farms, farmer groups, processing mills, or forest management units). There several key differences between traditional certification systems and LandScale:

- 1) Traditional sustainability standards tend to focus on improving sustainability within an individual management unit, whereas LandScale is designed to drive improvements across entire landscapes.
- 2) In general, traditional certification systems focus on a single crop or sector. In contrast, LandScale is designed to assess the outcome of all activities within a landscape. The results of LandScale assessments are therefore relevant to individuals and organizations involved in any natural resource dependent activity within the landscape, including agribusiness, forestry, extraction of natural resources, fisheries and infrastructure.
- 3) Traditional sustainability standards tend to prescribe best management practices or set threshold performance levels that must be met to achieve and retain certified status. In contrast, LandScale does not define minimum required practices or performance levels to participate in the program. Rather, it focuses on driving improvement in sustainability performance by providing reliable information about the status of ecosystems, human well-being, governance, and productivity at landscape scale. This information can help inform locally relevant policies and management interventions, guide sustainable sourcing and investment decisions, and create market incentives for landscape sustainability.

16. How does LandScale fit with the SD VISta and CCB standards?

Both Verra's [SD VISta \(Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard\)](#) and the [CCB \(Climate, Community & Biodiversity\) Standards](#) focus on activities at the site-scale or project-level. In contrast, LandScale is not designed to be site- or project-specific but instead to be an assessment of progress and the sustainability status of an entire landscape, inclusive of multiple projects and actions affecting a landscape.

17. How does LandScale relate to the Accountability Framework initiative (AFi)?

The [Accountability Framework initiative](#) (AFi) is a collaborative initiative - led by a diverse coalition of civil society organizations - to accelerate progress and strengthen accountability related to ethical supply chain commitments in agriculture and forestry. In June 2019, the initiative launched the Accountability Framework: a set of common norms, definitions, and guidance for establishing, implementing, and demonstrating progress on supply chain commitments addressing deforestation, ecosystem conversion, and human rights issues. The AFi is now supporting companies, industry associations, civil society groups, accountability initiatives, and others to apply the Framework to extend and improve the effectiveness of ethical supply chain efforts.

The AFi and LandScale are complementary approaches to drive sustainability in commodity-producing regions: the AFi focuses on supply chain interventions while LandScale considers landscapes as the key focus for assessment, incentives, and management. Both initiatives are working deliberately to align and create synergies between these two approaches in ways that can benefit companies, landscape stakeholders, and sustainability goals. For instance, LandScale assessments can be informed by definitions and metrics specified within the Accountability Framework; and the Accountability Framework specifies how supply chain companies may utilize and participate in landscape and jurisdictional initiatives to help implement and demonstrate fulfillment of their supply chain commitments.

There is increasing recognition that both supply chain and landscape/jurisdictional interventions are needed to achieve lasting sustainability benefits and to address the drivers of deforestation, conversion, poverty, human rights abuses, and poor governance. In this context, stakeholders are encouraged to consider how complementary initiatives such as LandScale and the AFi may help them address sustainability challenges as well as business needs and risks.