

Title: A Critical Year for Nature: Now is the time to accelerate action on the Global Biodiversity Framework

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Abstract

In October 2026, Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will convene for COP17 to review progress against the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) adopted in 2022. A global report provides a summary of collective progress, primarily drawing from government self-reporting at the halfway mark to 2030, the target year for taking urgent action to halt and reverse nature loss. Data suggest that action on the KMGBF to date remains highly insufficient. Simultaneously, the decline of biodiversity is continuing, with a real danger of reaching irreversible tipping points. We highlight four key needs to help turn this around: (i) an independent mechanism to track national and local efforts on nature to complement formal government reporting; (ii) an approach for prioritising the most impactful potential country actions, incorporating principles of fairness and ability to act; (iii) broader whole-of-society dialogue in and across countries on what works and what is needed; and (iv) a platform to facilitate context-specific scientific insights to support country-level and global action. To turn these needs into opportunities, we propose specific tools already under development which could complement existing CBD mechanisms to reinforce and account for collective action during these critical next few years.

37 **The biodiversity challenge**

38 The 2026 World Economic Forum's assessment of global risks on a 10-year horizon has once again
39 ranked biodiversity loss second only to extreme climate events (World Economic Forum, 2026).
40 Meanwhile, the 2025 Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)
41 *Transformative Change* report explicitly outlined how global systems of production and consumption must
42 be transformed to maintain a sustainable future for humanity (IPBES, 2024). In January 2026, the UK's
43 Joint Intelligence Committee recognised the urgent need to take action to limit the risks of ecosystem
44 tipping points, such as the collapse of coral reefs or degradation of the Amazon rainforest. Such tipping
45 points would create cascading dynamics across the globe, threatening food supplies, water sources, and
46 climate stability, with challenges to national security, economies and societies worldwide (HM
47 Government, 2026).

48 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), under which the Kunming-Montreal Global
49 Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) was adopted, have committed to - and hold primary responsibility for -
50 action to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity. This includes putting in place effective policy responses
51 and regulatory frameworks to address the main drivers of destruction, and ensuring the involvement of
52 private sector and other non-state actors under a 'whole of society' approach. However, while the focus
53 on governments as the key drivers of KMGBF implementation is central to the multilateral system, it is
54 insufficient.

55 Effective national implementation of the KMGBF is constrained by the failure to fully consider impacts on
56 biodiversity in other countries when prioritising national actions. Domestically, policy incoherence can
57 mean that policies meant to protect and restore biodiversity are undermined and overwhelmed by others
58 that continue to exacerbate biodiversity loss. Additionally, despite the CBD promoting a "whole of society"
59 approach, its platform for recording the many contributions towards fulfilling the KMGBF made by non-
60 state actors is under-used (Immerzeel et al., 2026). Therefore, the world is missing out on opportunities
61 to appreciate, account for, and catalyse meaningful actions undertaken by sub-national, supra-national,
62 and non-state actors, including local communities and Indigenous Peoples, civil society, and the private
63 sector – something recently recognised by the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and
64 Technological Advice (CBD, 2026d). Many Parties continue to face challenges in effectively implementing
65 policies on the ground, with some countries facing limited institutional capacity, financing gaps, or
66 insufficient enabling mechanisms.

67 The Parties to the CBD therefore risk falling short of their stated mission to halt and reverse biodiversity
68 loss (Figure 1). Firstly, if fully met by countries, the KMGBF targets might not necessarily add up to
69 achieving the vision of halting and reversing biodiversity loss. For example, the political process of
70 agreement means that many vitally important targets - such as those associated with changing production
71 and consumption - lack specificity. Secondly, countries might not completely commit to all KMGBF targets
72 in their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs; Immerzeel et al., 2026) and finally,
73 there may be a gap between commitments implemented by countries, and the biodiversity outcomes of
74 these actions (Maney et al., 2024). Meaningful outcomes materialise only when policy commitments
75 outlined in strategic frameworks are operationalised through robust and issue-appropriate measures.

76
77 **FIGURE 1 HERE**

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79 Most of the world's governments will meet in Yerevan, Armenia, for the CBD's COP17 in October 2026.
80 This meeting will include consideration of the first Global Review of collective progress, which is expected
81 to guide accelerated implementation of the KMGBF. For humanity collectively to 'bend the curve' of
82 biodiversity loss and secure a nature-positive future, all stakeholders committed to the KMGBF must
83 contribute. This requires agreement on what more is needed to support bold and effective action.

84 85 **Key needs for nature action**

86 The adoption of the KMGBF in December 2022 was a landmark achievement. Since then, many countries
87 have formulated new or enhanced national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), or adopted
88 new targets (WWF, 2026). While this represents important progress, the past three years have also
89 revealed several structural aspects that undermine more effective progress. Here, we identify four key
90 needs that must urgently be addressed, and the opportunities they present.

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1. The need for independent tracking of CBD Parties' actions in policy and practice, to implement and advance the KMGBF:

The revised draft of the Global Review of progress was published in 2026 (CBD 2026a), drawn mostly from governments' self-reported information, contained within their 7th National Reports (CBD 2026b), as well as additional information uploaded to the CBD's non-state actor portal (CBD 2026c). The resulting report represents an important milestone and an opportunity for dialogue on collaboration and renewed attention to areas of weakness, while recognising countries' efforts to date. It clearly articulates that collective progress is not on track to reach the 2030 goals or the 2050 mission.

Government commitments alone are insufficient if they don't also specify concrete policies to achieve them, including the necessary resources for implementation. Progress on the KMGBF depends on transparency, a deeper understanding of national efforts, and taking lessons from implementation of existing policies. Therefore, there is need to systematically track implementation progress; what policies are adopted or in development, how these policies are operationalised, what financial and other resources are allocated to implementation, how progress is monitored and evaluated, and the status of implementation, including barriers and obstacles as well as other lessons. While the Global Review and the 7th National reports are meant to cover many of these issues at collective level, only a subset of national reports include this level of assessment and were available for the global review (129 countries).

An independent platform that facilitates bottom-up assessments of, and dialogue on, implementation progress and broader lessons on what works, would complement and strengthen the formal CBD monitoring framework. The platform should be accessible to all, not generated or owned by any single organisation, and draw on a broad spectrum of in-country expertise across all sectors and drivers of nature loss.

2. The need for prioritisation of the most impactful actions beyond national borders:

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) are intended to drive comprehensive implementation of practical measures to address all KMGBF targets, including those targeting the primary drivers of biodiversity loss. However, they rarely account for the cross-border impacts of national economies, particularly via consumption and trade (for example, of agricultural commodities). The danger, therefore, is that such national plans may fail to reflect what is needed for transformative change at the global scale. For example, many countries in the Global North have substantial biodiversity footprints overseas associated with their consumption activities (Ball et al., 2025). National reporting may focus on domestic biodiversity action, but should also explicitly account for these cross-border impacts so that the global community can better assess priorities, work to reduce these impacts, and compare the positive and negative impacts of countries' domestic and international activities. Recognition and tracking of these cross-border impacts should be explicit in future international agreements, and in national reporting structures (Box 1).

Further, countries differ in their capacity to act to mitigate their impacts on global biodiversity. It is therefore unrealistic to assume that all countries can, or should, contribute to each of the KMGBF's targets in the same way, or to the same degree. Consequently, prioritisation of efforts and resources will be required, with emphasis placed on different KMGBF target areas according to each country's social, economic and ecological context. Such prioritisation needs to be informed by independent, forward-looking evaluations of the potential global impacts of alternative national policy choices, drawing on relevant data, predictive models, and expert elicitation, to guide where efforts should best be targeted (Zurrell et al., 2025; Purvis, 2025; Box 1). This approach is consistent with the draft CBD Global report which identified that *"Accelerated, strategic and prioritized action, tailored to national circumstances is urgently needed, particularly on issues related to addressing the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss and transforming the systems that impact nature."* (CBD, 2026b).

BOX 1 HERE

142 **3. The need for broader, whole-of-society dialogue on what is needed to halt nature loss:**

143 While the CBD and its negotiated agreements like the KMGBF are limited to national governments as the
144 only formal Parties, the implementation of these agreements depends on the active alignment and efforts
145 by other non-state actors. In many countries, there are remarkable efforts, innovations, and actions, both
146 public and private sector-led, that contribute to the KMGBF but are not systematically accounted for in
147 current national reporting. Examples include Indigenous Peoples establishing protected and conserved
148 areas with practices that balance protection with traditional livelihoods, and local communities and sub-
149 national governments conserving and expanding green spaces within urban and regional planning (UNEP
150 & IUCN, 2026). Some forward-thinking companies are implementing plans to understand and disclose
151 their impacts and dependencies on nature, while reducing their material risk, with the aim of contributing
152 towards KMGBF Target 15 and the global nature positive goal (Hawkins et al. 2026).

153 Several Parties do include non-state actors' actions in their 7th National Reports, and many non-state
154 and sub-national actors are beginning to voluntarily submit information on their biodiversity actions to
155 capture 'whole-of-society' efforts (CBD 2026c). However, there remain significant gaps in reporting,
156 verification, and long-term accountability, with information submitted by non-state and sub-national actors
157 subject to verification by national governments before being incorporated into national reporting and
158 analysis.

159 Ultimately, in order to accelerate global learning and collaboration, it is important to have transparency
160 and accountability for all efforts - both positive and negative, public and private - so their cumulative
161 effects are captured. This information can then inform discourse, planning and implementation of action
162 for biodiversity at local, national and international levels.

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164 **4. The need for context-specific scientific analysis and dialogue to support prioritisation:**

165 To create the momentum required to achieve the KMGBF goals and targets, it is critical to identify and
166 prioritise policies with the greatest potential impact, and to consider the benefits of action to reduce
167 national footprints abroad, as well as domestic action.

168 One of the most impactful modelling exercises ahead of the adoption of the KMGBF was Leclère et al.'s
169 analysis of the need not only for traditional conservation, but also for sustainable production and
170 consumption, in order to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity (Leclère et al. 2020). However, although
171 the analysis incorporated spatially explicit data, it did not incorporate climate change, was conducted at
172 a global scale, and was not designed to directly inform national-level prioritisation. Therefore, there is an
173 urgent challenge for scientists to produce context-specific analyses that can provide policy-relevant
174 guidance on the most efficient and cost-effective national-level measures to contribute to global
175 biodiversity goals. This should include not only positive conservation actions, but also measures to
176 mitigate negative impacts both at home and overseas, particularly with respect to consumption and supply
177 chains. It should also include principles for fair allocation of efforts and resources between countries
178 (Booth et al., 2024).

179 Developing decision-relevant, national-scale assessments that address all these issues remains a key
180 challenge. In the climate space, science-driven, locally grounded methods to model, compare and
181 prioritise specific national policy pathways have transformed the discourse on policy-driven change
182 (Schipper et al., 2022). By both broadening and sharpening our existing instruments in the biodiversity
183 space, and supporting countries to develop science-based policy pathways that align with both their
184 biodiversity impacts and their capacity to act, we can better ensure that national action for biodiversity
185 catalyses global-level transformative change. However, while improved data and models can inform more
186 effective decision-making, decisions will still need to be made in the face of poor data-availability and
187 other uncertainties. Models can help identify interventions likely to produce desirable outcomes across a
188 range of plausible scenarios, rather than delaying action until uncertainty is reduced.

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190 **Our opportunity to reinforce the KMGBF**

191 CBD COP17 provides a crucial and timely moment to critically review where we are, in the context of the
192 formal Global Review of progress under the KMGBF, with a focus on what it will take to deepen and
193 accelerate action for nature. This dialogue must not only consider what is already in place, but also what

194 is missing. Consideration of the needs and opportunities we detail above could reinforce the existing
195 multilateral biodiversity regime in three important ways:

196 First, the KMGBF targets provide a solid basis and plan for action towards its 2050 goals. However, aside
197 from its formal monitoring and reporting framework, a mechanism is needed for independent tracking of
198 government-led action and follow-through on existing policies and commitments. Transparency on
199 government policies, action, and outcomes, across sectors and drivers, is essential to enhance public
200 accountability. This would also support cross-sectoral and international learning on what works, how, at
201 what cost; and, importantly, who should bear those costs.

202 Second, while the UN provides platforms for dialogue and inter-country collaboration, the KMGBF
203 reporting mechanism's focus on national-level commitments and implementation means that neither
204 cross-border impacts nor sub-national actions (whether by government or non-state actors) are easily
205 captured. Given the need for action beyond borders and for whole-of-society engagement to tackle the
206 systemic drivers of biodiversity loss, it is essential that positive and negative actions and outcomes are
207 captured and learnt from, so their biodiversity impacts can be mitigated.

208 Third, the achievement of KMGBF targets depends on systematic efforts to develop, model and review
209 alternative policy choices at national and sub-national levels. While IPBES is a major, and hugely
210 influential platform, producing vital analyses of what is necessary for transformative change, it is not
211 tasked with producing concrete, country-level scenario modelling and assessments of the real-world
212 feasibility of national-level actions. Prospective policy analyses and science-based scenario modelling
213 have become standard contributions to climate policies, but similar work is lacking for nature and
214 biodiversity. This is especially true for national-level pathways and scenarios, and testing alternative
215 policy choices for relative costs and impact. To support consistency, improve efficiency and build
216 capacity, this should be based on international collaborations founded on in-country scientific expertise
217 and involving civil society actors, bringing together a range of perspectives and experience (including
218 traditional and local knowledge).

219 Of course, while new tools and approaches addressing these gaps and needs are vital to achieving the
220 KMGBF vision, they alone cannot overcome the wider political, economic and societal challenges to
221 effective action on nature. These include powerful competing interests, geopolitical tensions, limited
222 resourcing, political will, and managing socio-economic impacts and trade-offs. However, strengthening
223 the evidence base to make explicit the global implications of national policies and actions, and
224 demonstrating the long-term consequences of different policy options, is a critical enabler of effective
225 action.

226

227 **A way forward**

228 An open platform dedicated to policy learning and innovation is vital to moving beyond discussion towards
229 a concrete path forward for the CBD. Such a platform must be collectively, collaboratively and
230 transparently developed, rather than being owned by a single organisation or small group of
231 organisations. It should complement and support the CBD's existing mechanisms, and work in synergy
232 with existing tools and platforms (Burgess et al., 2024).

233 With such a platform in mind, two important initiatives have recently been developed to complement
234 existing activities: The Nature Action Tracker and NATURE Impacts (Table 1). Initiated by several NGOs
235 and academic institutions, these initiatives recognise the need for credible, collaborative approaches for
236 tracking progress, and evaluating existing and potential policy options and priorities, in the context of
237 limited time and resources.

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241 In alignment with existing KMGBF processes, such a platform could enhance transparency and learning
242 during and between Global Reviews, to accelerate and deepen shared understanding of gaps,
243 opportunities for innovation, and scaling of effective measures to address the primary drivers of
244 biodiversity loss. By embracing a whole-of-society approach and assessing both positive and negative
245 actions across actors (including underlying drivers of loss), this platform could help address a key need
246 identified in the CBD Global Review: prioritising accelerated and strategic action at the national scale.

247 The platform would also complement established CBD processes by bringing together evidence from
248 governments, researchers, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, civil society, businesses and
249 other stakeholders, for open and transparent dialogue on progress, lessons learned and future priorities.
250 Co-created with these actors, the platform could provide a shared resource to understand and assess
251 implementation progress and experience, inform priorities, and catalyse coordinated action across
252 sectors and countries.

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254 **Outlook**

255 Humanity, in aggregate, has never been wealthier, more technologically capable, or better informed - yet
256 the vital natural systems that underpin our prosperity are unravelling at unprecedented speed. Global
257 biodiversity loss poses an existential threat to economic stability, geopolitical security, and human
258 wellbeing (HM Government, 2026).

259 The scientific evidence is already sufficient to identify the drivers of nature loss and the actions required
260 to halt and reverse it. We have an internationally agreed framework for action, in the KMGBF. However,
261 while political ambition and commitments are necessary, they are not enough. What remains insufficient
262 is effective and dedicated action to implement what has been agreed, using approaches which in many
263 countries are already on the policy shelf. In order to strengthen and mobilise rapid, sustained and well-
264 coordinated action, as well as political capital and financing across the whole of society, we need to
265 establish full transparency on what countries are doing, domestically and internationally, and invest in
266 public accountability through practical mechanisms that have science and inclusion at their heart.

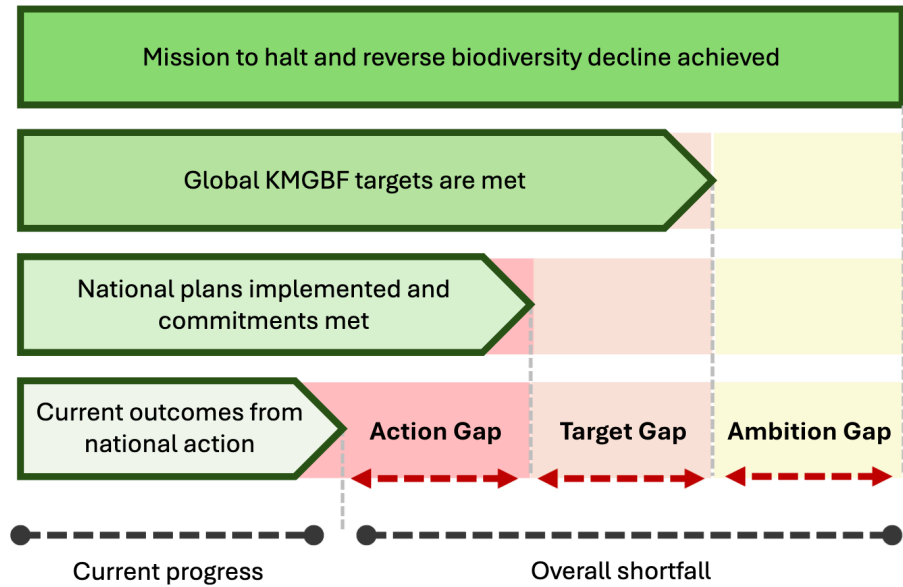
267 2026 is a critical year, in which financing and mechanisms need to be put in place to reinforce synergistic
268 implementation of global goals for nature, climate and sustainable development. Addressing the needs
269 and opportunities which we have highlighted here will support the broadening of efforts from business-
270 as-usual, towards a global, whole-of-society effort to turn the tide for nature and humanity.

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273 **Figure 1. Gaps between current outcomes, commitments, targets, and the CBD's 2050 mission.**
 274 There is firstly a potential gap between the KMGBF mission, and the level of ambition set out in the
 275 global targets. Secondly, there may be gaps between the collective KMGBF targets, and those
 276 committed to by individual countries. And lastly, efforts by countries do not necessarily achieve the
 277 necessary outcomes to meet their own commitments.

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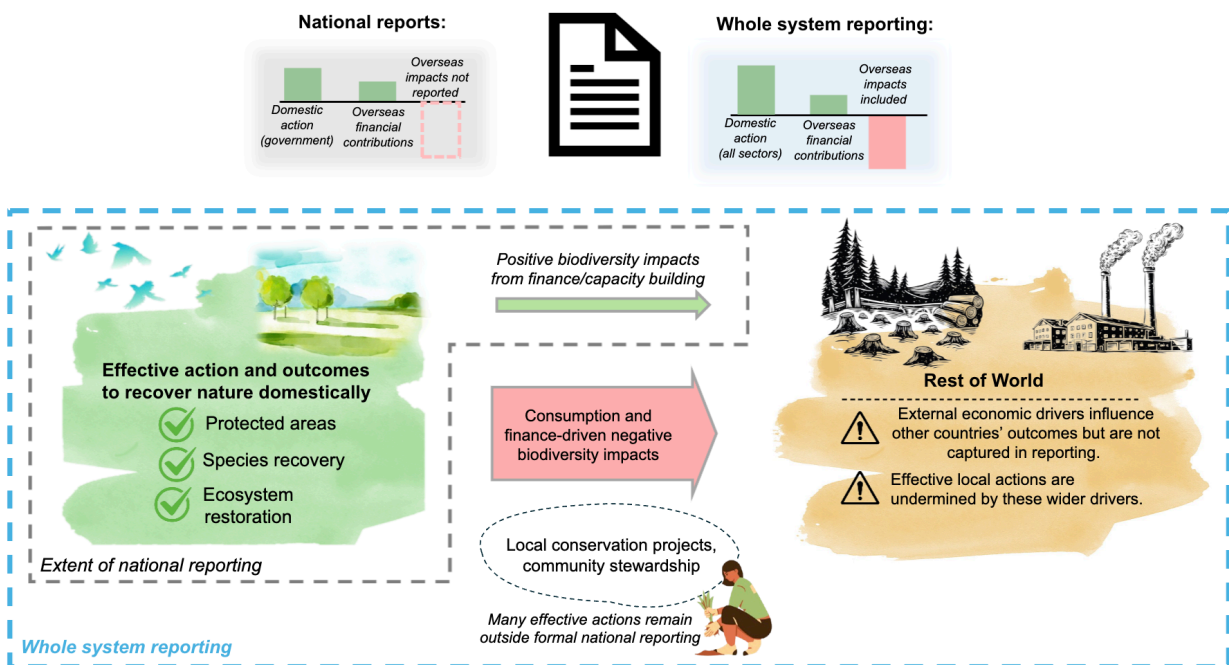
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Box 1: An example of the need to address cross-border impacts

Country A is a high-income country which achieves domestic conservation successes but fails to address its external impacts embedded in trade practices, imports or financial flows that support biodiversity-damaging activities in high biodiversity Country B. Because the KMGBF currently sets no explicit, measurable expectation for reducing international footprints and spillovers, Country A can report progress based on action within its borders, while continuing to drive deforestation, pollution, or unsustainable extraction elsewhere. Meanwhile, Country B struggles to deliver conservation gains at national scale due to powerful external economic incentives that overshadow local efforts. The result is a net loss of global biodiversity - even when individual countries appear to be performing well against their own indicators (Figure 2). These structural asymmetries highlight a deeper issue: in the absence of greater transparency, clarity, critical dialogue and public accountability, countries prioritise actions that are politically or economically feasible at home, rather than those most urgently needed to reduce global drivers of loss. In addition to action to conserve and restore biodiversity domestically, Country A should therefore focus more of its resources and efforts towards reducing its cross-border footprint, and supporting fair and equitable transitions away from biodiversity-damaging activities, in Country B.

Figure 2. A hypothetical example of the need for whole-system reporting to capture a country's overseas impacts



As a concrete example, the UK government has made a bold commitment to halt and reverse the loss of its own domestic biodiversity. It has included metrics of overseas deforestation and footprint in its National Report (JNCC, 2025). This recognition of the need to report on its overseas footprint is not yet, however, matched by implemented legislation to reduce the negative impacts of its consumption, external trade, production, supply chains and investments. The UK is a major global financial centre with a consumption footprint that puts it in the top 10% of countries worldwide (TheCityUK 2026; SEI & JNCC 2026). It would therefore seem clear that this should be a priority area of action for the UK, in terms of its contribution to global biodiversity recovery.

At the same time, Brazil published a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) at the end of 2025 (MMA, 2025). There is no doubting the ambition, arguably going further than required by the KMGBF, and contributing therefore to closing the gap between the KMGBF targets and mission. Brazil's pledges bridge between the climate and nature agendas, including the elimination of deforestation from Brazilian biomes by 2030 and promoting sustainable agricultural production. The question is whether this is feasible for Brazil to deliver without corresponding action from other

318 countries, including the UK and European Union, to address consumption footprints and reduce
319 market demand for, and investment in, unsustainable and deforesting commodities from Brazil.

320 History tells us that perverse subsidies, damaging investments, and unsustainable production and
321 consumption undermine all other conservation action. Global financial flows to nature-damaging
322 activities are 30x the flows to nature-sustaining activities (UNEP, 2026). So, we risk a cumulative
323 failure to halt nature loss, even if countries driving or facilitating that net-loss are still evidencing a
324 positive score card.

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Table 1. Key needs identified to support implementation of the KMGBF, the features required to address these needs, and details of two proposed initiatives, currently under development to meet them.

Identified need	Key features	Proposed initiative
Independent tracking and assessment of countries' efforts and actions to implement the KMGBF Broad and open whole-of-society dialogue on the action needed to restore nature	An independent mechanism capable of systematically tracking and assessing local and national-level efforts to develop, adopt, implement and enforce public policies and regulations directly relevant to addressing the key drivers of nature loss identified in the KMGBF. Broadly equivalent to the Climate Action Tracker in the global climate space (Climate Action Tracker, 2026), this mechanism would complement formal monitoring frameworks and remote-sensing data on the 'state of nature', by systematically updating publicly available policy inventories and mapping, and facilitating regular assessments of 'the state of implementation', its efforts, progress and status. These assessments will provide important evidence for the NATURE Impacts initiative, helping to inform its assessment of current action and refinement of future priorities. The mechanism would draw on the deep insights and practical experience of in-country networks of scientists and practitioners to assess progress, identify barriers and obstacles to implementation, and facilitate learning and public dialogue, including with local and central levels of government. It would complement government reporting on overall targets and outcomes, with a focus on implementation and effects on the ground, while also capturing the efforts and innovations undertaken by local communities, private companies and civil society. The resources, insights and lessons identified by this mechanism would be made publicly available, enhancing transparency and accountability of all actors with regard to action on nature, and providing a platform for learning and collaboration across sectors and countries.	Nature Action Tracker (NAT). The NAT is an independent platform, currently under development by a core team including the African Wildlife Foundation, BirdLife International, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and WWF International, among others. Since the adoption of the KMGBF, the NAT team has operated as a community of practice to jointly develop, pilot and refine action-tracking methodologies in preparation for rollout in 2027.
Prioritisation of the most impactful actions, including beyond national borders Broad, whole-of-society dialogue Context-specific scientific analysis to support prioritisation	A forward-looking, country-led approach to support countries in identifying and prioritising actions that can make the greatest contributions to global nature recovery. The approach combines scientific evidence, modelling and local expertise to assess current action, explore future scenarios and iteratively refine national priorities as new evidence becomes available. Forward-looking modelling and scenario analysis have been identified as key needs to help prioritise action to address biodiversity loss (Zurell et al., 2026; Purvis, 2025). Building on biodiversity tracking initiatives, including the NAT, the approach would support evidence-based national priority setting by: (1) Providing a transparent, independent platform through which non-state and sub-national actors could assess their government's progress and contribute expertise and knowledge;	NATURE Impacts (National Assessment Tool for Understanding Relative Environmental Impacts) NATURE Impacts is currently under development, led by WWF-UK and the University of Oxford, with a broader network of partners and collaborators being established. Initial components have been piloted through expert elicitation and stakeholder workshops, and

	(2) Hosting scientific assessments of current and potential policy outcomes, drawing on context-specific, spatially explicit modelling, existing datasets and expert knowledge, including both domestic and overseas biodiversity footprints; (3) Enabling analysis of priority actions and identification of fair and proportionate national and sectoral contributions to biodiversity recovery across all activities that impact biodiversity.	a public project webpage is available (LCNR, 2026).
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Acknowledgements:

This work on NATURE Impacts was supported by the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery at the University of Oxford, WWF-UK, WWF-International and WWF-Colombia; work on the Nature Action Tracker was led by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, WWF International, Birdlife International, and the African Wildlife Foundation. We are particularly grateful to Neil D. Burgess, Carlos M. Herrera, Yadvinder Malhi, Mark Wright and Lucy Young for their guidance and support. We also thank all those who attended the NATURE Impacts workshop in December 2025, providing valuable feedback and insights which informed the manuscript: Xilonem Clarke, Robin Freeman, Jonathan Green, Liam O'Connor, Willow Outhwaite, Harveet Singh Purewal, Cesar Suarez and Joe Trigg.

The work also benefitted from input from colleagues including Juan Camilo Cardenas Campo, David Obura, Thomas Brooks, Joseph Bull, Javier Castiblanco, Elsie McDowell and Camila Yepes. Finally, we express our appreciation for those who attended the original workshop co-organised by WWF-UK with members of Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science, and Environmental Change Institute at the Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford, UK, in July 2024: Ashley Bang, Samira Barzin, Michael Clark, Katie Gough, Leah Han, Thomas Harwood, Katia Sanchez Ortiz and Sophus OSE zu Ermgassen.

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