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# Charting a course to nature positive

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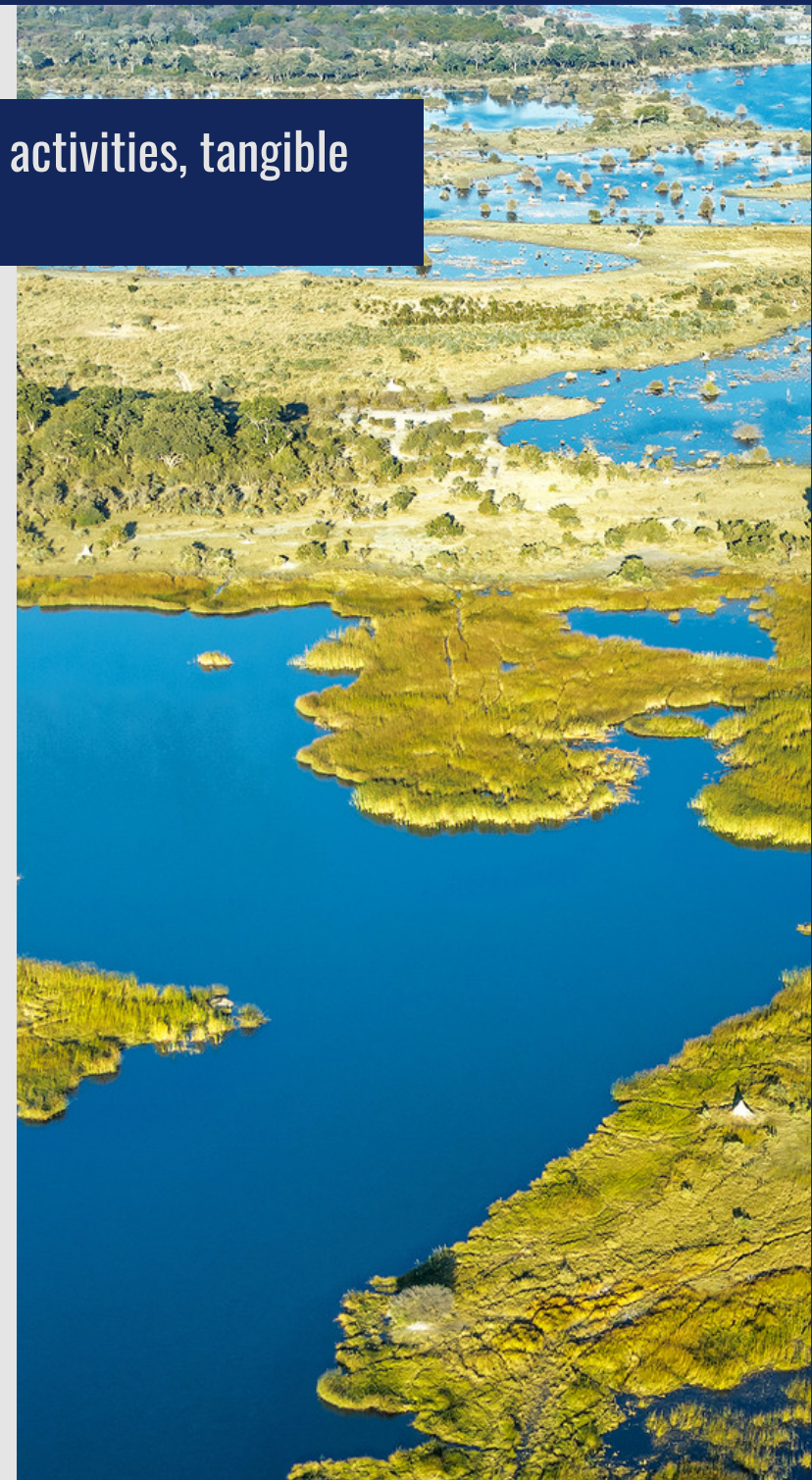
# Nature positive means a company delivers, through its processes and activities, tangible and meaningful positive outcomes for nature



Nature positive requires a new kind of thinking. It's a bold idea that is redefining what it means to be a sustainable business. Pushing aside entrenched ideas of the business-nature relationship, nature positive recognises that there is no long-term future for the 'do less harm' mentality.

Instead, it replaces the idea of the managed decline of our natural world with one that taps into the potential of businesses to transform corporate stewardship with new modes of working to restore nature.

COP26 sent a strong message that business and finance need an integrated solution to the [joint nature-climate crisis](#). Customers are asking for it, investors and stakeholders are demanding it, and many companies that embraced the climate challenge with ambitious carbon negative plans are now developing nature-positive corporate strategies.



## Why business and conservation are zeroing in on nature positive

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Nature positive is emerging as the guiding star by which companies can set sustainability strategies, as it responds to the change in how businesses, investors and consumers view nature. Wider recognition of the urgency of the nature crisis – and its role in climate change – has spurred a growing appetite for positive action.

This shift is also driving the upcoming goals from The Convention on Biological Diversity Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, currently being negotiated. Due to be finalised in 2022, the Post-2020 Framework is expected to set global goals for biodiversity – providing shared goals in much the same way as the Paris Agreement did for climate. At the same time, businesses are showing greater ambition to tackle nature and biodiversity loss, and the methods, means and metrics needed to deliver on this are being developed. This is key to why nature positive has taken such a strong hold.

When we look at the future of business sustainability, it's clear that it's going to be more integrated, bringing together sustainability strategy on climate, water, nature, and social equality. It's going to be data-led, which will bring greater transparency. And it will be embedded in a wider scope of business-decision-making – giving businesses a clearer picture of what's happening, and the ability to act in a consolidated approach.

A host of leading companies have already set out bold interpretations of what nature positive means for them, including GlaxoSmithKline's deforestation free and [net positive goal on nature](#) and IKEA and Nestle committing to 'forest positive', while the [Alliance of Nature Positive Universities](#) aims to prompt the prioritisation of nature and its restoration within the higher education sector. Microsoft, Facebook and Google have committed to be [water positive](#) – to put more water into areas where they operate than they take out – and L'OCCITANE has launched its [biodiversity positive strategy](#). What these commitments have in common is an understanding of the most pressing, material impacts each business has on nature and an ambition to address them through an integrated portfolio of action.



# Nature positive goals - how much and by when?

A company's nature-positive goals should align with the Global Goal for Nature.

A coalition of the world's leading conservation organisations have proposed a Global Goal for Nature as the equivalent of the net zero carbon goal, aiming for **zero net loss of nature from 2020, net positive by 2030, and full recovery by 2050**.

The goal has been endorsed by World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Business For Nature and the Leaders' Pledge 4 Nature – including 88 heads of state and businesses as diverse as Unilever and Gucci.

To align a business' strategic planning with the Global Goal for Nature there are **three major components**, and each will require a business to have a more sophisticated understanding of its impacts and dependencies on nature.

1

**Meaningfully slowing the rate of loss of nature due to business activities, and achieving net positive for all unavoidable new impacts from 2020 baseline by 2030.**

This includes fully implementing deforestation-free value chains and expanding this to reduce, and ideally eliminate, any new conversion of natural habitats – not just forests – in the value chain, starting now. A nature-positive approach means a company should consider both the nature impacts of its own direct operations and the impacts associated with its upstream and downstream value chain. This aims to close the loop on environmentally damaging activities by leveraging the influence of downstream value chain actors, recognising that companies create impacts beyond their direct operational footprint and need to work collaboratively to achieve nature-positive outcomes at scale.

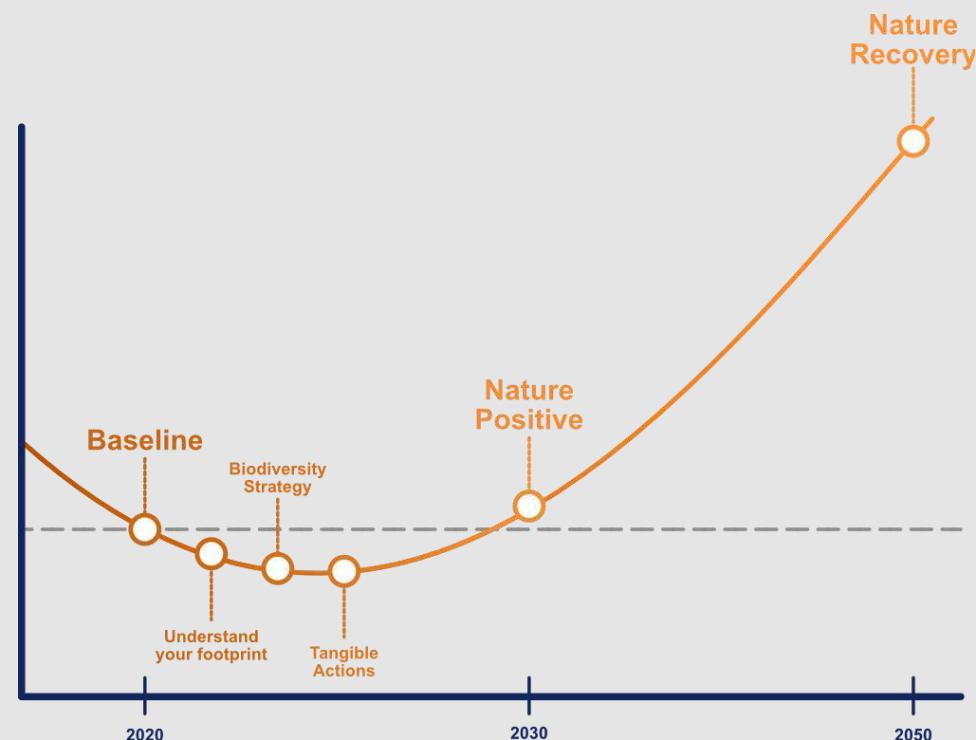


Figure 1: Company components towards a nature positive future.



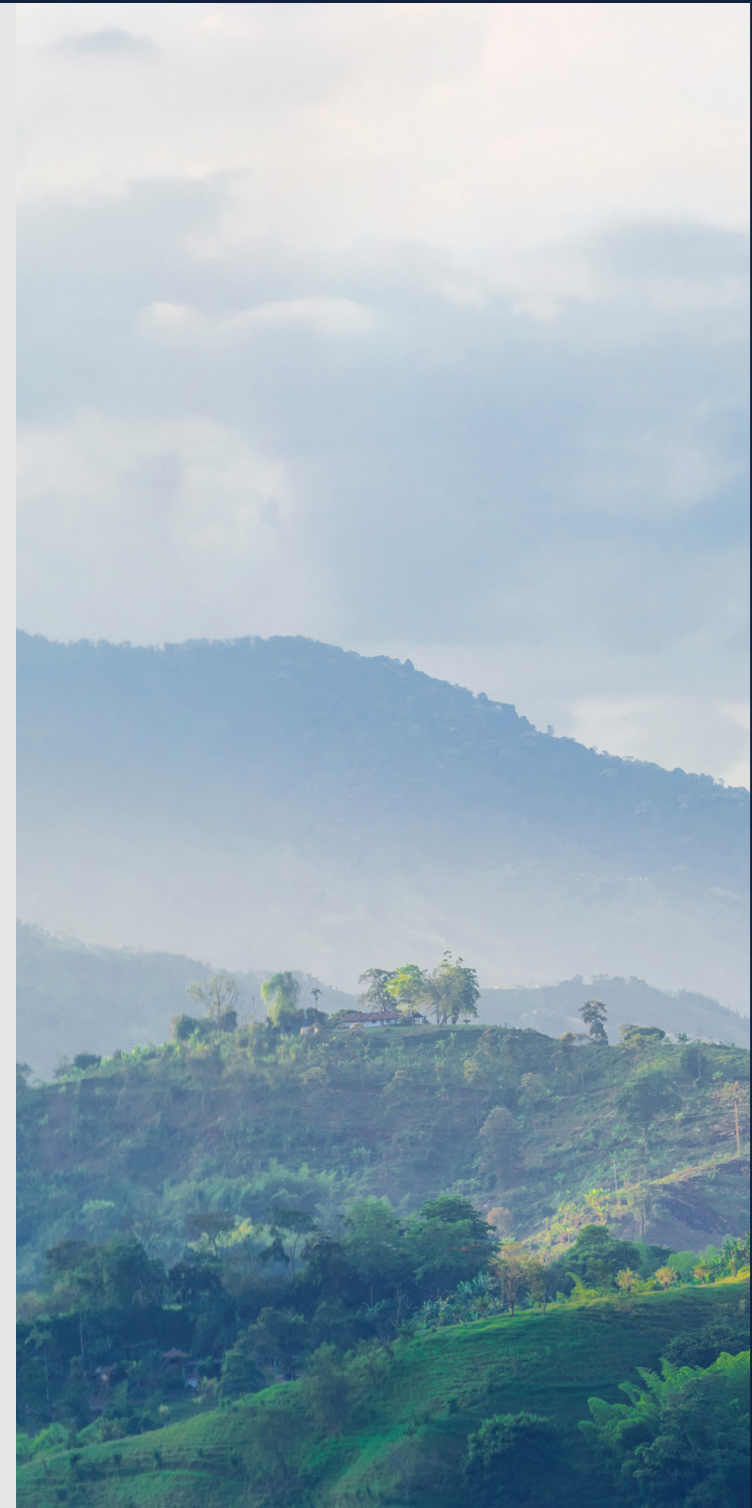
## 2

### **Make a proportional contribution towards supporting full nature recovery beyond a company's value chain.**

For a company to credibly claim it is working towards a nature-positive future, it must contribute to nature's recovery beyond its immediate business activities. To demonstrate readiness to support full nature recovery by 2050, companies will want to begin building a portfolio of nature, carbon and socially positive investments in proportion to the scale of their business operations.

Nature-positive investments are often most appropriate and effective when linked to the landscapes where the company works. However, strict requirements for site and habitat equivalence are relaxed for nature-positive investments compared to compensation requirements for site-based impacts. This opens opportunities for more creative approaches than would be possible through tightly constrained schemes such as biodiversity offsets, and allows a focus on where the gains for nature will be greatest.

The scale of a company's contribution towards nature recovery will depend on the scale of a company's nature footprint, its capacity and opportunity to make a larger proportional contribution.





3

### **Take collaborative action towards creating sustainable systems.**

Nature positive means systemic change. Achieving a nature-positive future requires a creative rethinking of how we do business in order to transform unsustainable patterns of natural resource consumption in our global economy.

Systems thinking is a holistic approach that focuses on the way different parts of social and environmental systems interrelate. For example, how an unstable climate and loss of natural resources are combining to create food production challenges and an emerging food security crisis, which in turn drives increasing levels of deforestation to support more land for farming.

**To go nature positive, companies need to deploy their problem-solving potential to begin tackling systemic nature sustainability challenges relevant to their business sectors. This could include working through broad coalitions focused on specific industries, commodities or landscapes to leverage wider systems change.**

Like with climate, nature positive recognises that some current production practices have no role in a nature-positive future, so transforming highly damaging business practices may be necessary.



# The scopes of nature and business

Biodiversity and nature are often used interchangeably. However, nature is a broader concept, with biodiversity a cross-cutting component. Companies can begin their nature-positive journey by focusing on biodiversity, using established good-practice approaches and science-based global metrics.

Looking to the future, a more integrated approach will be needed, with comprehensive nature-positive corporate strategies that can include other material components of nature such as soils and water.

The concept of nature positive moves beyond traditional corporate approaches, such as net positive impact on biodiversity, in three main ways:

1. A broader scope, encompassing all of a company's value chain and integrating all of nature
2. Clearer alignment with global goals - requiring absolute improvements in the state of nature, not just slowing down its loss
3. Emphasis on both mainstreaming nature in corporate structures and processes, and broader systems change that goes beyond any single company




	Corporate Social Responsibility	Project Net Positive Impact	Nature Positive
 <b>Scope of impacts</b>	Not tied to company impacts	Direct operations	Value chain + systems change to contribute to nature's recovery
 <b>Link to global goals</b>	No direct link	No direct link	Explicit alignment with global goals for nature
 <b>Scopes of nature</b>	Ad hoc elements selected for corporate philanthropy	Priority species and ecosystems, and sometimes ecosystem services	Biodiversity as a whole alongside other components of nature

Figure 2: Scopes of nature and scopes of business impacts required to align with nature positive.

## So, what could nature positive look like?

With the eruption of activity in this space, we see a lot of confusion in business over how to go nature positive. Which steps do you take? How do you start the journey? How will it influence current sustainability programmes and practices? To begin moving in the right direction, companies need clarity, specifics on the scale of ambition required and details of the concrete actions they can take to go nature positive. As with the arrival of any new disruptive idea, nature positive is generating a lot of debate, which is gradually being turned into guidance offering different pathways for companies (e.g. [SBTN](#), [WBCSD](#)). What an approach will look like in practice will be different depending on the business, the market, commodity use and areas in which a business operates, but emerging guidance essentially covers four points: Where you are now, where you want to be, how you get there and a way to measure and demonstrate progress.

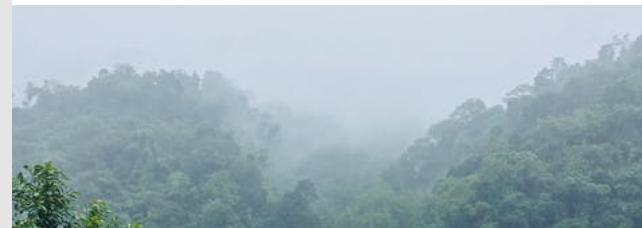
### Where are you now?

This begins by understanding your company's material impacts and dependencies on nature. This is typically conducted iteratively, starting with a rapid qualitative or semi-quantitative materiality assessment that flags key value-chain components for inclusion in a more focused and quantitative footprint assessment. Metrics and tools for assessing company impacts on nature are evolving fast and becoming more sophisticated and user-friendly. While there is increasing standardisation on the key dimensions of nature included in assessments, companies are different, and so there is no one-size fits all tool. The most appropriate approach will depend on a company's context.

Appropriate tools are available to suit the granularity of data available on company activity. An initial materiality assessment can be performed with basic information on a company's activities – sector, turnover, broad location – while a quantitative footprinting is most precise when quantitative data on volumes purchased and produced, location and type of production process are available. However, the best tools offer the ability to produce estimates even with simplified input data, so any company can get started.

### What key components of biodiversity are relevant to business?

**Ecosystems** – species assemblages and their interactions with both each other and the physical environment. A standard measurement framework for ecosystems is Extent × Condition.



**Species** – a fundamental unit of biodiversity. Population size and trends are fundamental metrics that inform assessment of a species' viability, while metrics like [STAR](#) enable a comparative assessment of a site or conservation action to reducing extinction risk.



**Nature's contribution to people** – the benefits such as food provision and water purification that people get from nature are a critical part of nature positive.





## Where do you want to be?

Understanding your nature footprint will show you the scale of action required to go nature positive. A company will want to set realistic, time-bound, quantitative targets aligned with the Global Goal for Nature, encompassing the three components highlighted above, e.g. by 2030 achieve net positive biodiversity outcomes for all new impacts from 2020 baseline. Nature-positive ambitions cannot be kicked into the long grass. They will require short- and medium-term targets linked to reversing the material impacts of business on nature.

## How do you get there?

Once the scale of ambition is set, a nature-positive strategy will translate corporate ambition into a coherent business plan, identifying the near-term actions to start a nature-positive journey and gain recognition for supporting global goals. Actions should follow the well-established mitigation hierarchy, prioritising those that avoid and reduce negative impacts as far as possible before moving to compensation measures, a positive contribution to nature recovery, and supporting transformative actions.




Direct Impacts		Upstream Impacts
	<b>Avoid</b> Site selection – not placing infrastructure in areas with high biodiversity value.	Choose inputs, methods and technologies that do not require additional habitat conversion.
	<b>Reduce</b> Design changes to the footprint to reduce impacts on sensitive biodiversity (e.g. installing wildlife underpass under a road), or to reduce erosion risk (e.g. using cover crops), or process improvements to reduce water use or waste.	Work with suppliers to modify practices (e.g. providing financial incentives for regenerative agricultural practices which improve soils, or using wildlife friendly approaches). Update purchasing policies to prioritise recycled or certified products (e.g. bird-friendly coffee).
	<b>Restore</b> Pro-actively manage non-operational areas for biodiversity conservation. (e.g. by changing mowing regimes on grass areas).	Support suppliers and other partners to restore non-productive areas to a more natural state (e.g. on field margins, or along water-courses).
	<b>Regenerate</b> Ecological compensation initiatives in the land/seascape around operations which generate tangible improvements for priority biodiversity.	Collaborate with partners to support biodiversity conservation initiatives in sourcing land/seascapes.
	<b>Transform</b> Work with industry bodies to develop sustainable sectoral working practices. Educate staff and customers to help them make informed choices, develop decision-making tools to mainstream nature considerations into the product lifecycle	

Figure 3: Example actions aligned with the mitigation hierarchy



### **How can you demonstrate progress?**

Report on progress, learn what works, adapt and improve. Because going nature positive means being part of wider systemic transformation, it's important that a business be transparent about actions and outcomes. Regulatory frameworks, such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and Sustainability Taxonomy, and voluntary frameworks such as CDP's sustainability questionnaires, are increasingly moving towards the disclosure of company impacts and dependencies on multiple dimensions of nature – including biodiversity. The forthcoming draft guidance from the Task Force on Nature Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) is likely to drive this to the mainstream, while specialist frameworks, such as the Biological Diversity Protocol (BDP), provide ready-made building blocks for compiling data ready for reporting. This will help guide the development of rigorous reporting on nature impacts relevant for your business and future-proof against the increasing expectations for nature disclosures and compliance by early alignment.

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Aligning with global goals for nature means setting a course to nature positive today. The [urgency of biodiversity loss](#) and the nature crisis is dictating the timetable for global nature goals. Those companies willing to engage now will find they stay ahead of expectations for business and be in a position to contribute meaningfully towards nature's recovery. We are already working with businesses across sectors to define, set and implement their actions that will contribute to a just transition to a net zero, nature-positive economy and gain the market recognition this bold commitment deserves.





## Integrating nature into business & finance



**The Biodiversity Consultancy** works with sector leading clients to integrate nature into business decision-making, at project level and through the development of post-2020 corporate strategies, metrics, SBTs and more.

Contact us to find out how together we can:

- Support project and strategic action plans
- Build corporate policies for nature
- Prepare and pilot science-based targets for nature
- Analyse biodiversity footprints and assess value chain risks
- Deliver biodiversity impact mitigation options
- Discover opportunities to go Nature Positive



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