



# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & CONSERVATION GUIDE



# INTRODUCTION

As climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss continue to threaten business operations and supply chains, organisations have a vital role to play in safeguarding natural resources and promoting environmental sustainability.

The health of ecosystems and the long-term viability of businesses that depend on these resources are increasingly intertwined.

This guide explores why organisations should prioritise environmental protection, conservation, and biodiversity, and provides practical steps for incorporating these considerations into strategic planning and operations.

## WHAT DOES BIODIVERSITY MEAN FOR BUSINESS?

Biodiversity - short for biological diversity - refers to the variety of life on Earth. It encompasses all living organisms, from the smallest microbes to the largest whales, and the ecosystems they form. Biodiversity is essential for the health of our planet and the well-being of humans, but is also foundational for the success of businesses' value chains:

- **Raw materials:** Many businesses rely directly on biodiversity for natural resources such as timber, fibers, food, and medicinal ingredients.
- **Ecosystem services:** Businesses depend on healthy ecosystems for services we take for granted, like clean water, pollination, and climate regulation.
- **Supply chain disruptions:** Biodiversity loss can make supply chains vulnerable to disruptions from extreme weather events, pest outbreaks, and resource scarcity.
- **Economic benefits:** Biodiversity supports many industries such as tourism that are dependent on the successful preservation of nature and the natural environment.
- **Natural hazard mitigation:** Healthy ecosystems, such as mangroves and forests, can provide natural protection against floods, storms, and erosion, reducing risks for businesses operating in vulnerable areas.



# SENSITIVE ECOSYSTEMS

Sensitive ecosystems are areas with a high concentration of biodiversity that are particularly vulnerable to disturbance or degradation. They are often home to rare or endangered species, and can be easily damaged by human or business activities.

There is no single definition of what constitutes a sensitive ecosystem, but tropical rainforests, coral reefs, wetlands, old-growth forests, and alpine ecosystems are frequently referenced.

Common characteristics include:

- A large number of different species living in a small area. This can make them particularly vulnerable to disturbance, as the loss of even a single species can have a cascading effect on the rest of the ecosystem.
- Home to rare species, such as those on the [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#). These species are particularly vulnerable to extinction if their habitat is destroyed or degraded.
- Some ecosystems, such as wetlands and coral reefs, are particularly fragile and can be easily damaged by human activities.
- Some ecosystems, such as old-growth forests, take a long time to recover from disturbance. This means that even small disturbances can have long-lasting effects.

## WHY INVEST IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION?

### Regulatory Compliance and Risk Management

Governments worldwide are implementing stricter environmental regulations. Failing to comply with these laws can result in fines, penalties, and reputational damage. Investing proactively in environmental protection helps organisations stay ahead of regulatory requirements and mitigate long-term risks, including those related to biodiversity loss and ecosystem health.

### Building Resilience

Environmental degradation and biodiversity loss can disrupt supply chains, affect resource availability, and increase operational costs. Organisations that invest in conservation become more resilient, reducing vulnerability to environmental risks and ensuring the sustainability of their operations.



## Economic Benefits and Cost Savings

Investing in sustainable practices, for instance, minimising waste disposal costs, reducing energy consumption, and adopting circular economy principles, often leads to cost savings.

## Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Public awareness of environmental and biodiversity issues is growing. Consumers and stakeholders now expect organisations to contribute positively to society and the environment. Organisations that invest in environmental protection and biodiversity conservation demonstrate their commitment to CSR, enhancing brand image, building trust, and improving relationships with customers, investors, and the community.

## Contributing to Global Goals

Organisations have the opportunity to contribute to global efforts to protect biodiversity and ecosystems in line with the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). By addressing biodiversity and environmental impacts, organisations play an important role in global conservation efforts.

# WHAT CAN BUSINESSES DO?

## Support Conservation Projects and Biodiversity Action Plans

Make a start by doing something as simple as supporting a local environmental charity or NGO focused on habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation. Invest in reforestation, wetland restoration, or other conservation initiatives to offset your impact.

Nature-based team building activities are also a great way to combine environmental and social impact. Beach or river clean-ups, tree planting, habitat restoration, seed bombing, biodiversity surveying, or building bug hotels are all excellent ways of actively investing in environmental protection and conservation while providing team building opportunities for employees.

## Assess your Impact

Begin by understanding your organisation's environmental and biodiversity footprint. Conduct an environmental impact assessment to identify areas where energy, water, and resources are consumed, and where waste, emissions, and pollutants are generated.

Similarly, assess how your operations and supply chain affect ecosystems, focusing on land use, resource consumption, and impact on sensitive habitats.



## Implement Sustainable Practices

- **Energy Efficiency:** Invest in renewable energy, upgrade to energy-efficient lighting and appliances, and improve building insulation to reduce resource consumption.
- **Waste Reduction:** Minimise waste generation by recycling, composting, reducing packaging, and promoting a circular economy approach where products are reused, refurbished, or repurposed.
- **Water Conservation:** Implement water-saving technologies to minimise water consumption and pollution, such as low-flow fixtures and water recycling systems.
- **Sustainable Sourcing:** Ensure that raw materials are sustainably produced, such as sourcing certified sustainable timber, fair trade products, or locally sourced materials.
- **Think Local:** There are simple but effective things businesses can do to increase biodiversity in and around operational buildings like green roofs, vertical gardens, outdoor planters, bug or bee hotels, and bird feeders.
- **Reduce Use of Chemicals and Plastics:** Explore alternatives to harmful chemicals, reduce use of pesticides, and cut single-use plastics and micro-beads.
- **Avoid Harm to Sensitive Ecosystems:** Map and avoid operating in ecologically sensitive areas such as wetlands, forests, and habitats of endangered species. Choose suppliers that adhere to sustainable resource extraction practices.

## Promote Employee Engagement and Education

Create programmes that educate employees about environmental and biodiversity issues and encourage sustainable practices in the workplace. Examples include recycling initiatives, carpooling programmes, and promoting biodiversity-conscious office design and operations.

## NEED MORE HELP?

Our team of Sustainability Consultants are on hand to support you. Contact us at:

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