



Environmental Working Group

July 2025



AMEA Environmental Working Group

Origins & Vision

- **Established:** 2024 AMEA Global Convening in Delft; 4 meetings since 2024 Convening
- **Approach:** Focused on sharing learning and connections between professional farmer organizations, ISO 18716, and environmental outcomes.

Objectives in 2025-26

Our goal is to discover how BDS providers, strengthened farmer organizations, and Agri-SMEs can lead in:

- **Carbon Markets:** Investigating durable pathways to engage in voluntary carbon markets to more effectively distribute co-benefits to communities.
- **Regenerative Agriculture:** Understanding how professionalization can accelerate the adoption of regenerative practices that build resilience and enhance soil health.
- **Green Economic Opportunities:** Identifying how to best position professionally managed agri-SMEs to meet the growing demand for sustainable goods and access high-value markets.

Underlying Assumption

- **Professionalization:** Utilizing frameworks like **ISO 18716, BDS platforms, and network learning** to strengthen governance and management is key to unlocking the potential of FOs and Agri-SMEs as effective environmental actors.



ENVIRONMENTAL
DIALOGUE SERIES
WEBINAR

Agribusiness & Nature Based Solutions

Strategies for Stability in Volatile Markets

Expect A Dynamic Discussion On:

- Enhancing income per hectare through NbS
- De-risking finance via ISO 18716 & technical assistance
- Opportunities for carbon markets and regenerative cocoa supply chains
- Real-world challenges and investment pathways for cooperatives

PANELISTS



James Parker
Landscape initiatives in West &
Central Africa
Proforest

proforest



Matthew Aghai

Reforestation &
investment pathways
Viridian Ecosystems

VIRIDIAN



Arnoud de Villegas



Casey Harrison
Chief Sustainability Officer
Nuru & AMEA

nuru

FACILITATOR



17TH JULY, 2025
14:00 GMT (60-90 MINS)

REGISTER NOW:

Be part of shaping climate-aligned BDS ecosystems

www.amea-global.com/book-edsw





The 1st AMEA Environmental Webinar

**with
Viridian Ecosystems and Proforest**



Opportunities for carbon markets and regenerative cocoa supply chains

The Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP)



James Parker, Proforest



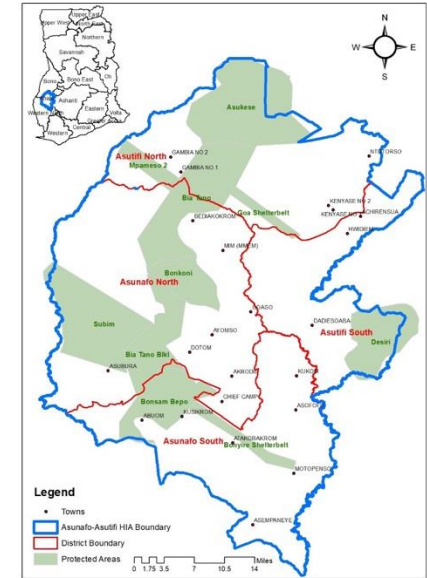
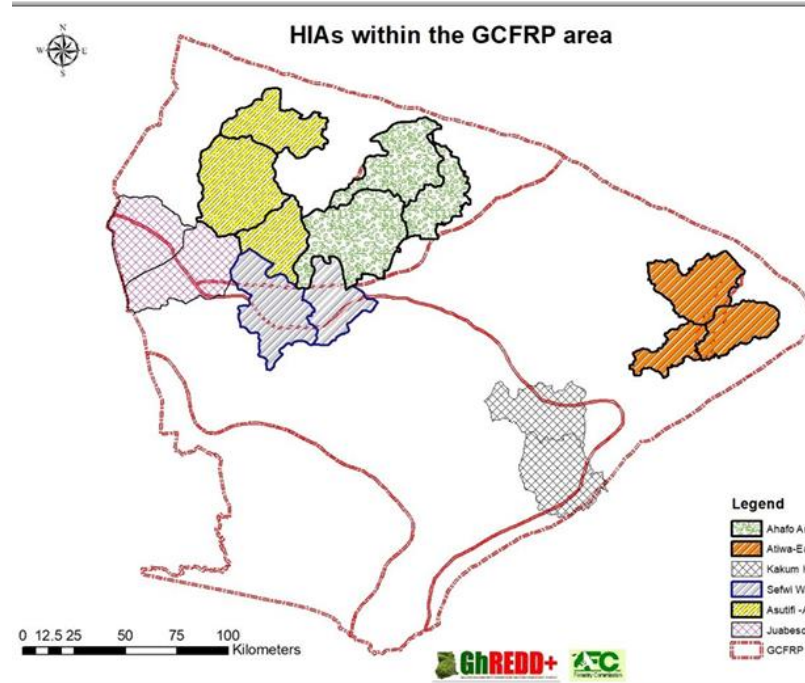
Proforest is a global organisation, locally led, with a shared mission

Agricultural and forestry production and sourcing that delivers positive outcomes for people, nature and climate



The Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ (GCFRP)

- GCFRP is the first Emission Reduction (ER) program to be developed under REDD+ in Ghana.
- Aims to reduce carbon emissions resulting from cocoa expansion into forest areas through the promotion of appropriate climate smart cocoa production systems (RegenAg & dynamic agro-forestry) to increase cocoa yields and improve rural livelihoods and economies



Performance indicators and contribution of Asunafo-Asutifi landscape interventions

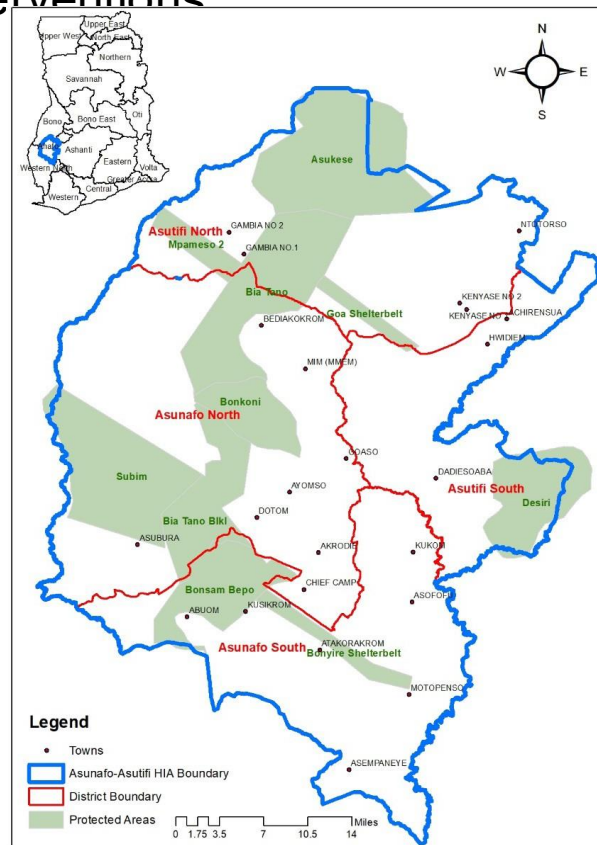


Table 31: Social performance indicators and respective weights

Social Performance Indicators	Data/Masurement Proxy	Weight
Registration of farmers/farmer groups	No. of farmers registered per HIA/Sub-HIA	0.5
Launching of HIA Consortium	Documentation of launch	0.5
Letter of Agreement/MoU to establish HIA governance structure	Letter/MOU	0.5
Development of management plan	Management Plan document	1
Verified participation of Traditional Authorities in development of management plan	Signature from TAs in MP	1
Establishment of HIA governance structure	Sub-HIA and HIA Constitutions and then	1.5
Adoption of CSC practices by farmer group & Implementation of management plan	By-laws	1.5
	HIA annual report	1.5
Total		8

Table 32: ER indicators and respective weights

Emission reduction indicators	Weight
Increased deforestation in HIA	0.5
No net change in deforestation	1
Reduced deforestation	1.5

GCFRP Targets

- Produce a total of 294,395,567 million tCO₂e emission reductions over 20 years
- Invest about USD 2 billion in Cocoa industry
- Increase cocoa yields from 400 kg/ha to 600-800 kg/ha, through adoption of climate smart agricultural practices
- Produce “sustainably” cocoa beans to support private sector’s no deforestation supply chain commitments
- Sign Emission Reduction Programme Agreements (ERPA) with the Carbon Fund

Carbon benefits

- Performance based incentive payment.
- Farm input packages to support climate-smart cocoa production.
- Community development projects.
- Logistics for landscape monitoring and law enforcement.
- Support for implementation and monitoring of Safeguards.

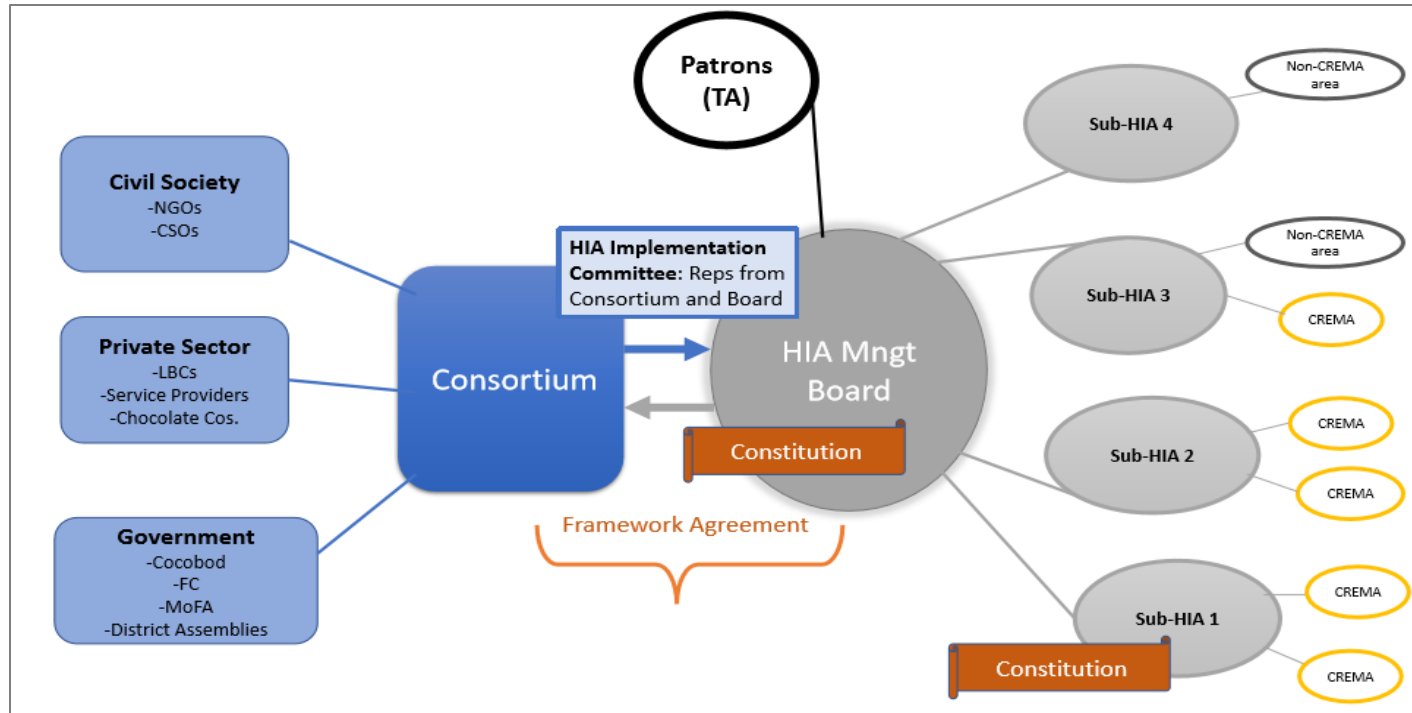
Non-Carbon benefits

- Increased yields and incomes through adoption of CSC practices
- Sale of CSC beans at premium price
- Improved tree and land tenure security
- Access to financial credit and risk reduction instruments
- Livelihood diversification (additional livelihoods)

Carbon Benefits outcomes

- In 2019, Ghana signed the ERPA with the World Bank Carbon Fund.
- The ERPA cover the first 7 years of implementation of the GCFRP (2019-2025) and estimated to produce about 10 million tCO₂e emission reductions to be transacted for USD 50 million.

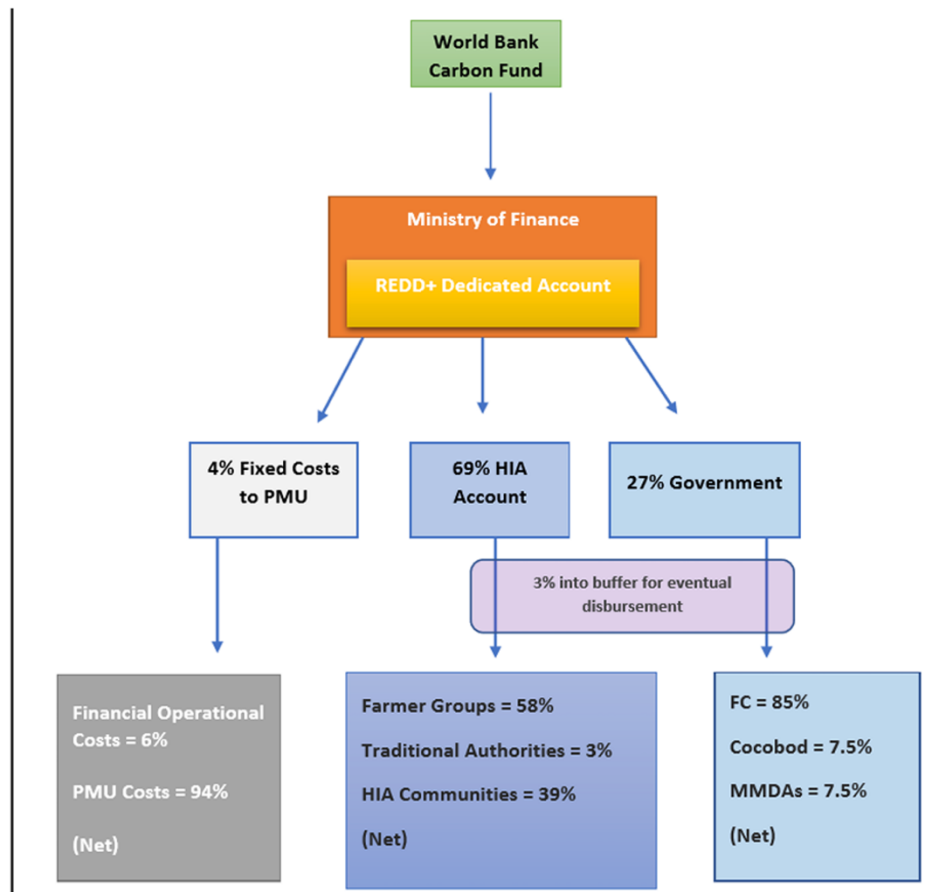
Landscape Governance Structure



Activities

- Working with **4 farmers groups** with a total of number of about **20,000 farmers**, traditional authorities and landscape communities.
- Implementing climate smart agricultural practices (RegenAg, dynamic agro-forestry), restoring degraded forests, diversifying livelihoods, addressing social issues including child labour and linking farmers to sustainable markets.

Benefit sharing Plan



Benefits

- A total of USD 37.5 million has been paid by World bank Carbon fund and USD 19.5 million shared. The Asunafo-Asutifi landscape has received a total of USD 4,480,453.21 (about 23%)
- The average productivity of cocoa in the GCFRP area has increased from 400 kg per hectare to 600 kg per hectare since 2019 (*World Bank , June 2023*)
- All cocoa farms in the GCFRP area have been mapped and polygons capture. All cocoa farmers have also been registered. Ghana COCOBOD is working with Verra (VCS) to develop and pilot a Landscape Standard (LS) for cocoa that will enable certification of sustainable landscapes beans for differentiated marketing and pricing.

Challenges

- Funding to scale up interventions
- The EUDR has shifted the attention of key private sector actors. This has slowed down investment in the cocoa sector
- Functionality at all levels of governance structure
- Reluctance to on-farm investments (unchanging attitude of older cocoa farmers)
- Data sharing and management
- Coordination at the national level



VIRIDIAN

AMEA
17th July 2025

Viridian Ecosystems

Partnering with AMEA to Cultivate Natural Capital in Agri-SMEs.

Regenerating Land, Livelihoods, and Legacy [now expanding into Rural Africa].

Presenters:

- Matthew Aghai, Chief Executive Officer
- Arnoud de Villegas, Chief Commercial Officer



Who We Are

01

In Forestry.

- Led the development of the first vertically integrated reforestation technology company in the U.S.
- Created a FOAK natural capital project finance model benefiting fire-affected landowners.
- Built the largest reforestation supply chain in the Western U.S.
- Shaped policy discussions on resilience and natural capital markets in D.C.
- Integrated applied science with commercial execution across the reforestation value chain.

02

Beyond.

- Experience in finance, operations and complex logistics, M&A, technology, and scaling small to medium sized companies across diverse industries around the world.
- Collectively, we have lived and operated across North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and most recently Africa, navigating both conventional and high-stakes environments.



Our Team



Matthew Aghai

Chief Executive Officer,
Co-Founder

Fmr Chief Science Officer,
Mast Reforestation



Fmr Univ of Washington
Pack Forest, Univ of Idaho



Arnoud de Villegas

Chief Commercial
Officer, Co-Founder

Fmr VP of BD, Mast
Reforestation



Fmr CalForest, GEM,
Hayground Cove,
Petercam Capital



John Hall

COO & CFO,
Co-Founder

Fmr COO/CFO at Mast
Reforestation



Fmr Convoy, Amazon,
U.S. Marine Corp Aviator



Joe Bardenheier

Head of Corporate
Development

Founding Exec and Fmr
SVP Corp Dev,
Endurance International



Adjunct Professor,
Montana State University



Solomon Dobrowski

Chief Scientist & Co-
Founder

Professor, Department of
Forest Management,
University of Montana.
Climate; Forestry;
Wildfire; Landscape
Ecology



Chris Samuel

Chief Impact & Corporate
Affairs Officer [Fractional]

Fmr. Head of Global
Communications, U.S.
Soybean Export Council



Fmr. Bayer, Monsanto,
Madison PR



Our Team



Lord Ameyaw

Principal | Agroforestry & NBS

Assistant Professor,
University of Nebraska
School of Natural
Resources



Kacy Hutchison

Advisor | Government
Affairs & Advocacy

Chief of Government
Affairs & Advocacy,
Lykos Therapeutics

Fmr VP of North
America Government
Affairs at Gilead
Sciences



Jonathan Loevner

Advisor | Carbon & Real
Assets

Acting COO, Carbon
Lockdown

Fmr Head of Carbon at
Mast Reforestation. Fmr
NewForests,
Weyerhaeuser, US
Congress



Hunter Oetinger

Advisor | Marketing &
Communications

Head of Marketing at
Reuben's Brews

Fmr Head of Marketing at
Mast Reforestation. Fmr
Docklight and Sierra
Nevada Brewing



Sierra Quitiquit

Advisor | Climate
Advocacy

CEO, Time For Better

Professional Skier |
Climate Activist | NATO
Youth representative USA





Nuru International :

- Global non-profit.
- Support the development of independent agricultural businesses in conflict-impacted countries.
- Operations in Kenya, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Nigeria.

Project partners : Ghana & Ethiopia.

- Blended-finance models:
 - Agroforestry <> Natural Capital.
- System design & project development in-country.
- Stakeholder engagement & funding.
- Broad technical support and supply chain evaluation.



Viridian & Nuru in Ghana



June 2025



Catalyzing Restoration & Land-Based Finance

Our Mission:

We design, fund, and manage projects that deliver landscape-scale ecological impact alongside robust financial returns by valuing nature in financial systems. Our expertise lies in creating durable and sustainable practices for integrating trees into landscapes.

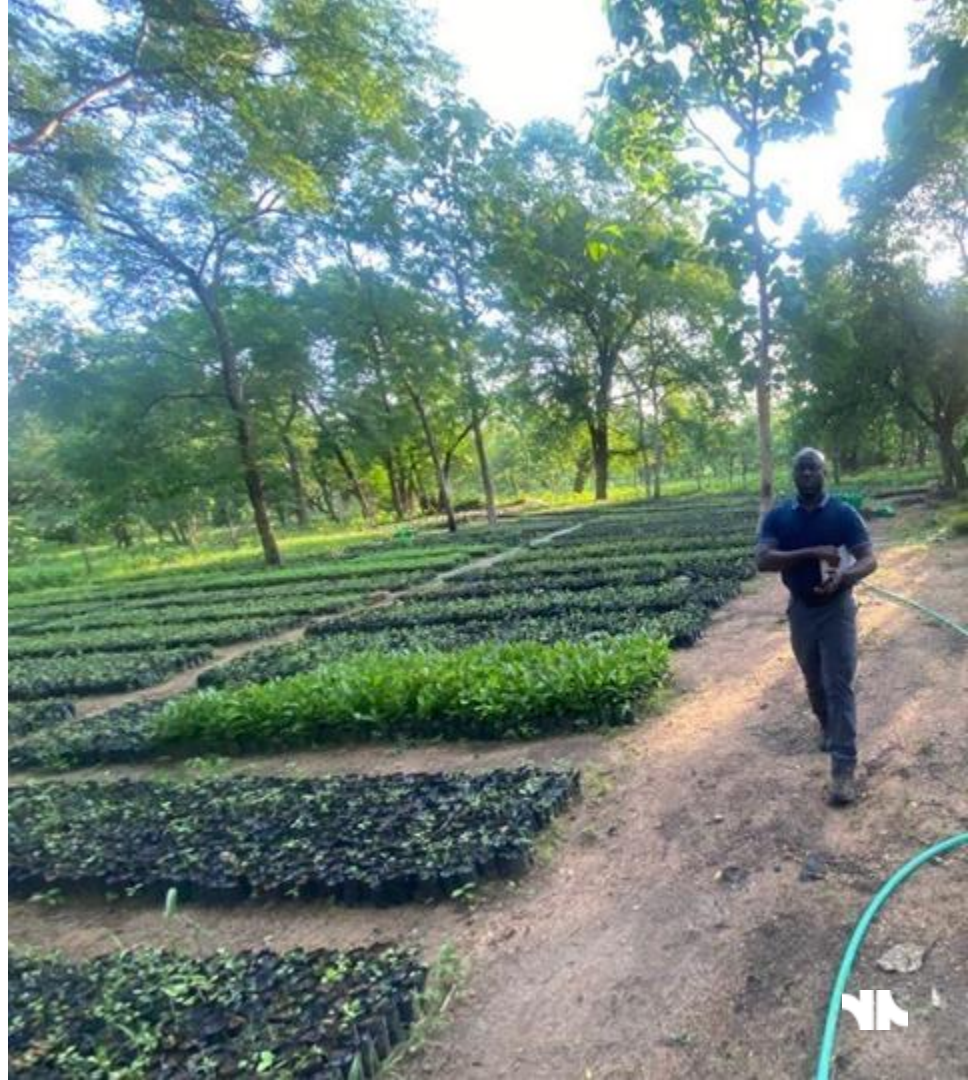


The Critical Context in Africa

The global imperative to restore landscapes:

Land degradation impacts 2.6 billion people globally, severely affecting over 2 billion in drylands. This threatens food security and rural incomes.

Africa holds one-fifth of the world's remaining forests but is experiencing the fastest rates of loss.



Agroforestry: Multifunctional, Resilient, and a Key Nature-based Solutions (NbS)

Agroforestry intentionally combines trees with crops and/or livestock, offering diverse agronomic, socioeconomic, and environmental advantages.

01

Climate Mitigation & Adaptation

Trees sequester carbon and improve soil health, while also providing shade and water regulation for climate resilience. Agroforestry can offer a "multiple-win solution". sustainable wood products, grants applications, forest inventory, and environmental services.

02

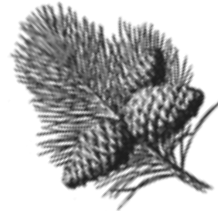
Livelihood Diversification

Provides varied income sources from timber, fruits, and other products, crucial for smallholder stability.

03

Enhanced Soil Health & Biodiversity

Reduces erosion, improves nutrient cycling, and provides habitats.



Quantified Agroforestry Impact

Global Potential

Agroforestry could mitigate up to $0.31 \text{ Pg C yr}^{-1}$, comparable to reforestation.

African Context

Systems stock an average of $24.2 \pm 2.8 \text{ Mg C ha}^{-1}$ in biomass and $98.8 \pm 12.2 \text{ Mg C ha}^{-1}$ in soil. Large-scale deployment in West Africa could sequester up to $135 \text{ Mt CO}_2/\text{year}$ over two decades.

Sources

Hart et al. 2023. Priority science can accelerate agroforestry as a natural climate solution

Roe et al. 2019. The potential of natural climate solutions in mitigating global climate change: a meta analysis.



Bridging the Finance Gap through NbS

01

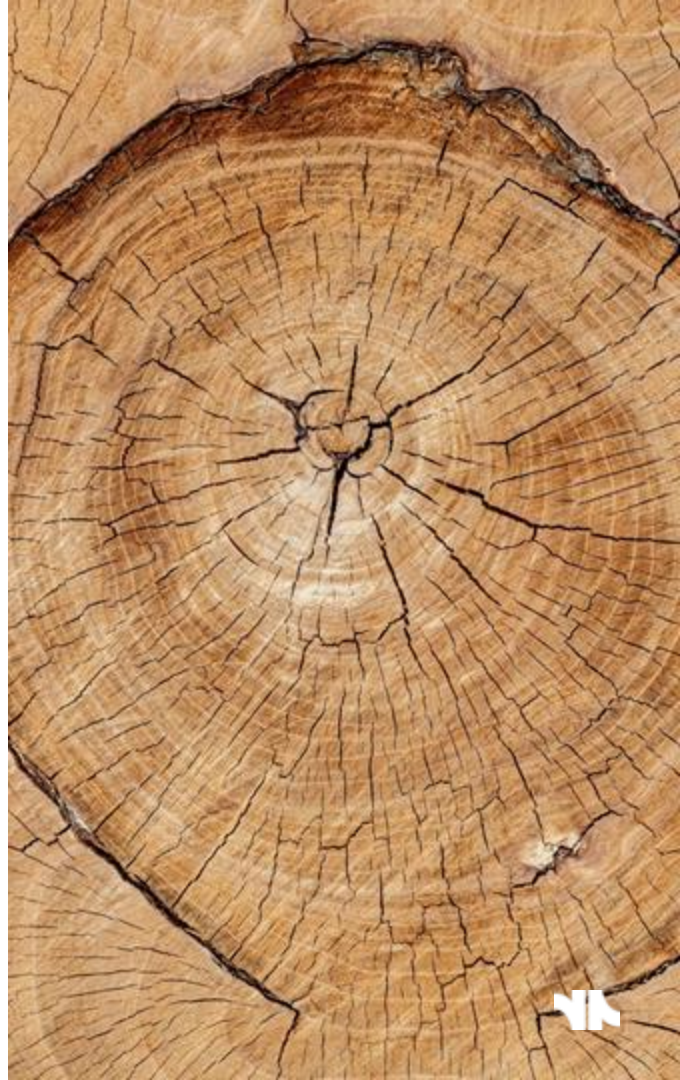
The "Missing Middle" Solution

Blended finance models combine catalytic capital (reducing risk) with private investment to unlock funds for agri-SMEs and cooperatives that are too large for microfinance but too risky for commercial banks. Every \$1 of catalytic capital can unlock up to \$4 of private investment.

02

Carbon Markets as a Revenue Stream

Carbon credits offer a performance-based incentive, allowing projects to generate revenue from emissions reductions or removals, providing a long-term sustainable financing mechanism (20-30 years).



Our Collaborative Approach: Building Investment Readiness

Aligning Incentives, Standards, and Local Realities for Scalable Impact

01

Criticality of Technical Assistance (TA)

Building capacity and quality in environmental projects is paramount for de-risking finance and ensuring stable supply chains. This includes support for fundamental business management and organizational capacity.

02

Community-Led Ownership

Empowering professional cooperatives, aligned with ISO 18716, ensures that project benefits improve livelihoods and climate resilience directly within local communities.

03

The Human Element

While technology extends reach, trusted local actors are essential for building relationships, ensuring uptake, and translating complex solutions on the ground.

04

Proven Partnership Model

Our work with Nuru in Ghana and Ethiopia aims to demonstrate how blending community-driven solutions with natural capital investment can foster resilience, impacting hundreds of thousands of people through professionalized agribusinesses.



AMEA & Viridian: Accelerating Regen Ag & NbS at Scale

Our Shared Ambition

We are committed to scaling regenerative agriculture and Nature-based Solutions in practical, profitable, and scalable ways for smallholder farmers and agri-SMEs across Africa.

How We Can Collaborate

Leverage Viridian's Expertise: Discuss how our knowledge in natural capital project development, blended finance, and robust MRV can directly support your initiatives in Africa.

Co-Create Solutions: Work together to bridge the technical insights of NbS specialists with the practical knowledge of agronomic experts, BDS providers, and smallholder farmers.

Our Collective Goal

To equip local actors with the knowledge, partnerships, and tools necessary to effectively respond to intensifying biodiversity loss and climate impacts, building resilient landscapes and livelihoods.





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Questions

Discussion:

- How can technical assistance and business development services build investment readiness and prepare cooperatives for nature-based finance?
- Noting the risk of “standards fatigue” for farmers, Agri-SME leaders, and investors, how can ISO 18716 guidelines act as a “gateway” rather than another “barrier” to positive environmental outcomes?
- What are some of the keys to unlocking nature-based solutions at scale? Is there a role for networks of professionally managed Agri-SMEs to create change across a landscape?