



**SIANI**

Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative

## Integrated landscape approaches Expectations and obstacles

Policy Brief

August 2015

### The need for landscape management

The driving forces behind global development are changing swiftly, and becoming increasingly interconnected. Still, we continue to address natural resource challenges sector by sector, through institutions built around a sectorial approach developed in another century.

This policy brief presents the case for a new approach to sustainably manage our natural resources: one that takes a holistic view of the landscape and its multiple functions. This new approach considers the interests of the full range of stakeholders and recognizes both formal and informal practices, such as the rule of law and cultural norms.

A growing world population and global economy are creating increased demand for food, fibre, bioenergy, forest products and water, and thus putting pressure on natural resources and environmental services. The limited availability of resources will force societies to produce more from less in order to meet societal demands, with a strong awareness of the need for sustainable development.

These pressures affect different sectors of society in complex, interconnected ways. The concept of Integrated Landscape Approaches was developed to better address this complexity. It takes a holistic and integrated view in conducting analysis, drafting policies, and finding solutions that encompass many sectors in the management of natural resources.

No country has yet established national policies for integrated, landscape-level management of natural resources, but expectations are high for this approach to still make a significant contribution. In the sections that follow, we describe the concept in greater detail, examine its potential applications, and identify priorities for action.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Create a relevant and useful definition of the landscape approach which includes indicators for monitoring and evaluation.**
- **Demonstrate and document the advantages and disadvantages of implementing landscape approaches.**
- **Make landscapes a focal point of the green economy, with initiatives to maximize both public- and private-sector engagement.**
- **Attract commercial investors by working to reduce investment risk, consolidating partnerships between public, private and civil society organizations, and fostering linkages between sectors.**
- **Establish stakeholder platforms to organize and mediate dialogue between the actors involved in multi-functional landscape activities.**
- **Focus on what a landscape approach can contribute towards broad societal goals. Include economic incentives and show how this is relevant to high-level policy-making.**
- **Build capacity through engagement of local decision-makers, practitioners and extension workers, smallholder associations, and researchers working with natural resource management.**
- **Identify the economic potential of connecting rural and urban markets, removing trade barriers, and integrating payment for environmental services (PES) systems.**
- **Develop sustainable mechanisms for monitoring and reporting systems covering a period of at least a 10 years.**
- **Investigate what is needed to institutionalize the landscape approach, such as coordination among different sectoral agencies from an early stage.<sup>1</sup>**

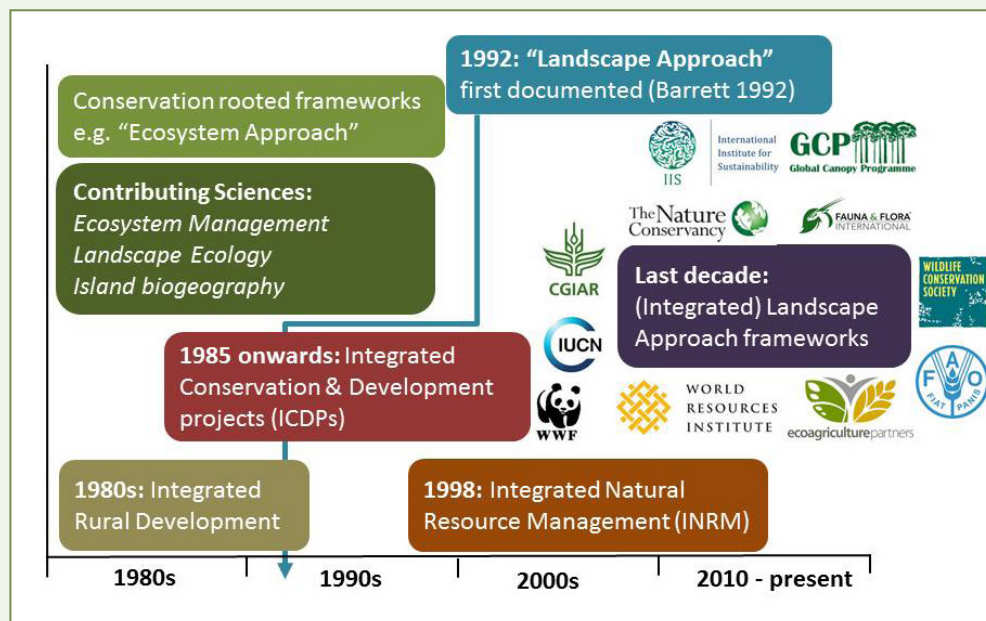


*Iron and Steel giant ISKOR's Vanderbijl Park refinery. Farm land bordering the industrial area. 2007. Photo: John Hogg/World Bank.*

<sup>1</sup> These recommendations originate from the seminar Landscape Approaches in Practice, organized by SIFI and SIANI, at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Umeå, Sweden, 17 March 2015.

**FIGURE 1.**

**A brief summary of development of frameworks which have fed into the landscape approach paradigm.**



Source: Deakin, L. 2015.

## Landscape approaches in practice

Landscape approaches have already been implemented all over the world, in different forms, at different scales, and in a range of environments and setups. Some span hundreds of hectares, while others span millions.<sup>3</sup>

Implementation so far has been driven mainly by conservation NGOs and civil society organizations. But there also are projects driven by communities and national governments. In recent years industry and the private sector have demonstrated an increased interest in landscape approaches, mostly to secure their supply chains. In adopting these approaches, they have also incorporated societal development and efforts to ensure the stability and sustainability

of the environments in which they operate. In the food sector, companies such as Unilever, Nestlé, Cargill, Starbucks, Mars, Tesco, and SABMiller are at the forefront of this new thinking.

### Lessons learned

The implementation of landscape approaches so far has encountered several obstacles and difficulties. These include insecure land tenure rights, inefficient institutions, inadequate capacity, sector-based subsidies, insufficient funding, a disconnect from markets, lack of political will, and weak governance. But there have also been positive experiences; one key success factor has been strong involvement and coordination by local stakeholders and by outside beneficiaries of landscape approaches. All experiences show that if a stakeholder platform is not in place, the landscape activity will fail. The platform provides the basis for organizing the landscape activity and engaging different actors.

Institutional planning and coordination are also crucial, as it is important to reform counterproductive laws and policies. A good governance model that addresses both policy-making and politics is needed for regular monitoring of input and performance, for financing development, and for supervision. If no model supports a sound implementation in the landscape approach itself, a minimum requirement is to build "bridges" between the administrative bodies at local and national levels across sectors, e.g. agriculture, water and forests.

Thousands of landscape management entities have been established by different actors all over the world, but hardly any complete economic evaluations and valuations have been carried out. This is due to the fact that system descriptions of the landscapes and the approaches are insufficiently documented. There is thus no reliable baseline for comparison. Filling this gap is not easy, as the economic, environmental, and societal dimensions of a landscape involve a range of values, scales and time horizons. Moreover, "non-use" values – that is, the willingness to pay to protect a landscape because its very existence is considered important – can constitute a significant part of the value of a landscape.

### What is an integrated landscape approach?

There is not one single widely accepted definition of "landscape" or "integrated landscape approach". In fact, the use of different terms and the lack of a coherent definition have hindered progress and implementation of the concept by policy-makers. The basic idea is summarized on the website of the Global Landscapes Forum, held in Lima, Peru, in December 2014:

*Farms, forests, water bodies and settlements are not isolated elements but part of a wider landscape in which all land uses are integrated. A landscapes approach entails viewing and managing multiple land uses in an integrated manner, considering both the natural environment and the human systems that depend on it.*<sup>2</sup>

For our purposes, we define "integrated landscape approach" as a way of achieving a balance between competing resource uses, employing multi-stakeholder interdisciplinary working modes, to sustainably meet economic, nutritional and environmental needs as well as the aspirations of people within a landscape and of those linked to it through value chains and ecosystem services.

This type of approach is not new. It has been under development since the 1980s, under several different names. Its development has been driven mainly by international conservation NGOs, policy think tanks, and scientific organizations. These actors have tried over time to define the roles of conservation, sustainable forestry and agriculture, and environmental services in meeting growing demand, building resilience to climate change, and providing social value.

Interest in landscape approaches is now growing rapidly, mostly driven by the issues of rural development, nature conservation and food security in developing countries. The Global Landscapes Forum in Lima brought together thousands of policy-makers, researchers, business and civil society leaders.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.landscapes.org/glf-2014/about/>.

<sup>3</sup> However, reporting on these projects is limited, making it hard to draw detailed conclusions about projects between different regions, though it is clear that the distribution is uneven. The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) is conducting research on this and has an interactive map of reported landscape approaches at: <http://www.cifor.org/landscape-map>.

Given those factors, it is very difficult to employ formal economic approaches and quantitative tools to assess efficiency of landscape approaches in terms of productivity. Under current conditions it is not possible to conclude whether the benefits of a landscape approaches outweigh the transaction costs, or whether the benefits to a landscape and its inhabitants are greater than with single-sector approaches.

Questions also remain about whether it makes sense to switch to a landscape approach when a sustainable land use system with a clear structure is already in place. That system may dominate strongly and be supported by local people and decision-makers, for various reasons: agro-ecological, economic, logistical or cultural, or any combination of these. This is the case, for example, with vineyards in wine-growing regions, or the small-scale mixed agricultural systems that prevail in large parts of Africa.

Achieving sustainable landscape development requires substantial investments. Current evaluations provide information about whether or not investments were made in a landscape, but it is not yet possible to evaluate the magnitude of these investments or the return on them. The vast majority of investments made so far involve environmental NGOs and other civil society organizations. Investments by national governments are largely lacking, and private-sector investments have been limited and insufficient. High investment risk and a perceived low rate of return are judged to be the impediments – though in recent years, private-sector investment in landscape approaches has been increasing around the world.

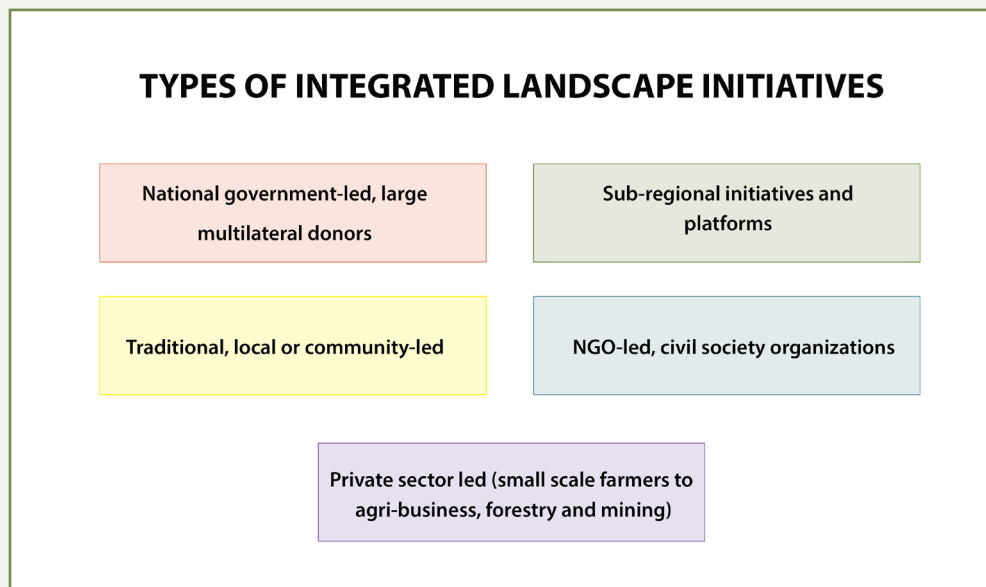
The current dependence on funding from environmental NGOs to support landscape approaches is a problem, because these organizations typically make relatively short-term investments, for a limited number of years. The evidence suggests, however, that investments are needed for at least 10 years in order to get a landscape approach established, self-sufficient and sustainable in formal and informal institutions.

### The future of landscape approaches

Landscapes are shaped by socio-political as well as economic factors, including, for example, government policies, market structures, taxes, institutions, property rights and other legislation, public research and development, and subsidies. Thus, if a landscape approach is to be established, it must in some way be integrated with overall socio-economic planning and development. This should be a guiding principle for any framework for establishing a landscape approach.

Sufficient representation of different sectors and trust among stakeholders are both essential to the success of a landscape approach. Thus, interaction between the different sectoral administrations should be fostered as soon as the stakeholder platform for the landscape process is established.

**FIGURE 2.**  
Types of integrated landscape initiatives.



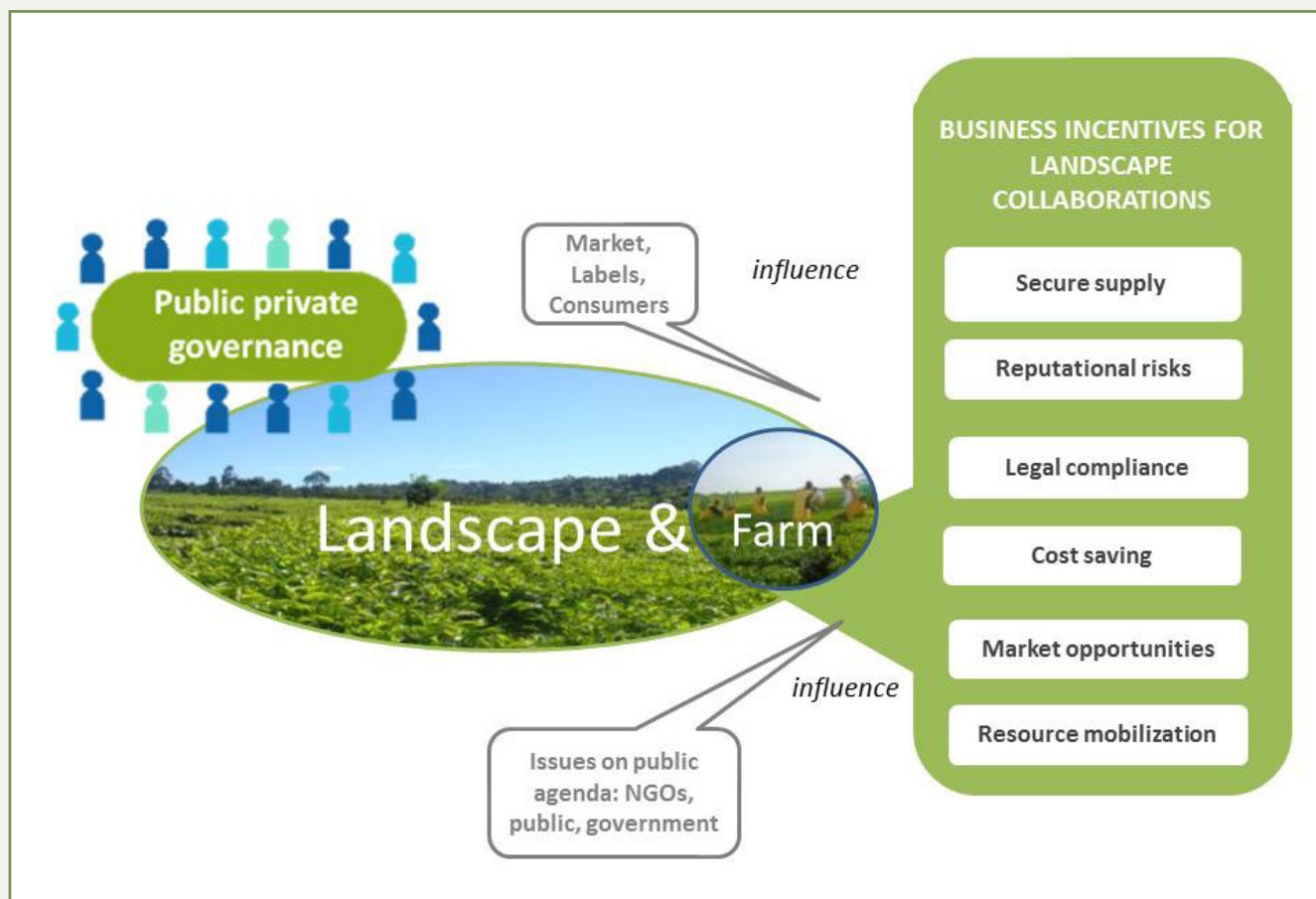
Source: Modified from Kissinger, G. 2014.

The recently developed UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can provide a platform as well. The SDGs could frame the policy dialogue until 2030, but should thereafter not be limited to the global and upper levels of the political hierarchy, which was a weakness of their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The SDGs and the landscape approaches have overlapping intentions, e.g. to achieve food security, secure water, sustainably managed forests, and to promote sustainable economic growth, agriculture, and use of terrestrial ecosystems. The landscape approach can supplement the SDGs and provide a framework for implementation of the goals on both the national and local levels.

The private sector needs to become a major player in implementing landscape approaches. Industry and businesses have a lot to gain from operating at landscape levels. Support is also required from governments and the industry, particularly for linking landscape development with the “green economy”. Industry will most probably be the driving force in this process, but it requires favourable political conditions. In this context, that means clear, well-coordinated policies and laws without contradictions, and long-term political commitments to a landscape approach at the national and local level.

Payments for ecosystem services (PES) will be crucial for the establishment of sustainable landscapes, especially in the early stages of the process, when they may provide the only immediate economic benefits from moving to this new approach. The idea behind PES is that those who benefit from ecosystem services – e.g. landscape beauty, certified wood, biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration and watershed protection – pay those who provide the services. PES have great potential but also pose great challenges. The first challenge is to establish markets for the services and to secure long-term capital for smallholder farmers. The second is to avoid conflicts with overall social development, specifically livelihoods.

**FIGURE 3.**  
Incentives for business to work at a landscape.



Source: EcoAgriculture Partners and the Sustainable Trade Initiative, 2015.

### Persistent challenges and obstacles

Several issues will continue to hinder the implementation of landscape approaches:

- **Weak sectoral organizations, institutions and insecure land tenure rights** are not conducive to policy-making and a good political climate for implementation of a landscape approach.
- **Global needs** (resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, etc.) are not integrated with local needs (increased income, food security and job opportunities).
- **Prevailing land use systems** that are strongly supported by local people and decision-makers, because of agro-ecological, market, logistical or cultural conditions, may be difficult to change or replace.
- **Ineffectual multi-stakeholder approaches** tried in the past, such as stakeholder platforms that are not strongly embedded in local and national institutional frameworks, could discourage participation in multi-stakeholder platforms to support

landscape approaches.

- **Current quantitative tools are not sufficient** to assess the economic benefits of landscapes.
- **Interdisciplinary research and analysis of landscape establishments** are limited, which puts constraints on implementation of the approach among decision makers.
- **Weak supply chains of products and services** between rural and urban markets and vice versa.
- **Financial resources and long-term capital** are not available for smallholder farmers.
- **Short-term investments** by environmental NGOs are still the main source of funding for landscape approaches, even though sustained investments over many years are needed.
- **Low activity level among national governments and the private sector** using landscape approaches. The private sector may require more than a favourable political climate in order to incorporate landscape approaches; these additional needs are yet to be identified.



**SIFI**

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