The Global Alliance for the Future of Food states that food systems transformation takes place, “when diverse actions, networks, and individuals intersect across sector and issue silos, the global and local [scales] ... and ... build critical mass and momentum behind tipping points that lead to healthy ... resilient ... systems.” The world urgently needs transformative science to support this process: science that addresses the complex ways in which people and ecological systems affect each other.

CIFOR-ICRAF is uniquely equipped to deliver transformative science. We bring together our strengths from policy to plot level science to support a whole-landscape mandate. This encompasses agricultural lands, intact forest, and everything in-between. When we combine the diverse skills of our more than 700 staff, and the long-established partnerships of both organizations, we are able to address local challenges and opportunities while solving global problems. Our innovative digital platforms, delivery and engagement strategy ensures the accelerated uptake of knowledge is shared and applied widely with partners and stakeholders.
The CIFOR-ICRAF approach

CIFOR-ICRAF is a research organization that supports development. Our mission is to deliver solutions through evidence, technologies and advisory services. We have a unique way of doing things, which includes our approach to research, partnerships, and our organizational structure.

**Partnerships**

We have learnt that complex challenges require us to build and nurture creative and transformative partnerships. South-South collaborations and partnerships, where we build technical cooperation in the Global South, form part of our partnership strategy. We enjoy trusted relationships with civil society in developing country landscapes, and with subnational and national governments. Our long-established presence ‘on the ground’, supported by in-country offices where our presence is needed most, has also been fundamental to building these relationships. Our staff understand the locations where they work. This enables us to inform policy change, strengthen capacities, and support policy implementation. We know how to build trust and deliver viable solutions through commitment to our partners.

**Systems perspective**

Experience has taught us that research-for-development must address the complexity of the interaction between people and ecological systems. More recently, the current pandemic has provided a tragic demonstration of the interconnectedness of the global community. A systems approach recognizes that interdependent problems cannot be dealt with one-by-one, because of the complex nature of the innumerable connections. Solutions must work at multiple spatial and temporal scales. Our expertise spans the social and biophysical sciences and is up to the challenge of implementing such a systems approach. At the same time, we recognize that our partners need solutions that are pragmatic and applicable.

**Relevant and actionable solutions**

We need to ensure that the evidence that our research generates can be used as a basis for action. It must be actionable. To be actionable and effective, it must be designed with the people who count most: farming and forest dependent communities, value chain actors and the policy and decision makers we are seeking to support. Delivery of products and services must be underpinned by collaborative processes of development and mutual learning around adaptive solutions — ones that work now and are engineered to respond to future change. In these ways, we achieve contextual relevance, delivering solutions that can lead to action on the ground. Humility, open-mindedness, and willingness to learn guide our approach to delivering our products and services.

**Knowledge led digital engagement**

By 2023, two thirds of the global population will have internet access and 70 percent will have mobile connectivity. CIFOR-CRAF will leverage its digital engagement and delivery platforms to simultaneously connect stakeholders at all levels of society and across geographies, from scientists in Indonesia to farm families in Ghana and policy makers in Berlin. We are creating new digital spaces for innovative collaborations that have never been possible before. We transform leading scientific exploration and direct experience in landscapes, together with finance and governance, into living knowledge that addresses the world’s most pressing environmental challenges.
CIFOR-ICRAF’s transformative agenda

Forests, trees, people, planet

Worldwide, people recognize that forests and trees help combat climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation. Many also understand their importance to rural livelihoods. Conserving forests, planting trees, keeping them in the ground, and ensuring that the potential benefits come to fruition is not easy. We generate evidence and use our experience to unlock this potential. This requires work across all the themes outlined below: work that helps shape the future by building the business case for working with nature.

Restoration of landscapes and dependent livelihood systems

We work closely with local people in restoration. The goal? To restore their landscapes so that they meet their present and future needs. In many locations, our work focuses on the major smallholder-grown commodities that support livelihoods — cocoa, timber, coffee and palm oil — as well as lesser-known tree crops that provide a diverse range of foods and other products and services. We unravel the relationships between biodiversity, food security and nutrition, and help farmers apply agroecological principles. This supports availability and access to healthy and nutritious food.

Value chains and trade

Our work helps translate sustainable production into income. We build inclusive value chains and show how sound business practices can help farmers prosper. We illustrate how trade and investments in a diversity of forest and tree products can have positive impacts on rural livelihoods while minimizing negative impacts on the environment.

Sustainable and resilient landscapes

The rights and interests of those who live in agricultural and forest landscapes often overlap and conflict. Similarly, there may be trade-offs between the products and services that people demand from landscapes. We look at the implications of different land uses. What are the drivers of change? What approaches to land-use governance and planning could reconcile conflicts? Our research has generated tools that support these objectives. These include cost-effective mapping of land degradation, and frameworks for systematic planning and negotiation. As the rate of change and frequency of shocks increase, our intention is to help build adaptability to withstand these shocks — as well as productive resilience for the long term.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Forests and trees slow climate change by storing vast amounts of carbon. All our research contributes to natural carbon capture by keeping trees in the ground and increasing tree cover, matching planted trees to planting site and purpose. Our specific work on mitigation contributes strongly to the global agenda: for example, through assessment of major initiatives such as the REDD+ programme for reducing emissions, and through highlighting the role in carbon capture of natural ecosystems. Our work on adaptation illustrates how trees reduce local temperatures, modulate water flow and continue to produce when annual plants and livestock no longer can.

Supporting policies and governance that works

We provide informed, trusted evidence for the formulation of national policies on climate, food, forest, land use and tenure, as well as facilitating the development of national agroforestry policies. Our policy work is fed not only by analysis of specific policies, but also by comparative and retrospective studies of key issues, and by the full breadth of our experience in forests, farms and landscapes.

Gender, equity and rights

Gender equality and social inclusion are woven into our activities. We recognize that the full development of production and livelihood options must consider the different roles of women and men. We know that gender equality and social inclusion affect or are affected by drivers of change in tree-based and forested landscapes. Women’s access to resources and opportunities, their voice and influence in decision-making processes at various levels, and gender-equitable distribution of paid and unpaid work are central to our endeavours.
New elements in our strategy

Projects will continue to be our principal organizational and contractual way of working with partners and stakeholders. However, we believe that the time is now ripe to introduce three new elements into our strategy: Transformative Partnership Platforms (TPPs), Engagement Landscapes (ELs) and Flagship Products (FPs). These innovations will deliver timely, relevant change in response to global and national challenges and opportunities.

Transformative partnership platforms

CIFOR-ICRAF’s extensive experience and combined work have taught us that the development of actionable solutions suitable for widespread adoption requires an intensive, systematic approach to collaborative work. Transformative Partnership Platforms (TPPs) meet this need. TPPs are alliances: each focused on one critically important issue that will deliver a specific transformational result by a certain date. TPP members collaborate to generate solutions through understanding problems, data collection, analysis and model development.

Some characteristics of TPPs

TPPs vary in size, duration, focus, and nature of partnerships, but share many characteristics. They will:

- operate at multiple sites
- be investable, both in pay-off to implementation partners’ efforts and financial partners’ investment criteria
- reflect other aspects of our way of doing things. This includes our willingness and capacity to work across disciplines, and our emphasis on securing the various functions that people demand from healthy land and landscapes
- add value to other initiatives, including projects, other TPPs and Flagship Products
- increase impact by promoting complementary partnerships, preventing duplication and enabling more effective pooling of resources
- produce solutions that can be locally adapted and applied by on-the-ground partners in Engagement Landscapes and other locations.

We are already assessing the potential for TPPs on:

- Restoration
- Peatlands
- Nature-based solutions for adaptation and mitigation
- Agroecology
- Green tree-crop commodity value chains
Engagement landscapes

Engagement Landscapes (ELs) are geographic locations where we carry out concentrated, long-term work to support transformational change and enhance resilience. They share many characteristics of TPPs, but differ in this context-specific focus. In ELs, we engage with local stakeholders and work with them and others to develop solutions that work.

Engagement landscapes share the following characteristics. They will:

- be discrete, geographic areas large enough to capture the various dimensions that we need to address — landscapes where challenges arise from political economy, governance, policies and the needs of differing social groups.
- typically have multiple layers of governance, multiple land uses, and multiple types of stakeholders, farmers and value chain actors.

CIFOR-ICRAF has a strong track record in long-term engagement in specific landscapes. We have been present in the following locations for at least 10 and up to 20 years: cocoa landscapes in Côte d’Ivoire; the Aguaytía watershed in Ucayali, Peru; South Cameroon; Jambi province in Sumatra, Indonesia; drylands of East Africa; Sahelian parkland landscapes. Previous studies comparing experiences and approaches in different global locations, including the Sentinel Landscape initiative, have given us the insight to bring about transformative change in Engagement Landscapes and to understand how to apply solutions beyond these contexts — for example, within TPPs.

Examples of landscapes where we have long-term engagement

- Aguaytía watershed, Peru
- Parkland landscapes in the Sahel
- Dryland restoration in East Africa
- South Cameroon
- Jambi province, Indonesia
- Cocoa landscapes, Côte d’Ivoire
- FORETS (Formation Recherche Environnement dans la Tshopo) initiative, Democratic Republic of Congo

Flagship products

Flagship Products (FPs) provide insights into key global issues: enhancing visibility, improving understanding and generating actionable knowledge. FPs are based on the latest knowledge, large-scale datasets, analysis and advanced models to inform decision-making and are developed in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders.

Now in its seventh year, our flagship product the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) continues on its path to spark a movement of one billion people around productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient landscapes. The GLF has reached more than 700 million people from 185 countries, making it the world’s largest knowledge forum on integrated and sustainable land use. It continues to break new ground with digital conferences and GLFx — a global network of local chapters connecting online in dedicated communities of practice to take direct action at a local level.

700 million people reached 185 countries
Our integrated strategy

Our mission is to contribute to a radical transformation in food production and land use systems. This encompasses agricultural practice and how biodiversity, forests and lands are managed. It is aligned with recent IPCC, IPBES and UNCCD reports, and the three Rio Conventions. We share the key message of these reports: that Earth is reaching a tipping point, and now is the time for action.

Our strategy aligns to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have provided a global framework for development for the next 10 years. Our focus is on contributing to a decisive shift in global trajectories: from a future of environmental destruction and livelihood crises to a future of prosperity and planetary health. This strategy reflects the confidence we feel in the relevance of our approach, and the urgency to step up and support the rapid and radical transformation that is so badly needed.

The diagram illustrates the relationship among organizational units and the three ways in which we will interact with our investors, clients, partners and beneficiaries: Projects, Engagement Landscapes (EL), Transformative Partnership Platforms (TPP) and Flagship Products. Linkages are purely illustrative and are shown only for one EL, one TPP and the Flagship Product.
Our operations in more than twenty countries are now supported by a dynamic new governance and management structure:

- A common CIFOR-ICRAF Board of Trustees, an integrated leadership team and a jointly constituted research division. The latter consists of the Directorate of Science, with thematic focus and regional representation, and the Directorate of Innovation and Impact, focused on supporting the acceleration of impacts.

- Combined communications, partnerships and resource mobilization functions directly support the research division. All is underpinned by a streamlined Directorate of Corporate Services.

CIFOR-ICRAF is poised to join an intensified global effort to achieve the transformative change so urgently needed by people and planet.
CIFOR-ICRAF

Founded in 1993 and 1978 respectively, CIFOR and ICRAF are centres of scientific and development excellence that have united to conduct research-in-development on the most pressing challenges facing the world’s landscapes. We are committed to an equitable world of sustainable landscapes that foster human well-being. We strive to use the world’s best science to eradicate hunger, reduce poverty, provide affordable and clean energy, protect life on land, and combat climate change.

CIFOR-ICRAF are members of the CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food-secure future, focusing on poverty reduction, increased food and nutritional security, and sustainable natural-resource systems. Our work also strongly addresses the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.