



ENVIRONMENT

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE LANDSCAPES AND NATURAL RESOURCES SMALLHOLDERS DEPEND ON.

Farmers in eastern Africa rely on forests, grazing lands, fertile soils and healthy rivers to earn a living. Soil erosion, deforestation and destruction of grazing lands are threatening their livelihoods.

The way farmers use land has far-reaching consequences, affecting communities well beyond their immediate vicinity. The preservation of soil, forests, grazing lands and water resources are all critical to national and global food security, poverty reduction and climate change mitigation.

Farm Africa promotes agricultural and conservation management approaches that bring farmers, governments and other stakeholders together to simultaneously earn an income from and protect the environment.



Agriculture



Environment



Business

Combating poverty in rural Africa depends on making agriculture work better, using natural resources well, and creating stronger markets for what farmers produce. Farm Africa's strategy is built around three pillars:

INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

CONSTRUCTING A WHOLE-LANDSCAPE APPROACH TO NATURAL RESOURCE AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

What happens in one part of the landscape has knock-on effects elsewhere. Introducing pesticides to improve crop yields may kill vital predators that control pests on other crops. Diverting water from one source means those relying on the water elsewhere may suffer. Farm Africa takes a holistic approach to reconcile competing objectives between different land users. We help people better manage the impact they have on other communities, identify opportunities for business development and coordinate actions amongst groups of land users to promote cooperation and manage conflict. We help develop strong local landscape management institutions that deliver long-term environmental and economic benefits to local communities.



Building capacity

Optimising land use and ecosystem management requires proactive cooperation between land users based on accurate knowledge on the drivers of environmental degradation. This necessitates strong community-level mechanisms for research, coordination and conflict management.

Farm Africa helps communities develop land and resource use plans that optimise benefits and minimise damage, so that gains from development in one region are not cancelled out by losses in another.

We build local institutions' capacity to develop, implement and monitor environmental strategies. We equip communities with the skills to manage the environment in the face of a volatile climate.

We provide agricultural communities with the tools and knowledge they need to increase the stream of goods and services they receive from the environment, leading to bigger, more profitable yields.



Eco-businesses

If managed correctly, communities can reap lucrative financial benefits from managing landscapes. Farm Africa helps rural communities gain economic benefits from thriving natural environments.

From managing land to protecting global biodiversity, rural communities deliver a wide range of environmental services. Farm Africa connects local communities with international schemes, like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), and organises local agreements — such as watershed management agreements — that offer incentives to farmers for providing improved ecological services for other communities. Farm Africa helps people engaged in conservation capitalise upon these opportunities and sets up benefit sharing agreements to ensure that the revenue gained from new income streams is fairly distributed across the community.



“To protect the hillside, we built physical soil and water harvesting structures, and stabilised them by planting elephant grass. We agreed to control the movement of our grazing animals by keeping them tethered in specific areas. The elephant grass has helped us feed our animals. Since there is limited pasture, we sell to selected members who have dairy cattle, which generates 3,000 Birr (about £100) per season.”

Ato May Shewit, a participant in Farm Africa's food security project in Tigray, Ethiopia.



Farm Africa / Nichole Sobeck

GRAZING LAND MANAGEMENT

OPTIMISING RANGELAND USE AND INTEGRATING PASTORALISTS INTO THE MARKET

Eastern Africa's drylands are home to millions of pastoralists who migrate with their herds seeking water and pasture for their livestock. The sophisticated commons systems that have for centuries provided resilient livelihoods are struggling to cope under the weight of new pressures. Population growth and economic challenges have disturbed the balance between the needs of individual herders and the need to sustain communal grazing lands. Farm Africa addresses these concerns to ensure that rangelands are managed sustainably.



A systems approach

The weakening of traditional rangeland management systems has given rise to overgrazing and environmental degradation; reducing the availability of water and grass for livestock. Farm Africa works with local communities to build effective rangeland management institutions. Our approach blends local and technical knowledge to develop management plans that meet all land users' needs.

We help rangeland communities better understand the impact they have on different land users, allowing them to work together more effectively.



Greener pastures

From installing weather stations to natural resource mapping, we use community-led research to uncover the drivers of rangeland degradation. We employ environmental management techniques that improve the health of water resources, soil and grasslands to breathe new life into fragile rangeland ecosystems.

We help communities implement rotational grazing systems and other rangeland management techniques that boost the number of grazers a rangeland can support sustainably.



Market approach to resilience

Environmental and economic shocks have the potential to push herders into poverty. Farm Africa builds the resilience of pastoralists' livelihood systems by improving beef and dairy production, and by setting up new businesses, such as vegetable farming, that improve and diversify rangeland economies, boosting their resilience in the face of new social and climate risks.

Farm Africa designs and implements livestock insurance schemes that protect herders from weather-related loss. When faced with impending disaster, access to weather-indexed insurance, which triggers payouts ahead of extreme weather events, can help herders make appropriate investments, such as animal feed. We protect people's assets and build pastoralists' resilience to disasters.

To tackle poverty and improve communities' adaptive capacity we improve households' access to finance, helping them to smooth day-to-day cashflow problems and boost investment in local businesses.



“We are not taking our livestock to the forest any more because we have access to grazing lands near our neighbourhoods. As a result, we are helping prevent deforestation.”

Sheik Abdo Ali, Chairman of the Hurufa-Deno rangeland management cooperative in Bale, Ethiopia.



Farm Africa / Nathan Siegel



PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT

MAKING FOREST PROTECTION PROFITABLE

Africa's forests are at risk, with large swathes of forest territories being axed for firewood or converted into agricultural land every year. Their disappearance is endangering water, food and energy security and contributing to global warming. Farm Africa develops economic incentives for communities to sustainably manage and protect forests by helping them to earn a living from forest-friendly businesses, like wild coffee harvesting and beekeeping.



Working together

At the root of eastern Africa's deforestation lies ineffective forest management. Top-down forest management systems that prioritise forest protection over rural people's livelihood needs have failed to quell rising levels of deforestation, and in some cases inadvertently encouraged illegal and unregulated deforestation.

Farm Africa champions the use of participatory forest management, a framework in which local communities and government are empowered to manage the benefits and responsibilities of the forest together. Farm Africa's forestry approach is based on 20 years of practice and learning in the field, establishing government-community forest management partnerships that combat rural poverty and protect forest resources.

We develop and mediate formal management agreements between forest users and government agencies that set out how forest resources can be used sustainably and how forest benefits will be shared.

Farm Africa helps communities strengthen the organisational and management capacity of forest organisations and enterprises. We help local government agencies and communities develop plans for sustainable forest management.



Boosting livelihoods

We help farmers set up sustainable forest enterprises that boost their incomes and protect the forest. We also link them to lucrative markets for their products and services, including emerging markets for ecosystem services that pay communities for the environmental services they deliver, such as storing carbon or managing watersheds.



Policy and practice

Farm Africa shares lessons learnt from our work at community level to inform government and international forestry policy. We collate and share our experiences in the sector to provide an evidence-based framework for forest policy.



“Before, the forest was managed by the government, so we didn't care about its condition, but now we are managing it with the government, so we feel ownership and responsibility. The whole cooperative has benefited. People no longer cut down trees for fuel or livestock grazing.”

Ali Gilo, Chairperson of the Girbissa Forest Management Committee in Bale, Ethiopia.

Investing in smallholder farming is the number one way to combat poverty in rural Africa. Farm Africa is a leading NGO specialising in growing agriculture, protecting the environment and developing businesses in rural Africa.

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