

A BIODIVERSIFY SERIES

# From Ambition to Implementation

*Building Nature Strategies That Deliver*



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IMPLEMENTATION MATURITY  
RARELY ARRIVES ALL AT ONCE.  
MORE OFTEN, ORGANISATIONS  
BUILD CONFIDENCE THROUGH  
REPEATED OPERATIONAL  
LEARNING

From Ambition to Implementation

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# FOREWORD

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Many organisations now have nature ambition in place. Strategies have been drafted, commitments announced, and pilots launched. Yet for many, a persistent gap remains between strategic intent and operational delivery. This report continues the Biodiversify guide series, focusing on how organisations can bridge that gap.

The insights shaping this report come directly from sustainability professionals navigating these challenges in their organisations. Biodiversify was proud to co-host Accelerating Corporate Nature Positive Journeys with the Corporate Partnerships team at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where sustainability leaders shared practical barriers and opportunities for embedding nature in business strategy. We are also grateful to members of the Nature and Biodiversity Peer Group, whose perspectives have contributed further insights. Taken together, the guides form a comprehensive roadmap for corporate ecological stewardship.

This guide series has been made possible through the support of the Porticus Foundation

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# FROM AMBITION TO IMPLEMENTATION

## *Building Nature Strategies that Deliver*

As nature has climbed to the top of the corporate agenda, we have reached a defining milestone: a clear majority of organisations now have some form of ecological ambition in place. In fact, a recent cross-industry study published in Sustainable Environment found that over 70% of evaluated corporations now actively report on their biodiversity and nature-positive goals. Commitments have been proudly announced, frameworks are being explored, and pilot projects are underway.

But look beneath the glossy annual reports, and a widening gap between corporate ambition and real-world delivery emerges.

It is a pattern that surfaced repeatedly during a recent gathering of sustainability leaders, hosted by Biodiversify and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, to discuss the reality of accelerating corporate nature journeys. These frontline reflections are deeply reinforced by ongoing insights gathered from our own cross-sector Nature and Biodiversity Peer Group. By combining these distinct touchpoints, this report synthesises the collective experiences of a wide range of sustainability professionals actively navigating the realities of corporate execution.

The story they shared is an incredibly common one: a nature strategy gains brilliant initial momentum. The C-suite signs off on it, the sustainability team is energised, and the vision feels crystal clear. But then, the strategy hits the gears of daily business operations, and it grinds to a halt.

The underlying issue is not a lack of care. The teams working in this space, and even the teams surrounding them, deeply understand that nature matters. The breakdown happens when that high-level understanding tries to translate into actual business machinery:

- Governance structures that lack teeth
- Procurement decisions still driven solely by cost
- Supplier engagement models that treat biodiversity as a box-ticking exercise
- Day-to-day operational priorities that completely ignore ecological impact

As one sustainability manager in the room bluntly put it, ***the challenge for modern business is not whether we care; it is whether we know what to do on Monday morning.***

Ultimately, corporate nature strategies do not stall because organisations lack ambition. They stall because implementation was never designed into the strategy from day one. To bridge this gap, businesses must move away from treating nature as an isolated corporate social responsibility initiative and instead view it as a core operational capability. Grounded in the shared insights, this white paper outlines a pragmatic, four-stage framework designed to help organisations move past initial friction, break down internal silos, scale their pilots, and achieve true institutional maturity.



## STAGE 1:

### Mapping the terrain - Data, Hotspots, and the Traceability Challenge

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Across almost every sector, traceability stands out as one of the most persistent hurdles to successful implementation. While many organisations maintain relatively strong visibility over their tier 1 suppliers, their insight drops off significantly further upstream. This creates a significant structural mismatch, because the most significant nature impacts and ecosystem dependencies often sit at tiers 3 and 4, particularly within agricultural and raw material supply chains. Businesses are increasingly expected to manage nature-related risks across vast, global supply networks that remain only partially visible.

It is worth noting that this challenge differs fundamentally from traditional carbon accounting. Carbon data can often be aggregated across large, centralised systems because a tonne of carbon has the same planetary impact regardless of where it is emitted. Nature-related risk, by contrast, is entirely location-specific, context-dependent, and operationally fragmented. Successful execution depends heavily on understanding exactly where commodities originate, how those specific local ecosystems are managed, and where operational exposure is most heavily concentrated.

Achieving this level of deep, granular visibility across a complex supply chain takes time. However, imperfect traceability must not become an excuse to delay action. Complete, unbroken supply chain visibility is unlikely in the near term, meaning organisations must master the art of strategic prioritisation instead.

Rather than attempting to map every single supplier at once, practical execution begins with focusing on high-volume commodities, strategically important sourcing regions, and known areas of intense ecosystem pressure. By combining proxy datasets, active supplier engagement, and existing sourcing knowledge, businesses can begin identifying their primary hotspots before investing in comprehensive mapping exercises. This pragmatic approach directly aligns with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's ***Roadmaps to Nature Positive: Foundations for all businesses***, which urges corporations to use sector-level data to locate immediate risk hotspots rather than delaying action in search of perfect upstream visibility.

The reality is that organisations often know far more than they initially assume. Existing supplier relationships and frontline operational experience frequently provide more than enough directional information to begin identifying areas of immediate ecosystem exposure.

As one sustainability professional noted:

***“You do not need perfect visibility to identify where the biggest risks probably are.”***



## STAGE 2:

### Breaking the Silos - Governance, Ownership and Internal Engagement

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Real-world implementation must be treated as a cross-functional business challenge rather than a standalone sustainability exercise. While nature strategies almost always begin within specialised sustainability teams, their long-term delivery depends entirely on active engagement across procurement, finance, operations, legal, and commercial functions. Without this broader operational ownership, implementation becomes isolated, stagnant, and incredibly difficult to sustain.

This cross-functional shift relies heavily on cultivating internal champions outside the core sustainability team. Real traction is often achieved because individuals within procurement, finance, or sourcing step up as advocates for integration, sometimes moving the needle faster than formal governance structures can on their own.

However, relying too heavily on individual champions creates a fragile system. When implementation depends primarily on personal relationships or informal influence, momentum can easily evaporate as teams change or corporate priorities shift. To build lasting resilience, governance must focus less on creating entirely new bureaucratic structures and more on embedding nature into the systems that already dictate daily decision-making.

## Using Dependencies as an Internal Engagement Tool

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To build this cross-functional ownership, discussions must move beyond purely environmental language and link directly to existing commercial priorities. This requires a clear understanding of the difference between **impacts (how a company alters the environment)** and **dependencies (how a company relies on the environment to operate)**.

While impact framing can sometimes feel abstract or regulatory to non-sustainability teams, dependency framing shifts the focus to operational resilience. In procurement functions, focusing on dependencies means discussing sourcing resilience, supplier stability, and long-term input continuity. Within finance teams, engagement strengthens dramatically when nature-related dependencies are translated into physical risks, potential material disruptions, or asset exposure. **By framing nature through the lens of what the business depends upon to survive, sustainability leaders can engage finance and procurement teams far more effectively.**

True integration happens when these ecological metrics are seamlessly woven into existing corporate machinery. This includes updating supplier engagement processes and sourcing criteria, incorporating nature risks into standard operational risk assessments, and making ecosystem health a core part of investment discussions, procurement guidelines, and annual business planning processes.

For organisations looking for a structured blueprint on this functional integration, *Business for Nature's Nature Strategy Handbook* provides an excellent operational matrix for dividing accountability among finance, risk, and procurement leaders.

# STAGE 3:

## Operational Scaling - From Pilots to Embedded Practice

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A core guiding principle for moving past the initial stages of a nature strategy is recognising that implementation becomes significantly harder when an organisation attempts to address everything simultaneously. The sheer complexity of nature-related impacts, dependencies, varied geographies, and deeply entrenched operational systems can easily create a sense of organisational overwhelm. It is incredibly common for teams to find themselves stalled by the scale of the challenge before their priorities have even been clearly defined. This paralysing effect is particularly visible during complex internal discussions around data, traceability, supplier engagement, and cross-departmental coordination.

Compounding this challenge is a distinct corporate pressure to appear further ahead than reality dictates. In practice, many businesses are still working through foundational questions around internal ownership, prioritisation, and basic operational scope.

To overcome this inertia, successful strategies rely on a phased approach. Rather than attempting an immediate, disruptive, organisation-wide transformation, the most effective route involves focusing efforts where they matter most. This means prioritising high-risk commodities or specific sourcing regions, focusing actions where the business holds the strongest commercial influence, and building internal capability gradually over time.

Using pilot projects effectively is a vital part of this gradual build, but only if they are used to generate genuine operational learning and to test governance structures before attempting to scale them. Crucially, isolated pilots alone are entirely insufficient. Without a clear, predetermined pathway to scale, organisations risk remaining trapped in a cycle of repeated, localised experimentation.



To avoid this trap, pilots must be designed with future operational integration in mind from the very beginning. This requires ensuring that the governance structures, reporting lines, and data collection methods used in a small-scale trial are structurally compatible with the wider corporate systems they will eventually need to live in.

This iterative loop is a core feature of the *TNFD's official guidance on The LEAP Approach*, which positions piloting not as a final destination, but as a repeatable mechanism for building long-term operational capability.



# STAGE 4:

## Strategic Maturity - Nature as a Core Business

### Discipline

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True institutional maturity is never achieved overnight through a single, heavily publicised strategy launch. Instead, it develops incrementally through repeated operational integration, continuous internal learning, and a steady accumulation of institutional confidence. When an organisation reaches this final stage, implementation maturity ceases to be about chasing absolute perfection and becomes a matter of complete organisational coherence.

**To understand how this coherence develops, it is useful to look at the three distinct phases of institutional growth:**

#### 1 THE EARLY STAGE: DISCONNECTED AMBITION

At the beginning of the journey, early-stage organisations almost exclusively approach nature through a lens of isolated projects, voluntary commitments, and exploratory pilots. At this level, the conversation is largely siloed within the sustainability team. The business recognises the abstract importance of biodiversity, but there is no functional mechanism connecting corporate rhetoric to the operational frontline. Leadership often relies on isolated projects and exploratory pilots rather than systemic operational integration.

#### 2 THE INTERMEDIATE STAGE: FRAGMENTED FRICTION

As an organisation progresses to the intermediate level, it begins the difficult work of linking nature to genuine operational risk, procurement decisions, internal governance structures, and broader supplier engagement. This is a positive step forward, but the implementation remains highly uneven. At this stage, teams are actively fighting against internal silos. A procurement manager might want to support a nature-positive supplier, but they are still being judged against legacy cost metrics. The intent is there, but the internal business machinery is still working at cross-purposes.

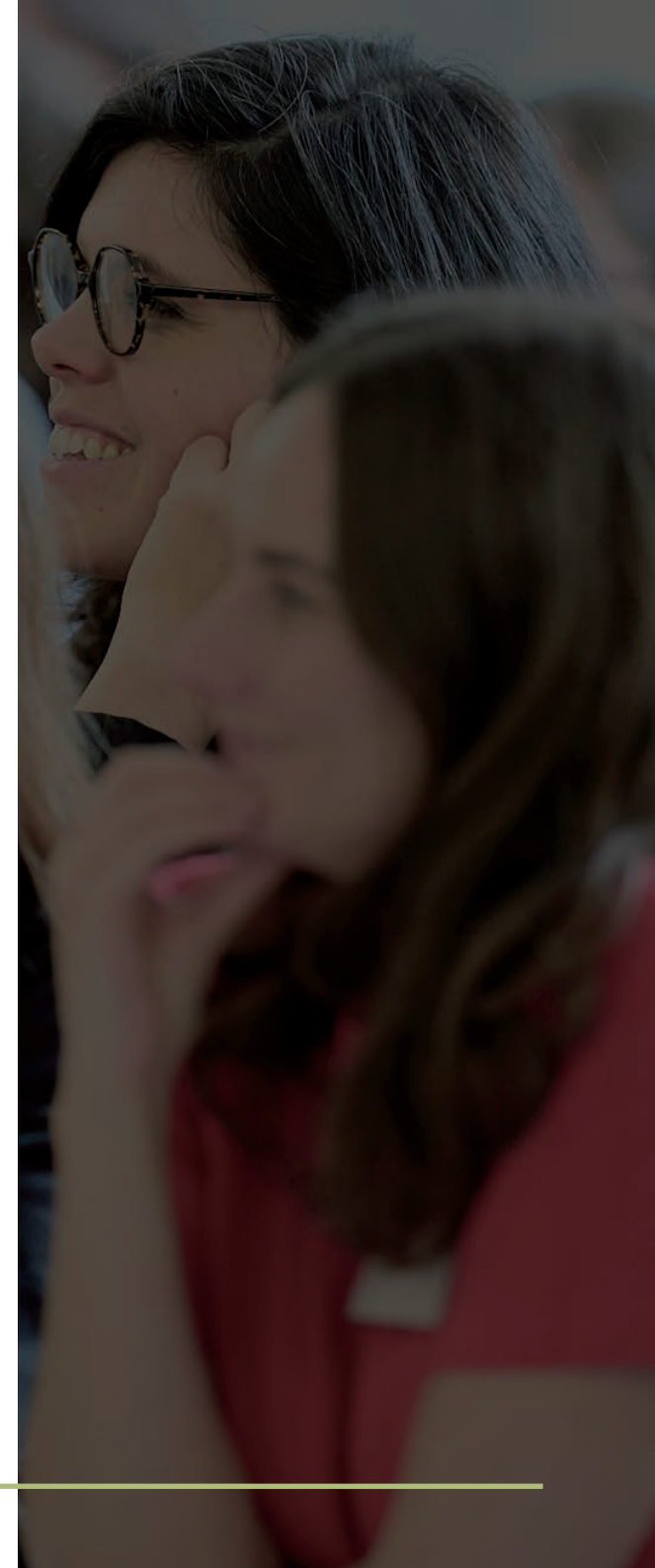
### MATURE STAGE: ORGANISATIONAL COHERENCE

Fully mature organisations treat nature not as a separate compliance task, but as a core operational capability that is embedded across sourcing, finance, governance, risk management, and commercial decision-making.

In a mature institution, internal teams work to resolve legacy friction by increasingly aligning corporate incentives. Sourcing strategies are designed to account for ecosystem health because resource resilience is linked to long-term operational stability. Finance teams work toward assessing nature-related dependencies alongside traditional capital allocation, while risk management frameworks increasingly treat ecological decline as a material threat to business continuity.

Ultimately, a mature organisation understands that protecting the natural systems it relies upon is the foundation of long-term commercial survival.

As research from the *World Economic Forum's Nature Positive Transitions: Sectors* series notes, true maturity occurs when nature-related risks are quantified with the same boardroom rigor as traditional financial exposures or geopolitical volatility.



# CONCLUSION: TURNING INTENT INTO OPERATIONAL REALITY

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The insights from across sector discussions point in a remarkably consistent direction. The barrier to progress is rarely ambition, and it is rarely a lack of data. More often, it is simply the absence of structures designed to make delivery possible in the first place. Organisations that make the most meaningful progress are not any special corporate exceptions; they are simply those willing to begin operationalising nature despite uncertainty, building their capability through real-world use.

*“Implementation maturity rarely arrives all at once. More often, organisations build confidence through repeated operational learning.”*

- Sustainability Professional and attendee of Accelerating Corporate Nature Positive Journeys

Nature risk becomes actionable only when it is connected directly to the concerns that already drive internal business decisions: sourcing resilience, input continuity, and long-term asset exposure. Likewise, governance structures that actively embed nature into existing corporate systems prove far more resilient than standalone sustainability initiatives that sit alongside them.

Ultimately, building these delivery structures changes the internal dynamic entirely. When a sustainability manager logs on at the start of the week, they are no longer left holding an abstract corporate commitment with no clear way to enforce it. With a defined maturity framework, cross-functional ownership, and embedded processes, the corporate strategy provides a definitive, practical answer for exactly what to do on Monday morning.

# NEXT STEPS MATRIX

| Framework Stage                     | Immediate Operational Action   | Key Internal Stakeholders                          | Useful External Resource                                     |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Stage 1: Mapping the Terrain</b> | Identify your top three high-volume commodities or high-pressure sourcing regions to begin identifying your primary risk hotspots.   | Procurement, Sourcing, Sustainability Teams        | <a href="#"><u>WBCSD Roadmaps to Nature Positive</u></a>     |
| <b>Stage 2: Breaking the Silos</b>  | Audit current metrics to identify where sustainability targets and traditional cost incentives conflict. Use dependency-based framing to strengthen engagement across operational functions. | Sourcing Directors, Finance, Risk Management       | <a href="#"><u>Business for Nature Strategy Handbook</u></a> |
| <b>Stage 3: Operational Scaling</b> | Review current pilots and map out their future data integration with core operational and supply chain software.   | IT Architecture, Operations, Supply Chain Managers | <a href="#"><u>TNFD LEAP Approach Guidance</u></a>           |
| <b>Stage 4: Strategic Maturity</b>  | Incorporate quantified nature-related asset exposure and resource dependencies directly into the corporate annual risk register.   | Executive Board, Chief Financial Officer, Legal    | <a href="#"><u>WEF Nature Positive Transitions</u></a>       |

## CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE

The Nature & Biodiversity Peer Group was established to provide a neutral forum for senior sustainability leaders to share candidly and learn from one another. Biodiversify now stewards the Group, continuing its role as a trusted convening space for corporate nature strategy. Participation is invitation-led to preserve candour and depth of discussion.

If your organisation is navigating similar questions, we welcome an exploratory conversation about future participation.

[Join the Nature and Biodiversity Peer Group](#)

## APPLYING THIS WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION

Every organisation's starting point is different. Translating the principles outlined in this report requires adapting to your specific governance structure, risk profile and strategic priorities.

Biodiversify works with companies to design defensible nature strategies that align biodiversity science with commercial reality.

To explore how these insights apply within your organisation, you can arrange a short conversation with Dr Samuel Sinclair, who leads Biodiversify's work in corporate nature strategy and stewards the Nature & Biodiversity Peer Group.

[Book a 15-minute discussion](#)

## MORE GUIDES IN THIS SERIES

*Moving towards a nature-positive future is a journey that goes beyond high-level commitments. This series of guides is designed to help your organisation navigate the path forward, offering the practical frameworks and clear insights needed to turn environmental ambitions into lasting, meaningful change*

### **EMBEDDING NATURE INTO ENTERPRISE STRATEGY:**

*How to make the business case for nature*

Making the business case for nature is seen as the most significant barrier to progress in corporate nature strategy. This practical guide is written for nature managers working inside large organisations to help build a business case that can win internal traction and buy-in.

### **BEYOND CARBON TUNNEL VISION:**


*Integrating Carbon and Nature*

In many companies, carbon and nature have been treated as parallel agendas. This guide examines why integration is now essential for resilience, how siloed approaches create blind spots, and how building nature work on the foundations laid by carbon can enhance business interests on multiple fronts.

### **DATA:**

*From Paralysis to Decision-Grade Insight*

What to measure, what to ignore, and how to prioritise. A lot of companies begin with data that feels too messy or incomplete to be useful. This guide helps clarify what information is necessary, what should be done first, and how frameworks can strengthen methodological credibility without overwhelming organisations.



**PROCUREMENT AS  
LEVERAGE:**

*Embedding Nature into  
Supply Chains*

Nature strategy becomes tangible where sourcing decisions are made. Supply chains are at risk if the raw materials companies depend on aren't protected. This guide explores the transparency gap, supplier fatigue, procurement incentives and the shift from pilot projects to embedded action.

**LANDSCAPE-LEVEL  
INTERVENTIONS:**

*From Fragmented Projects to  
System Resilience*

Commodity-level action alone cannot secure resilience. This final guide examines the move from fragmented supply-chain initiatives to coordinated, landscape-level collaboration and finance models.

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