



Nature

About these guides

These practical guides explain important sustainability topics for businesses. Share them with the people in your organisation who are working together to meet your environmental, social and governance goals.

Healthy people, healthy businesses and a healthy planet all rely on thriving nature. [Over half of the world's economic output](#) (\$44 trillion of economic value), and many Aotearoa New Zealand businesses, depend on nature and its ecosystems.

Nature is also essential for a stable climate. We need functioning ecosystems such as oceans and forests to keep temperature rises to below 1.5°C on pre-industrial temperatures.



Guiding principle: Kaitiakitanga

Kaitiakitanga describes the concept of guardianship and the balance of nature and humans. Traditional views of kaitiakitanga include many methodologies of caring for te taiao (the environment) as te taiao cares for us in return.

Kaitiakitanga is both an obligation and a privilege. Many Iwi and hapū have their own ways of realising kaitiakitanga. Organisations have an opportunity to build meaningful relationships by supporting conservation and restorative efforts.

Te Tiriti ō Waitangi affirms the rights and responsibilities for Māori as Māori to protect and preserve their lands, forests, waters and other taonga for future generations. Working together as partners to become better guardians of our natural resources benefits our land, people and businesses.

Why should your business care about nature?

The World Economic Forum's [2024 Global Risks Report](#) (GRR) ranks dwindling biodiversity and collapsing ecosystems among the five most severe risks to business in the next ten years.

Businesses, investors and lenders need to understand their nature-related issues (dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities) and how to account for nature in their strategies. [About 70% of Aotearoa New Zealand's export earnings](#) depend on natural capital. Three-quarters of our bush has been cut down and 90% of wetlands have been drained to create farmland, towns and cities.

Like climate-related disclosures, nature-related disclosures may become mandatory for many businesses in New Zealand (and Australia) in the coming years. By preparing now, you will be ready to disclose how nature affects your business.

The benefits of making nature part of your business strategy

| Business opportunities | Business results |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and prioritise your nature-related risks and opportunities• Improve your strategy to cover nature, climate and equity• Build your brand value and reputation• Improve your access to capital• Build relationships with tangata whenua, your team, suppliers and community• Improve your team's health and wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower risks and costs (including of future compliance)• A more resilient organisation• Increased market share• Increased revenue• Attractive to investors and talent• Stronger relationships with tangata whenua• Engaged employees• Social licence• Meet your directors' duty of care |



What is the difference between nature, natural capital and biodiversity?

Nature covers four realms – land, ocean, freshwater and atmosphere – which are made up of ecosystems (for example, Natural capital refers to forests).

Natural capital refers to the part of nature that provide benefits to people and the economy such as clean air and food.

Biodiversity refers to all life forms (plants, animals, microorganisms) and is one part of natural capital.

Why are we talking about nature now?

A growing global movement recognises the value of nature and is pushing for a path of recovery. Recognising nature loss as an economic and financial risk has resulted in frameworks with targets and benchmarks to get nature 'back on track'.



The global goal for nature

With climate change, the world has agreed on a global goal: to limit global warming to 1.5°C by 2030. The global goal for nature (Nature Positive) is the equivalent for biodiversity.

There are three measurements for the nature-positive goal:

- zero net loss of nature from 2020
- start reversing nature loss by 2030
- full recovery of nature by 2050.

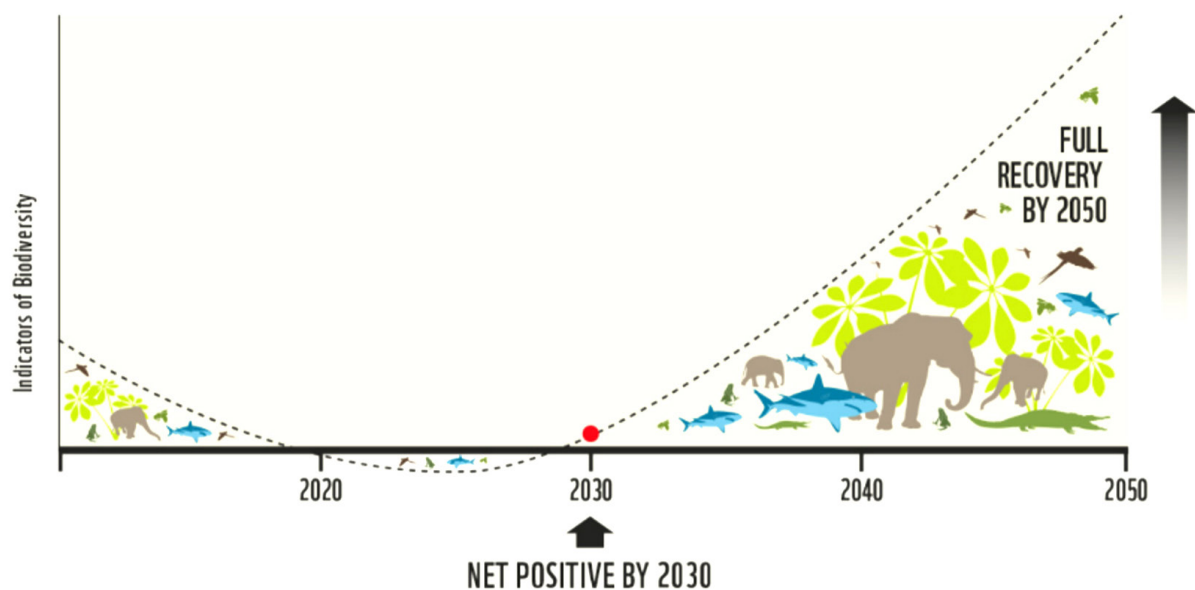
What does Nature Positive mean for business?

The collective impacts from regenerative and restorative business actions (doing 'more good') must outweigh those from avoiding and reducing nature loss (doing 'less harm'). Companies must act urgently to halt nature loss while bringing back more nature.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

This agreement is often referred to as the 'Paris Agreement for nature'. It was adopted by 196 countries in 2022, including Aotearoa New Zealand. The GBF goal is to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 and achieve full recovery of nature by 2050. It includes actions such as phasing out fossil fuels and ending destructive farming and deforestation, and focusses on nature-based solutions.

Nature Positive by 2030



Source: Nature Positive Initiative

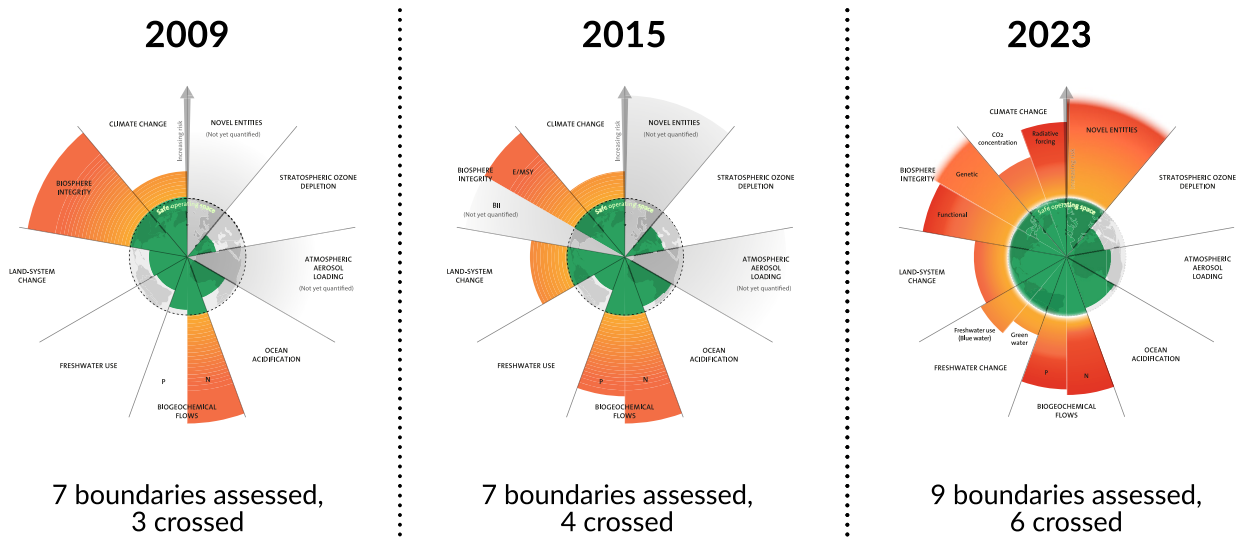


Planetary boundaries

This concept identifies nine systems that are essential for humankind to continue to develop and thrive.

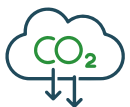
| Three are based on what we take from the 'system': | Six come from the waste and pollution we add to the 'system': |
|--|---|
| Biodiversity loss Fresh water Land use (for example deforestation) | Climate change Ocean acidification Novel entities ¹ Aerosols Nutrient overload Depletion of the ozone layer |

As of 2023, we have breached six of the nine boundaries.



Source: Stockholm University

How are nature and net-zero emissions related?



Nature-based climate solutions

Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) help nature do what it's been doing for millions of years: sequester and store carbon. Research shows that these solutions could deliver more than one-third of the emission reductions needed by 2030 to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. These measures must be on top of efforts to decarbonise our economy, not replace them. They include:

- protecting forests, wetlands and grasslands
- improving management of timberlands, croplands and grazing lands
- restoring forests and wetlands.

'Climate change is a primary driver of biodiversity loss. And climate change depends on biodiversity as part of the solution. So clearly the two are linked and cannot be separated.'

- Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity

¹ Human-made material including plastic, synthetic chemicals, radioactive materials



Nature-based adaptation solutions

(also called ecosystem-based adaptation or EbA)

These use nature to adapt to climate change. We must invest in a thriving nature so it can help us cope with climate change. Solutions include:

- protecting and restoring native forests and shrublands to prevent erosion and flooding. Examples include bringing native flora into urban areas via landscaping.
- protecting coastal habitats like dunes and mangroves so they can protect coasts from storm surges and sea level rise
- restoring natural wetlands so they can absorb flood waters
- protecting water bodies like rivers and lakes so they can provide natural drainage to reduce flooding
- designing buildings to mitigate flooding. Examples include adding channels for rain runoff, swales and rain gardens, and minimising surfaces that prevent water from passing through.

Biodiversity offsets and credits

Biodiversity offsetting aims to counterbalance the impacts of development on biodiversity. Businesses can invest in projects that contribute to protecting, restoring and enhancing biodiversity. Landowners or project developers can obtain biodiversity credits for conservation projects following a certification process. Biodiversity credits are new to New Zealand but are more established globally.



The Māori economy's relationship with nature

Much can be learnt from mātauranga Māori which values nature as something to be respected and honoured. For Māori, all aspects of nature are intertwined and connected through whakapapa. The Māori relationship with the land is one of kinship.

Of the 1,290 Māori authorities, around one quarter operate in primary industries (Stats NZ 2022). They rely on income from these activities to support Iwi initiatives.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade estimated the Māori economy is worth \$68.7 billion (2023). Many Māori businesses rely on nature. Land, agriculture, fisheries and forests make up 34% of the Māori asset base.

Where should my organisation start?



1. Investigate frameworks and tools

Decide how you want to assess, measure and manage your nature-based dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities. Unlike climate change where we have CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) as a single metric, there is no one unit to compare progress with nature.

Globally, several standards, frameworks and systems have been released or are currently being developed to help businesses assess their nature-related issues. The approaches vary in their purpose including disclosure, management, assessment and/or setting targets – and content. The WBCSD's [Roadmaps to Nature Positive](#) provide useful guidance on where to start.

International frameworks do not include Māori perspectives. Businesses in Aotearoa need to consider how to tailor these frameworks, so they are relevant to our country.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ➤ Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) | ➤ Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) |
| ➤ CDP disclosure system | ➤ Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) - Biodiversity Standard |
| ➤ International Sustainability Reporting Standards (ISSB) | ➤ Natural Capital Protocol |
| ➤ European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) | ➤ Science-based Targets for Nature (SBTn) |

You can find more information on these frameworks and standards and how they compare in [Accountability for Nature](#).



2. Assess where you are at

Assess where you are in your efforts to make climate and nature part of your decision-making. This [WBCSD toolkit](#) recommends actions, suggests business functions to collaborate with, and offers relevant resources.



3. Identify your nature-related risks and opportunities

Use what you have learnt in step 2 to identify your organisation's dependencies and impacts on nature and where they are located (geographically, operations, supply chain). If you are just starting out, you could use a high-level screening tool such as [WWF's Biodiversity Risk Filter](#). Measure, value and prioritise your impacts and dependencies on nature to ensure you are acting on the most material ones.



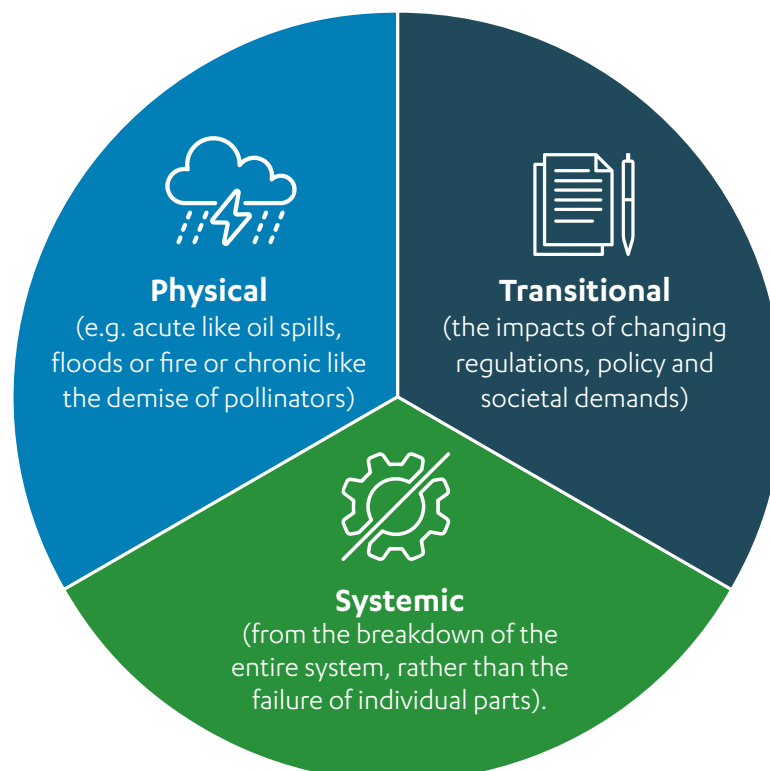
Accessing data

It can be challenging to access data in Aotearoa as it is held across different agencies. Aim for progress, not perfection, by focusing first on understanding your impact on nature and how nature impacts your business. Consider working with a specialist or ecologist to help you interpret the data you have available.

An example: The Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) framework

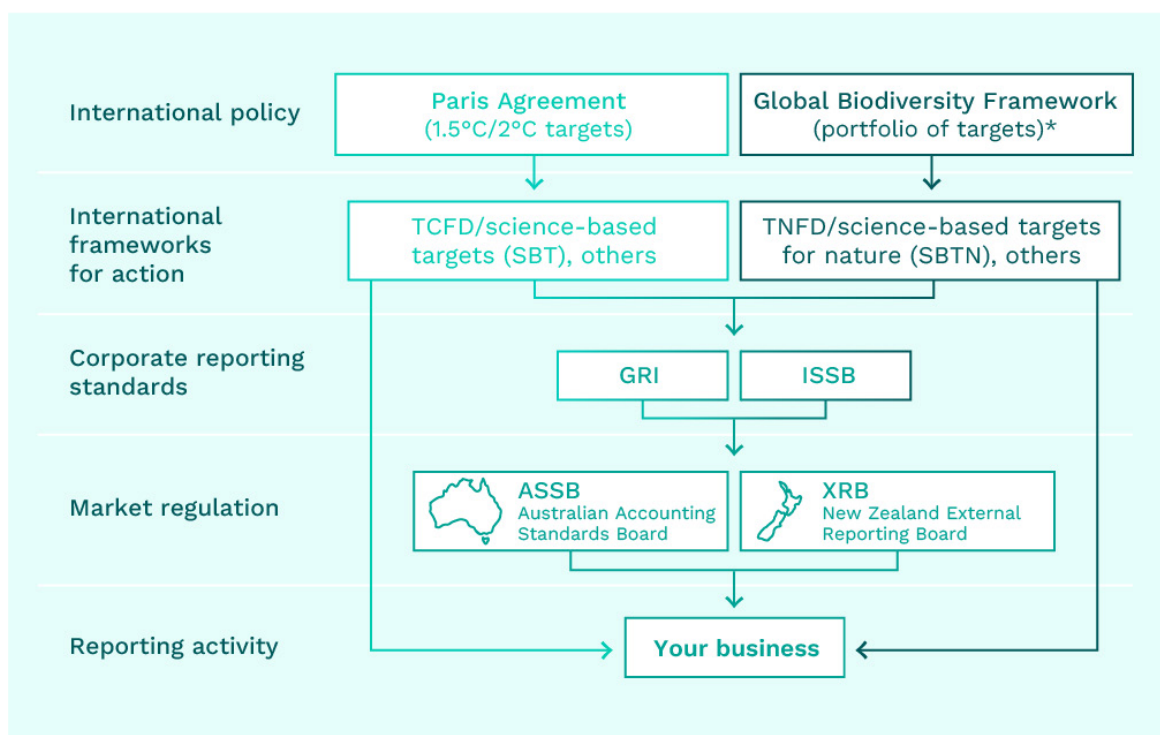
TNFD is modelled on the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) framework that sets the global standard for climate disclosures. It draws on and is consistent with many other methodologies and tools.

If you use the TNFD you will need to classify your risks into:



You will also need to consider how your businesses depends on nature and how it affects nature. (This is known as 'double materiality'.)

| Your nature-related dependencies | Your nature-related impacts |
|---|---|
| Every business depends on nature, some more, some less. Analyse what your business 'needs' from nature. | Analyse how your business impacts nature. Your impacts can be positive or negative. |



Source: thinkstep-anz



4. Set targets

Unlike carbon, biodiversity does not have a common metric as it depends on how and where your business operates. Your target needs to be practical and relevant to your local context. Examples include increasing canopy cover across your building site to reduce heat or increasing the number of native species in the waterways near an agricultural area.

These are some things to think about: What impacts, dependencies, risks or opportunities do your targets relate to? Have you considered whether any other targets (e.g. climate, social or other sustainability targets) relate to your nature targets?

A good metric is one you can collect data for, track, and relate to an achievable target. Make sure it's SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. Ideally, environmental metrics should be science-based.

5. Get to work!

| Getting started | Making progress | Leading the way |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm your 'why' (compliance, opportunities, growth, shareholder expectations) Decide on a framework (verified or not) Engage with Māori and local communities Identify material locations (sites and supply chains) Assess and prioritise your impacts on nature and how you depend on nature Develop a strategy for how you'll manage these impacts including where you'll allocate capital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit/collaborate/set targets/report Reduce the 'bad' Increase the 'good' Ensure nature is built into other plans in your business (for instance, your asset management plan) Find more partners Communicate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review regularly Show progress Support others Invest in Research and Development Embed nature into your core business strategy |



Restorative action plans

Consider including the views of tangata whenua in any restorative action plan. Kōrero with your local Iwi to understand their views on the environment and how your organisation operates within it. Make sure to first consider any feedback they may have already provided your organisation on environmental topics and how to ensure a lasting relationship that will endure beyond engagement on this topic.

Looking ahead

Expect to respond to change even more quickly in future. Anticipate emerging issues and how these will affect your stakeholders and business and build this into your strategy. 'Dynamic material assessments' will help you.

About us

The **Sustainable Business Council (SBC)** is a CEO-led membership organisation that mobilises over 130 ambitious businesses to build a thriving and sustainable future for all.

thinkstep-anz is an independent trans-Tasman sustainability firm. We offer a full range of sustainability services and specialise in plain English sustainability communications and design. thinkstep-anz's sustainability communicators have written this guide.

Kaitiaki Collective promotes transformational thinking through sustainability, environmental and stakeholder engagement. We reflect whakaaro me mātauranga Māori in everything we do.

More information

You'll find the other guides in this series here:
sbc.org.nz/sustainability-toolkit

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