Landscape Labeling: A marketing approach to support integrated landscape management

Framework document for landscape leaders

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A landscape in Mbeya, Tanzania. March 2013. Photo courtesy of Raffaela Kozar/EcoAgriculture Partners.

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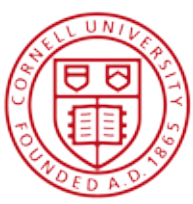

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Introduction

Currently, many countries with growing economies are demonstrating renewed interest in investing in agriculture. The expansion of conventional production practices into the agricultural frontier is commonly viewed as a culprit in land degradation, over-exploitation of natural resources and greenhouse gas emissions. Concerns also rest on the often negative socioeconomic impacts of commercial agricultural expansion on smallholder farmers and their communities. Green revolution technologies will not be sufficient in many cases for meeting growing demand for agricultural commodities while protecting critical biodiversity and natural resources. Yet market mechanisms that reward farmers for avoiding these externalities and choosing practices that protect the biodiversity and ecosystem services needed to sustain agricultural productivity over the long term are not widespread. Nor are market incentives sufficient in most places to motivate farmers and livestock keepers to overcome the risks inherent in investing in practices that are more socially and ecologically sound. These conditions limit opportunities to sustainably intensify agriculture at scale and thereby build socio-ecological resilience to climate change while meeting demand for food and ecosystem services (Milder et al., 2013, Garnett et al., 2013).

A variety of marketing strategies such as certifications, labeling and payments for ecosystem services (PES) schemes that are designed to financially compensate farmers and other land users for sustainable production practices have been tried and tested over the past several decades. Fair trade, organic and shade grown certifications are just a few of the marketing approaches in place that reward farmers for implementing sustainable practices. The transaction costs of establishing and maintaining these market innovations however, can be high. The recurrent cost of verification through various auditing mechanisms can be especially prohibitive to participation in such schemes by smallholder farmers. While certification companies and other organizations can subsidize the costs of auditing, the costs result eventually in retail prices that require consumers to pay a premium for certified products. This model has worked for some export commodities, but has not provided a viable model for rewarding farmers for adopting sustainable practices for products sold in local or regional markets. The commodity roundtables (e.g., Bonsucro for sugar, RSPO for palm oil, and RTRS for soy), offer producer-driven and designed certification schemes, and focus on single commodities. PES schemes, on the other hand, may offer incentives for sustainable production of multiple commodities over large geographic areas, but then only reward producers for providing particular ecosystem services (e.g., water quality, carbon sequestration, etc.). While PES are meant to positively impact livelihoods and conservation over an entire program area, the two types of benefits do not always occur together in the same community (Alix-Garcia et al., 2012).

Large consumer goods corporations such as Unilever and Mars have made serious commitments to sourcing sustainably produced commodities. Supplying these large buyers with sufficient quantities of certified commodities will require a major shift in how commodities are certified and the sustainability standards used to keep producers accountable. Certifying entire landscapes, rather than individual producers, is one option for corporations to rapidly expand sustainable sourcing. Many approaches for certifying landscapes are emerging to meet these new demands for sustainable commodities and reward producers for implementing best practices, including producer-driven models.

Landscape labeling is a producer-driven approach that can provide financial incentives to producers for practicing agriculture, fishing or forestry in ways that help to sustain biodiversity and ecosystem services while improving livelihood security. A landscape label can encourage consumers who share these values to participate through their purchases and payments in management strategies that help promote a healthy landscape. At its foundation, landscape labeling is a tool based on the collective action of producers to market diverse products from the landscape under a particular system of values and sustainability standards.

The concepts underpinning landscape labeling come

from PES, especially certification approaches, and, to some extent, the related concept of geographic indication. Landscape labeling rewards producers for a bundle of ecosystems services produced and maintained in the landscape (Ghazoul, Garcia & Kushalappa, 2009). Ideally it helps producers capture the market value of existing social and ecological assets in the landscape. A landscape label can serve as a mechanism for increasing the visibility of small producers, improving market access, and generating premium payments. It also addresses some of the concerns of exclusivity associated with farm- or plot-scale certification schemes, while limiting the cost through accountability and monitoring by members (e.g., the Participatory Guarantee System). In addition, a landscape labeling approach can provide an incentive for defining and mainstreaming best practices, as well as collective production and marketing.

As mentioned by Ghazoul and colleagues (2009), landscape labeling is also linked to geographic indication, a concept originating in Europe that differentiates products from a particular region or landscape based on the unique characteristics derived from the particular growing conditions, soil, topography and management of the region. As with geographic indication, a landscape label can capture the unique qualities of multiple products, because it is inherently about the entire landscape rather than a particular product or service. Increasingly, landscape labeling is being seen as a marketing tool that can support products from landscapes attempting to implement integrated landscape management. In other words, landscapes being managed by multi-stakeholder collaboration not only for ecosystem services, but human livelihoods and well-being, agricultural production and institutional coordination (Scherr et al., in press).

Despite interest in landscape labeling, there are few examples of landscapes where producers have put a landscape labeling approach to the test. In collaboration with partners in Lari, Kenya and Mbeya, Tanzania, EcoAgriculture Partners decided to design and test a landscape labeling approach to marketing. The interest in a landscape label can come from various actors. Although landscape leaders may be interested in developing a label, the process is not necessarily straightforward. Producers can articulate the values and practices they would like to include in the label but they may lack some of the other types of skills and expertise that are needed to determine the feasibility of the label, establish the legal brand, or navigate new value chains. The diagram below highlights the basic steps that we expected would be part of developing and implementing a landscape label before initiating the process with partners in Lari and Mbeya.

The case studies in the next section explain how producers and entrepreneurs in the two landscapes tested landscape labeling approaches, their efforts to follow the steps above, and some of the challenges that they encountered along the way. Following the case studies we provide lessons learned and recommendations for future work on landscape labeling.

The final section specifies recommended steps for designing and implementing a landscape label based on the experiences and lessons learned in Lari and Mbeya. It is designed to be used as a framework that points out key decision points and stages of the process for landscape leaders who are interested in trying a landscape labeling approach with producers and other stakeholders. It is meant also to provide insight to donors interested in community market-based approaches to integrating biodiversity and ecosystem service conservation into agricultural production. Each step is presented as a distinct module that describes the types of activities, capacities, expertise and financial resources needed to complete the step.

Figure 1 | Expected steps for developing and implementing a landscape label

Initiating a landscape labeling approach in two learning landscapes: experiences from Lari and Mbeya

Over the past three years, EcoAgriculture with local partners has begun testing a landscape labeling approach to marketing in two landscapes: Lari, Kenya and Mbeya, Tanzania. Each landscape has a unique story to tell. In Lari, smallholder farmers have been able to use the landscape labeling approach as a social tool to unite producers of diverse products under a common set of principles for managing their landscape. The case of Mbeya is different in that the region is already well known for its high quality agricultural products, while small and large scale producers are looking for ways to access new niche markets for sustainably produced goods and services. Both cases highlight how interest in landscape labeling developed, the process that participants followed, and the challenges and opportunities they faced along the way. Neither story has an end in that landscape labeling is not yet fully implemented and generating noticeable benefits for producers and the landscape. The cases demonstrate, however, how landscape leaders can begin learning about and testing a landscape labeling approach.

Pride of Lari: testing a landscape labeling approach with KENVO in Lari, Kenya

In 2012, the Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) and EcoAgriculture Partners initiated a two-year project to understand new market opportunities for farmers in the Lari landscape encompassing Kijabe, Kenya. The focus was on the development and utilization of a landscape label aimed to help farmers overcome identified marketing challenges for sustainably produced products. A landscape label was envisioned to serve local farmers in two ways: 1) as a new marketing mechanism for local products and 2) to foster farmer organization and collective action.

First, the label would serve as a market-based mechanism for rewarding farmers, highlighting the diverse and sustainably cultivated products from the Lari landscape, and offering production differentiation and potential value-addition in regional markets. A recognizable label could ensure stronger and easier market access, and a brand around which viable marketing strategies could be developed. Landscape labeling would be part of a larger marketing initiative to gain recognition for the Lari landscape and its environmental and cultural attributes, bolstering rural development activities such as eco-tourism as well as environmental conservation in the region.

Second, the label would serve as a social organization tool to offer local farmers a way to better produce and market their products collectively under a label that captured their personal satisfaction and feelings of pride for the production landscape. Buck et al (2011) and Mwangi (2012) have expressly noted the great pride that residents of the landscape feel towards the Lari region. The area is rich in history and culture, and the initial efforts to prevent degradation of the landscape were rooted in this sense of pride, and a shared feeling that the landscape needs to be protected. KENVO's successes in fighting forest degradation have enhanced this sense and have increased the pride of ownership that communities feel towards the landscape.

Step 1: Introduce landscape labeling

In March of 2012 an inception workshop was organized by KENVO and EcoAgriculture Partners in Kijabe, Kenya. The first meeting was used to discuss marketing challenges faced by producers in the region and to introduce the concept of a landscape label. Stakeholders included local medium and small

scale farmers, encompassing members of KENVO's community farmer groups in bee-keeping, dairy and horticulture; government officials from the Ministries of Water and Irrigation and Agriculture and the Kenyan Forest Service; and select members of local civil society groups.

The workshop introduced the concept of landscape labeling and its practice in other contexts along with a visioning exercise among participants to identify key attributes of their landscape and products for inclusion in a label. A local artist captured this feedback to draft a sketch of a label in real-time that was presented back to the group at the end of the workshop. The group then conducted an exercise to map value chains for the community farmer groups of beekeepers, dairy producers and horticulture growers to identify key barriers and opportunities to improve marketing and apply the landscape label. Overall, the workshop was successful in generating interest among local and regional stakeholders in the landscape labelling initiative and served as an opportunity for information sharing to understand common challenges within the landscape.

It became apparent from the workshop that landscape labeling is a complicated topic to introduce and requires a continuous process of learning and application among stakeholders. A lesson learned was that learning about landscape labeling might be easier if the process began with a small group of engaged farmers with a common commodity from which other farmers could learn directly from experience.

Step 2: Perform market analysis

Next a market study was commissioned by KENVO with support from EcoAgriculture Partners to assess the activities, opportunities, risks and actors associated with the bee-keeping, dairy and horticulture value chains that local farmer groups were engaged in, and that appeared to have good potential for value addition. The analysis, conducted by an expert local consultant involved an extensive review of literature on and participatory data collection through individual and group interviews and focus groups with stakeholders at different positions in the value-chain. Two workshops were held with local stakeholders; one for validation and feedback on the findings (September 2012) and the other for the presentation of the consultant's final report (October 2012).

The report documented the challenges facing agriculture markets within the landscape, identified key linkages to prospective buyers, and highlighted opportunities for value addition through landscape labeling and marketing. The study reinforced some of the findings from the inception workshop and offered important guidance for refining the project's implementation activities in the next phase such as developing business plans with community farmer groups, and developing mechanisms to improve farmer access to information on price, and to credit.

The market analysis activity was well executed and provided important insight into the realities of marketing within the landscape. A market analysis is necessary in order to understand the local context for the potential design and application of a landscape label before moving forward.

Step 3: Strengthen farmers' networks

Upon completion of the market analysis, the project focused for the next six months on strengthening farmers' capacity to address key challenges that were identified in the introductory workshop and the market analysis, developing key principles upon which product quality standards would be based, and advancing the design of the label. These steps were approached through a series of workshops and field activities with local community farmer groups and other relevant stakeholders.

The first workshop focused on improving farmers' access to information (e.g. best practices and pricing) and helping them appreciate the importance of farmer networks and cooperatives for such purposes. A presentation was offered by Kenyan non-for-profit organization International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE), on the Biovision Farmer Communication Program which utilizes methods and tools such as radio, internet, video, text message and print media to develop "one-stop farmer information hubs." The hubs share information with farmers on topics from organic production methods to health, sanitation and environmental conservation.

The workshop was valuable to farmers in terms of encouraging them to have networks as a way easing access to information. However, it revealed a need to start small by establishing simple networks that could work even at the village level. Due to the past

bad experience that centered on mismanagement of farmer cooperatives, most of the farmers were skeptical about success of large scale networks.

Step 4: Establish product quality standards and design landscape label

The second workshop focused on introducing quality standards for landscape labeled products. The concept of quality standards was introduced for local and regional levels, formal and informal markets. The workshop was led by regional agricultural experts and offered participants an opportunity to discuss their existing best practices and to form an initial draft of attributes related to social, environmental and economic best practices to be included in a standard backing the landscape label. Stakeholders selected key principles upon which to base product quality standards that linked best practices across all of the products under the label. A professionally designed label was created based on the sketch label developed in the inception workshop and presented to stakeholders for discussion about its application.

The workshop revealed that farmers lacked knowledge on the processes of standardization. In the future, it will be important to conduct studies to establish the existing gaps within a landscape to make informed choices for trainings. Finding common agreement on production standards is difficult; it is better to build upon pre-identified existing and agreed upon best practices, while referring to established standards and certifications for guidance (e.g. organic).

Step 5: Develop marketing strategy and business plan

The final stage of the project focused on working with two of the community farmer groups, in dairy and horticulture, to develop marketing and business plans. The two groups were prioritized as they had long collaborations with KENVO and represented a diversity of poor farmers who had long been affected by the dynamic market as well as poor production systems. Over the course of three months the groups received a series of consultations from experts from KENVO and the Ministry of Agriculture to develop business plans incorporating recommendations from both the market study and capacity building workshops. Consultations were performed at KENVO's center in Kijabe and at selected farms. They

Participants brainstorm for concepts required for Lari landscape label (photo by Lee Gross)

included training on accounting, market access, price information and improved marketing techniques.

The business planning activity offered the community farmer groups much needed support in taking theoretical concepts such as a landscape label to implementation, defining concrete ways to address priority challenges (e.g. creating a table bank system) and gaining access to new identified markets. The activity also demonstrated that smallholder farmers need long-term technical assistance. Partnership between government extension programs and community groups such as KENVO are essential.

Conclusion

Upon completion of the project in April 2014, business plans for farmers groups called for collective production and marketing of products, but without the application of the landscape label. While serving as a valuable tool for galvanizing support from farmers and other local stakeholders to develop collective marketing strategies, the landscape label in the case of Kijabe will require additional support for further adoption and scaling. Thus far two local and key stakeholders' offices, the Governor's office and the Ministry of Agriculture, have expressed their interest to be involved in the process should it move forward. They view the initiative as complimentary to the County's agricultural work to promote green growth. They have committed to support the project in subsequent phases. Further, other initiatives like the Kenya Agriculture Productivity and Sustainable Land Management (KAPSLM) have benefited from information generated by the project through interactions with members of KENVO.

In hindsight, the application of a landscape label as a marketing tool for product differentiation may be better suited for regions where farmers are better mobilized. It may be more suitable also for groups that have resources to devote to a process that is likely to require legal aid and political support in the final stages to be legitimized in formal markets. Findings from the market assessment and business plan development activity suggest organic certification as a potential mechanism to reward front-running producers in dairy and horticulture, while allowing other producers time to learn and transition to better practices.

The process of creating a landscape label must be inclusive and engage all stakeholders in the landscape for it to be successful. Furthermore a strong central organization is needed to further activities in relation to the landscape label and lead monitoring of quality standards. In many ways, KENVO is a central actor in this landscape, and along with EcoAgriculture Partners, one of the main proponents of the landscape

Participants discuss the the unique strengths of the Lari landscape (photo by Lee Gross)

label. It also has access to funding sources, capacity building opportunities and academic support that other actors in the landscape may not have. However, KENVO is not an agriculture-focused organization, even if a large part of their work revolves around farmers. KENVO thus would be an unlikely candidate for becoming a standardization organization; they can play a central role with training, capacity building and pulling in other resources for creating a label. However, organizations involved in the creation and implementation of a landscape label will need to be broader and more inclusive, including government agencies, business and external experts from certifiers to ensure legitimacy, efficacy and long-term impact.

Exploring opportunities and barriers to landscape labeling in Mbeya, Tanzania

Interest in testing a landscape labeling approach in Mbeya, Tanzania came about by a different pathway than in Lari, Kenya. The Mbeya region, located in the southwestern part of Tanzania, is one of the most productive areas in the country. The eastern part of Mbeya region is renowned for its excellent rice, and other parts of the region are among the most important in the country for producing corn and horticultural crops. Due to its agricultural potential, particularly for rice production, the area has been included in investment plans for the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT). However, the region also is home to the largest mountain in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, Mt. Rungwe. It also includes several important biodiversity hotspots around Lake Tanganyika and Lake Nyassa in addition to the mountainous areas. Its highlands form the headwaters of the most important rivers for irrigation and hydroelectric power generation in southern Tanzania. Growing concern about implementing a business-as-usual model for agricultural investment in the area is evident. While new approaches to investment are being called for that allow for intensifying agricultural production in ways that help protect the region's critical ecological resources and ensure equitable participation by smallholder farmers.

In 2011, a workshop on Green Growth for leaders in SAGCOT brought together regional and district officials, agribusiness entrepreneurs, investors and producers from Mbeya and elsewhere in the Corridor. The workshop was part of partnership between EcoAgriculture Partners and the SAGCOT Centre to identify leaders and opportunities for promoting a green growth approach to investments in agriculture, forestry and agribusiness (Milder et al., 2013). Leaders came from throughout the corridor, especially from SAGCOT-designated Clusters, including Mbarali District in Mbeya.

As a result of the Green Growth Leaders Workshop, a group of leaders from Mbeya became interested in continuing to learn more about opportunities for greening agricultural development in the region, and using spatial planning with maps to help understand synergies and trade-offs between different land uses, and identify areas where innovative agriculture and businesses are ripe for investment. With financial support from the Arthur D. and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation, EcoAgriculture and ERMCSD worked with leaders from district government offices, civil society organizations, research institutions and villages to conduct a workshop entitled, Greening Agricultural Development in Mbeya: Using Maps to Advance Innovations, The workshop led to the formation of Innovation Action Teams who developed plans for advancing a variety of technical and institutional innovations. Based on a brief introduction of the concept during the workshop, an Action Team formed around landscape labeling. Others with whom the landscape labeling Team would collaborate included Teams for the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and Biodiversity Conservation (EcoAgriculture Partners, 2013).

Step 1: Introduce landscape labeling

An early focus of the Landscape Labeling Action Team was to expand their knowledge of producers engaged in sustainable agriculture practices, and connect with entrepreneurs and producer leaders who may be interested in learning more about landscape labeling. Following the workshop, the Team followed up with a series of phone meetings to share information about farmers and entrepreneurs in their networks and value-chains. Through this process it became clear that producers and entrepreneurs sought to come together to learn about the landscape labeling

concept, explore potential opportunities and establish buy-in from others who could help advance this innovative approach to marketing.

In September of 2013, the Landscape Labeling Action Team, along with EcoAgriculture Partners and ERMCSD, with funding from Hivos and Oxfam-Novib, organized a two-part workshop to introduce landscape labeling to a burgeoning group of interested producers. The first part of the workshop, held early in September, brought together the Action Team members with EcoAgriculture, ERMCSD, a market analyst and KENVO, the organization leading the landscape labeling effort in Lari, Kenya. Together participants planned the main workshop that would strategically expand membership of the Action Team concerned with assessing and advancing a prospective landscape label, identify criteria for products to include in a prospective landscape label and assess priority products. During the workshop, leaders identified value chains and ranked them based on their competitive advantage and potential for scaling up. Those ranked most highly included SRI-rice, honey, agro-ecotourism, and avocado. They also began defining the principals that would serve as the backbone of their landscape label. The workshop aimed also to lay the groundwork for testing sales of labeled products and services in one or more communities in the region.

The workshop raised several issues that are crucial for the development of a landscape label and that, in the case of Mbeya, brought to light challenges that will need to be addressed before landscape labeling is likely to take off. The issues included: 1) identifying accessible marketing channels; 2) improving production capacity and quality to meet demand; 3) supporting smallholder and stakeholder collective action; 4) sensitizing local leaders and smallholder farmers to landscape labeling; 5) specifying the criteria that characterize the multifunctional nature of the landscape; 6) identifying local institutions that give the label credibility and legitimacy; and 7) maintaining the involvement of key individuals and organizations in effectively operationalizing the development of the label.

Step 2: Perform market analysis

A market expert who participated in the pre-workshop on landscape labeling conducted a preliminary market analysis on the rice value chain, and the potential for expanding SRI (site consultant's report). Initial assessments of the current production systems and practices, key actors in the value chain, links to biodiversity conservation, and challenges and opportunities were conducted for each of the commodities. Needs for further market analysis,

Participants discuss the honey value chain (photo by John Recha)

particularly exploring consumer preferences for potential products under the landscape label, were specified.

In several cases, mechanisms for expanding the promotion and adoption of sustainable practices were not well specified. For instance, although small trials of SRI have been conducted elsewhere in the Tanzania, farmers in Mbeya were not already practicing SRI and would need to learn about the practice and reach a certain level of production before being able to market SRI-rice under the label. In other cases, some large producers already had a competitive advantage for one of the selected products, for instance organic avocado. It may be difficult therefore to expand production to other areas, or for the same practices to be equally profitable for smaller land holders. Also, although niche markets for sustainably produced goods are growing in Dar es Salaam, it was not clear if consumers in local and regional markets would be willing to pay price premiums for the labeled products. The expanded Action Team recognized a for further market analysis to better understand consumer preferences and to use the findings to shape the marketing strategy for the landscape label.

Step 3: Assess barriers to adoption

The workshop and market analysis revealed significant challenges to advancing landscape labeling. Apart from the costs of designing a label and organizing producers, there was a general concern among leaders that a lack of tenure security would limit smallholders from adopting new agricultural practices. Given the magnitude of this challenge, the Landscape Labeling workshop participants, EcoAgriculture and ERMCSD decided it would be worthwhile to investigate the potential for land use planning to support farmer and pastoralist adoption of sustainable practices. Together, some of the workshop participants, EcoAgriculture Partners and ERMCSD conducted a small study in Mbarali District on the participatory land use planning process and its potential to support green growth, with financial support from the International Land Coalition.

The study revealed that village land use planning provides an important foundation for the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. The process is a prerequisite for the issuing of Customary Certificates of the Right of Occupancy (CCRO), equivalent to land titles. However, it has been slow to advance. Currently, approximately 25% of all villages in Mbarali District have village land use plans. The situation is likely to be similar in the other districts in Mbeya region. The study found also that producer organization for collective production, marketing or other action is limited in Mbeya, and needs to be strengthened to improve opportunities for landscape labeling to take root. Other challenges, including poor extension services for sustainable practices, limited financial resources, and market constraints such as the current export ban on rice, present additional barriers to the successful implementation of a landscape label.

Conclusion

The group of leaders in Mbeya is demonstrates interest in continuing to develop a landscape label despite slow progress and notable barriers. It remains to be seen if viable markets can be accessed or created for the products explored in the workshop. However, the landscape labeling approach has facilitated cross-sectoral dialogue, inspired collaboration between new actors in the landscape, and identified important new areas for capacity building and knowledge exchange. As interest in the region grows for investment in agriculture, conservation and tourism, markets for products under a landscape label are likely to expand, increasing the potential benefit to producers and perhaps opening opportunities in local markets.

The experience of the team of leaders in Mbeya demonstrates that landscape labeling can be a complex, lengthy and expensive process to bring about. Currently, no formal organization of producers or entrepreneurs is poised to lead such a venture, though the Action Team is well positioned to play key roles in helping strengthen existing groups and/or form new ones who can. On top of creating the label itself, it is likely that the group will need to formalize itself provide ongoing support and monitoring of a landscape label. The leaders' experience in exploring the challenges and better understanding the opportunities associated with landscape labeling suggests that additional donor support is needed to help expand the learning and overcome the risks involved in investing in the development of a label.

Lessons learned

Short-term gains incentivize participation in landscape labeling

The concept of landscape labeling holds potential for rewarding producers of agricultural products and a wide range of ecosystem services while addressing some of the problems associated with other eco-certification schemes such as high auditing costs, standards determined by external actors and others. Self-monitoring and verification, like Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), have been shown effective for monitoring and validating producer compliance with standards (IFOAM 2008). PGS and similar approaches to monitoring quality and compliance offer an alternative to third-party certification that emphasizes participation, capacity-building and knowledge exchange, and they can function well alongside third-party certifications. However, even with more affordable monitoring and verification methods, the road to price premiums with a landscape label can be long and insecure. Additionally, landscape labeling requires significant start-up costs that must be paid by producers or sponsors interested in advancing the approach.

Long-term sustainability of landscape labeling hinges on producer interest in collective production and marketing. Many producers do not have the capital to wait for long-term returns on investments. Therefore, the short-term gains for participating in a landscape label need to be clear. Our experiences in Mbeya, Tanzania and Lari, Kenya demonstrate that generating short-term financial benefits can be a serious challenge, but that landscape labeling provides a wide range of other short-term benefits that may provide incentives for producers to participate.

First, landscape labeling can serve as a mechanism for social organization, linking producers of different commodities or actors at different points in the value chain and landscape. Second, the label can raise the visibility of producers contributing to relatively small markets by sharing the label with more visible or well-known products for which the landscape is already well known. Third, the process of developing a landscape label can jump-start the identification of shared values across producer groups. It can also initiate discussion on production and processing standards. Although it may take time to access price premiums for labeled products, the implementation of standards can immediately spur improvements to production efficiency and quality control of products. Lastly, the landscape labeling process improves individual producers' knowledge of opportunities related to new markets, as well as the laws and regulations related to investment, production, processing and marketing. Landscape labeling pools knowledge from a variety of producers and can draw in the knowledge of conservation and marketing experts.

Multiple obstacles impede access to benefits of landscape labeling

Even when producers are willing to test a landscape labeling approach and recognize the short-term benefits, there may be major obstacles to producers accessing short-term gains. Accessing or creating appropriate markets, for instance, can be a persistent challenge. In some cases, poor infrastructure limits access, such as a lack of processing facilities or poor options for transporting products. In other cases, policy constraints, such as regulations prohibiting the export of certain commodities (e.g., rice export ban in Tanzania) removes access to the closest international markets for labeled products. Also, producers may have limited technical expertise to navigate markets at larger scales if they have not done so before.

Poor tenure security also impacts the potential for landscape labeling to succeed. Lack of willingness to invest in farmland and limited willingness to improve production through standardization or adoption of sustainable practices some of the consequences of poor tenure security. While some farmers are already engaged in sustainable intensification, the success of the label will depend on scaling up farmer participation in the label's standards and practices. As noted in the case study, tenure insecurity was one of the primary

obstacles to advancing landscape labeling in Mbeya, Tanzania.

As demonstrated in the case studies and the following framework, a landscape labeling approach requires business, legal and management skills in addition to knowledge on best practices for a potentially wide range of commodities and products. In the two cases presented, producers felt they had limited capacity and skill to walk through the process on their own without the support of partner organizations and donors. Additionally, producer groups may not have experts within their social networks that have the necessary expertise. Although donors, facilitators or producers can bring in external experts to clarify the process and inform the development of the label, their help may be costly. Without the support of donor organizations, it seems unlikely that producer groups will invest their money in seeking external expertise to develop the label without assurance that they can recover these costs with short-term gains.

Landscape labeling approaches are too new at this point to be able to calculate the full costs of implementing a landscape label over multiple years. New efforts to test landscape labeling approaches should aim to document the costs to help landscape leaders and donors understand the full set of costs associated with developing and implementing a landscape label. It will be especially important for comparing costs to the short and long-term benefits that producers derive from label.

Currently, landscape labeling has limited adoption in both of the case study landscapes. In Mbeya, the process is still in the early stages and there is opportunity for landscape labeling to take root with a highly motivated group of producers. In Lari, they have had more years of experience and have managed to complete more of the steps but, for now, limited interest and expertise have stalled the process. In other words, the challenges to developing a successful landscape label are not insignificant, especially if it is to be producer driven and managed. Based on these two experiences, we identified several questions to answer in future work to improve landscape labeling and its prospects for adoption at the landscape level.

1. What enabling conditions are necessary for landscape labeling to succeed?
2. What is an appropriate timeframe for expecting to see financial benefits from a landscape label? (i.e., What is the business case for landscape labeling?)
3. What is the best role for donors and capacity building organizations in supporting landscape leaders implementing landscape labeling approaches?

The guidance for landscape labeling provided in this framework is an early effort to begin to clarify the process, potential benefits and costs of landscape labeling approaches. Interest in landscape scale certification schemes will most likely continue to grow along with interest in sustainable sourcing and differentiated products. As with other PES and certification schemes, landscape labeling is challenging to initiate and sustain. Although markets can reward producers for practicing climate-smart, biodiversity friendly agriculture, accessing such markets requires an enabling environment with political and institutional support for producers. However, the power of landscape labeling as a tool for collective action and marketing also offers producers new opportunities that may be well worth their attention. Our hope is that producer groups, facilitating organizations and donors use this guide as a starting point for testing their own approaches to rewarding producers for stewarding biodiversity and supporting livelihoods in their landscapes.

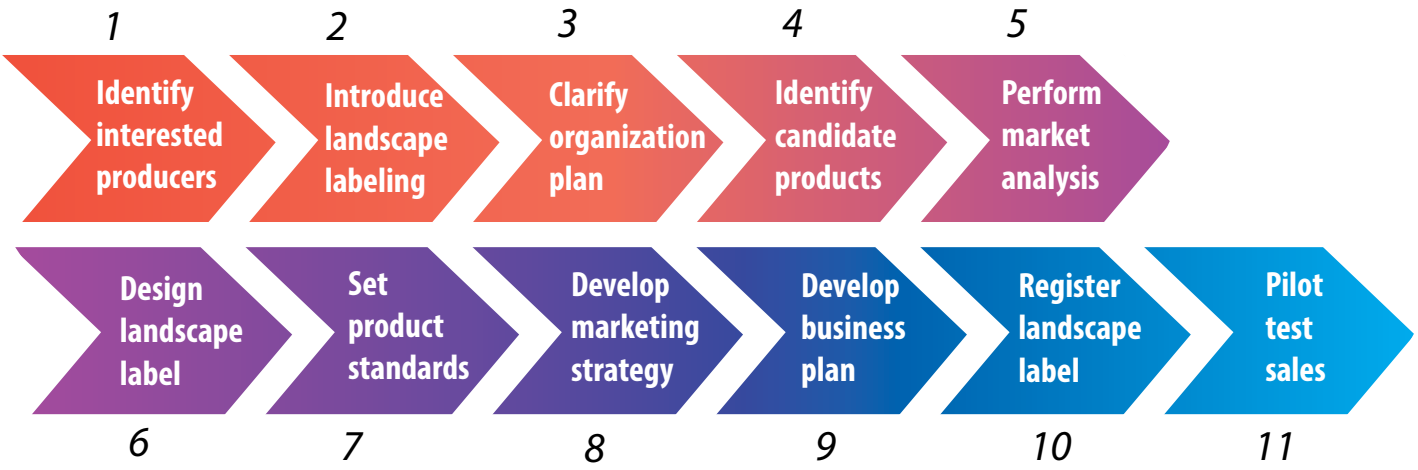
A framework for designing, developing and implementing a landscape labeling approach

Before initiating the two pilot tests of landscape labeling described in the Lari and Mbeya case studies, we anticipated that the process of developing and implementing a landscape label would include the steps depicted in Figure 1. Based upon our experience in the two landscapes, we have added steps to the process. The 11 steps below (see Figure 2) highlight key decisions that need to be made and who to involve in each step. They also estimate the time and financial resources that a group interested in testing the approach could expect to invest. To allow for flexibility and ease of interpretation, costs are estimated on a four-point scale.

$ = Low cost
$$ = Moderate cost
$$$ = High cost
$$$$ = Very high cost

The steps reflect our current best thinking about the elements of a local producer-led landscape labeling process for improving markets and marketing for products and services from sustainably managed farms, rangelands, forests and/or fisheries. They are not meant to be followed precisely. Instead, we encourage innovators who seek to develop a successful landscape labeling scheme to use the framework outlined and adapt the activities described to fit their circumstances. Consider combining some of the steps —for example, implementing them in different ways and possibly adding new ones to realize your goals for landscape labeling. We encourage you also to share your experience with other landscape leaders to help accelerate the learning and the realization of benefits from marketing mechanisms that reward producers for investing in sustainable production systems and integrated landscapes management.

Figure 2 | Revised expected steps for developing and implementing a landscape label



Step 1 | Identify a core group of interested producers

The purpose of this step is to identify interested and motivated producers and entrepreneurs who have a passion for contributing to the well-being of their landscapes through sustainable agricultural production and processing. The type of leadership needed to initiate a landscape labeling approach might be different than the leadership needed to advance through other stages. The figure below offers some ideas for the types of leaders you should look for when starting a new venture. You may want to come back to this figure for ideas of the types of leaders to involve in some of the following steps.

Time needed: 1 - 2 weeks

Cost: $

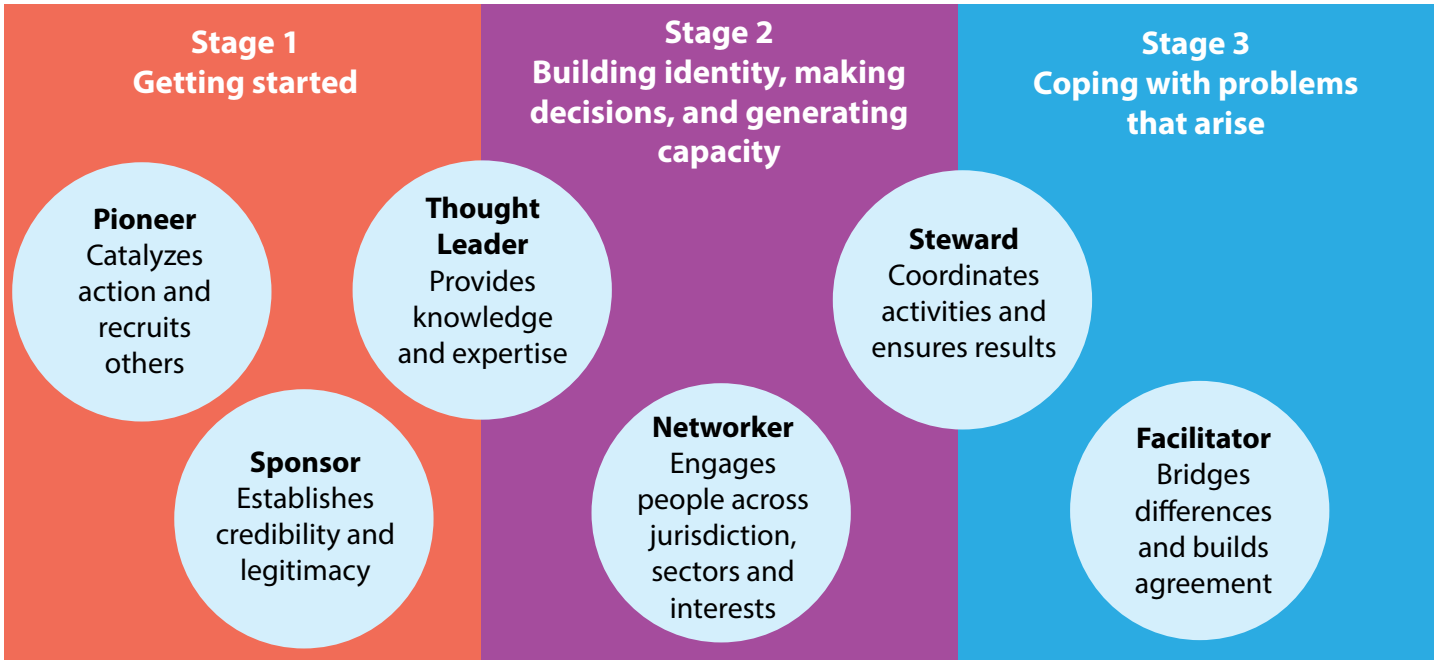
What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Identify innovative producers:
  - Which producers in the landscape are already adopting sustainable practices?
  - Which producers demonstrate strong leadership in their sector?
  - Which producers have demonstrated business skills?
- Identify entrepreneurs who are interested in selling sustainably produced and/or sourced products, or who would like to help reward producers for stewarding the landscape
- Identify CSOs or NGOs that could provide capacity building on sustainable agricultural practices, development of production standards, or business development skills; or who are interested in providing funding to support a landscape labeling process.

Who should be involved?

The primary participant in this stage is a pioneer individual or organization who will begin identifying and recruiting others.

Figure 3 | Leadership roles needed at different stages of the collaborative process



adapted from McKinney & Johnson, 2009

Step 2 | Introduce landscape labeling in a workshop

The inception workshop provides an opportunity to bring together a core group of leaders interested in landscape labeling with other actors from the landscape who might be interested in participating.

Time needed: 1 full day or 2 half-day sessions

Cost: $

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

The workshop can lay the foundation for a landscape labeling approach. The following activities may be helpful to include in an inception workshop:

- Introduce landscape labeling (see Box 1)
- Identify common values held by potential landscape label members, and the crops, goods and value adding services that could contribute to the label.
- Introduce the steps for developing and implementing a landscape labeling approach so that participants can begin to identify local capacity to develop a landscape label and potential challenges to developing a label (e.g., lack of local capacity, lack of resources to support the process, or institutional/structural barriers, etc.)
- Develop an action plan for moving forward with development of the landscape label, including agreement between participants on activities that each will do to advance the process to the next step

Who should be involved?

The participants in this process depend directly on the results of Step 1. The workshop should be led by the pioneer individual and supported by any CSO/NGO identified as a potential funder. The workshop participants should be all the producers, entrepreneurs, CSOs, NGOs, and other interested parties previously identified.

Box 1 | Introduction to landscape labeling

What is landscape labeling?

Landscape labeling is a marketing mechanism that can provide financial incentives to producers for practicing agriculture, fishing or forestry in ways that help to sustain biodiversity and ecosystem services while improving livelihood security. A landscape label can encourage consumers who share these values to participate through their purchases and payments in management strategies that help promote a healthy landscape.

Opportunities with landscape labeling

- Captures market values for existing social and ecological assets in the landscape
- Offers incentives to scale up agroecological farming pracices to benefit biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods
- Offers incentivizes for collaborative production and marketing
- Offers incentives for defining and mainstreaming best practices and standards for production and processing
- Offers incentives to access new regional and export markets

Step 3 | Clarify the organization plan

Before moving too far along the process, potential members of the landscape label need to decide how they will organize themselves to manage it. Producers may want to form a new membership organization or to designate an existing organization to manage the landscape label. Here, we outline activities for both scenarios. In either case, all members should be clear on the structure for leadership and the criteria for membership. It is also important to clarify at this stage how the label will handle finances, partnerships, and intellectual property rights. This is also the time for members to develop a mission and vision for the label, as well as strategic partnerships for the label's association.

Track 1

Producers operate as individual businesses and use the label in addition to their own brand (e.g., as a certification)

Time needed: highly variable

Cost: $

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Develop a mission and vision for the label. Remember to include all aspects of the landscape, including the importance of food production, ecosystem health and human wellbeing
- Select an Executive Committee or Board of Directors to guide and monitor the use of the label
- Clarify how the label will handle finances, partnerships, and intellectual property rights
- Draft rules or bylaws regarding how the producers will make decisions about the label
- Decide criteria and rules for members

Who should be involved?

Representatives from producer groups interested in using the label

Track 2

Producers form a business association and collectively use the label as the brand of the new business

Time needed: highly variable

Cost: $$

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Develop a mission and vision for the association. Remember to include all aspects of the landscape, including the importance of food production, ecosystem health and human wellbeing
- Select an Executive Committee or Board of Directors to guide the business
- Clarify how the association will handle finances, partnerships, and intellectual property rights
- Decide if and how additional producers can join the association, and any costs for membership
- Form a legal membership association

Who should be involved?

Representatives from producer groups interested in forming a new business association

Step 4 | Identify candidate products for the landscape label

Based on the agreed-upon label and its values, interactive sessions should engage participants in discussions and prioritization of the crops, goods and services that they would like the label to represent. The Inception Workshop and earlier activities may have generated ideas for potential products. Initially, participants should aim to develop their label around just a few products. Additional products can be brought into the label later once it has been tested on the products with the highest potential for success.

Time needed: 1 - 2 weeks

Cost: $

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Brainstorm ideas for and agree on the criteria to use in prioritizing the suitability of products and services included in the landscape label (Box 2)
- Conduct additional research and information-gathering about different products (if necessary)
- Present the recommended products to members and partners, along with any further information or rationale gathered, for a final discussion and vote

Who should be involved?

Representatives from all producers, now label members, should have a say in the choice of product(s) selected. The Executive Committee or Board of Directors should oversee the process and will most likely be the ideal group for leading interactive sessions to gather the information. If necessary, a market researcher or other person may be hired to assist in gathering information.

Box 2 | Sample criteria for selecting products for the landscape label

- Potential for scaling up production
- Ease of adoption
- Direct or indirect positive impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Market accessibility
- Potential for value addition
- Supports gender equality in production and processing
- Benefits smallholder farmers and promotes social equity in production and processing
- Helps sustain unique cultural qualities of the landscape
- Profitability
- Lack of substitutes in the market
- Product of interest to the local and national government
- Competitive advantage of product

Step 5 | Perform market analysis for each candidate product

Like all other market-based tools, the success of landscape labeling depends on demand for the label's products and access to the appropriate value-chains. While producers may have a sense of some of the opportunities and barriers for landscape labeling, it is very beneficial to conduct a formal market analysis that carefully examines the value chains, actors, opportunities and risks for each of the candidate products for the label. Landscape label members may need to seek external help to conduct the market analysis because of the particular skills and knowledge required. Hiring an external expert to help with the market analysis may cost anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars. It is wise to earmark resources for this task early on in the development of the label. The market analysis may also reveal significant challenges to accessing one or more of the identified value chains. Producers should use the results of the market analysis to reevaluate which products are best suited for the landscape label.

Time needed: Highly variable depending on the number of value chains being analyzed

Cost: $$ - $$$$

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

Conduct a market analysis: while there are a variety of ways to conduct market analyses, to to support landscape labeling it should include at least the following components:

- A summary of the value chains: identify whether the markets are primarily local, national or international as well as overall trends in the market, expected future growth, and anticipated profitability
- A map of the actors in the value chains: include actors in formal and informal value chains, the types of investment or value-adding activities done along the value chain and all of the possible end users of the product
- Identification of the target consumer group: include their behavior and preferences related to the niche to be filled by the label
- An analysis of existing capacity to meet consumer demand: analyze the current supply and infrastructure, as well as the feasibility of scaling up production and strategies for increasing supply and improving infrastructure
- An analysis of the barriers, opportunities and risks: include the costs associated with the risks and/or political or social conditions that favor or inhibit the access to the desired markets
- Identification of competitors: examine their strengths and weaknesses
- Potential for competitive advantage: consider the qualities and characteristics of the product, local capacity for business management, and other factors contributing to the competitive advantage of labeled products.

Who should be involved?

The Executive Committee should select someone with significant economic or business expertise to conduct the market analysis. The Committee will need to decide if the analysis can be done by a member or other participant, or if they need to hire an external expert. Local organizations or supporting NGOs can be contacted for recommended experts.

Step 6 | Design a label that reflects strengths and values

The label design depends on the outputs from the previous steps. The producers should have identified the shared values or qualities of the landscape that they want to be reflected in the label (Steps 2, 3 & 4). The challenge now is to represent those values and characteristics graphically. Depending on the resources available and the type of market that the group is trying to enter, developing a label for a brand can be inexpensive or very costly. Producers aiming to supply specialty products for export markets will likely need to invest in a label professionally designed by a graphic artist with marketing expertise. On the other hand, producers targeting local markets may not need to invest as much in the design of the label due to the ease of increasing name recognition through low-cost local marketing channels.

Time needed: 3 months - 1 year

Cost: $ - $$$

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Hire artist or designer
- Design graphic(s) for the label
- Test the label
    - o Solicit feedback from producers or the business association
    - o Conduct focus groups with target consumers and others
- Focus groups can help members determine which of several draft designs best communicates the values and qualities they want consumers to associate with the brand
- Incorporate feedback into label design
- Finalize label

Who should be involved?

The producers should either select a designer from among themselves or hire a local designer. Feedback groups include both the producers and potential consumers, including individual customers, retailers, middlemen, and others. The Executive Committee should oversee the label's revision and finalization.

Draft landscape label for Lari (photo by Lee Gross)

Step 7 | Establish quality standards and monitoring plan

During this step, members should decide on the standards they will use for monitoring the production and quality of each good and/or service throughout the value chain. They should also agree to a monitoring plan that identifies the methods and responsible parties for determining compliance with the label's standards.

Time needed: 1 month - 6 months

Cost: $ - $$$$ (depending on the type of monitoring chosen)

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Decide on the standards to use for each product or value chain. Producers may either:
  - Choose to monitor producers for compliance with existing eco-standards or best practices; or,
  - Identify their own best practices for each of the products under the label. This option allows for a greater degree of customization than using existing standards. It also allows members to select standards for all of the landscape goals across production, conservation and livelihoods.
- Decide who will do the monitoring. Below are two options.
  - Use a self-monitoring approach like a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). PGS is now recognized as a legitimate monitoring approach for organic products by major international organizations like IFOAM (IFOAM, 2008). The same system could be used to monitoring for compliance with other standards.
  - Use a third party monitoring approach. Using a third party to monitor compliance typically costs more than member-to-member monitoring for compliance, but it may also help to establish legitimacy and confidence with a wider range of potential consumers early in the process. An Internal Control System (ICS) is a relatively cost-effective alternative to traditional third party quality assurance in which certification bodies delegate inspection of individual group members to an internal unit within the certified body.

Who should be involved?

The Executive Committee should lay out the different options for standards and monitoring to the label members. The label members should have time to discuss and vote on each issue. If the group is considering a third party monitoring approach they will need to reach out to the certification or monitoring agency.

A producer shares her opinion (photo by John Recha)

Step 8 | Develop a marketing strategy for each product

The marketing strategy should flow naturally from the visioning workshop, market analysis, label design and organizational management plan. For a landscape label, the marketing strategy should include the value proposition of each of the products as well as for the label itself. The value proposition for a landscape label is unique in that it should explicitly include benefits for conservation or ecosystems services, in addition to income generation and enhanced product quality. A marketing strategy should clearly state who the target consumers are and their needs. It should then outline a plan for the type of marketing activities that members will engage in to reach their target consumer group.

Time needed: 1 week - 6 months

Cost: $ - $$$ (depending on the experts hired and the type of promotional materials produced)

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Understand the needs of target consumers. Based on the market analysis (Step 7), clearly state the benefits of the product or service to the customer who uses them. For each type of customer and/or each product, answer the following questions.
    - How does the product or service help the customer reduce costs or increase sales?
    - Why do they need to buy it?
    - Do the customer's values align with the landscape label's value proposition (Step 3)? Why or why not? *This step could involve in-person interviews to follow-up on the market analysis.*
- Address channels for reaching consumers. Describe how the company communicates with and reaches its target consumers to deliver the label's value proposition. How is it reaching its customers? The label can use its own channels, partner channels or a combination. Each channel has 5 distinct phases. Answer the following questions for each phase:
    - Awareness: How do we raise awareness about our company's products and services?
    - Evaluation: How do we help consumers evaluate our label's value proposition?
    - Purchase: How do we allow consumers to purchase specific products and services?
    - Delivery: How do we deliver a value proposition to consumer?
    - After sales: How do we provide post-purchase consumer support?
- Address the needs of target consumers. Prepare a marketing document (a leaflet or booklet) that clearly states what your product or service is, what the benefits are for your customers and why they need it. This document should draw on the previous steps, particularly the label design and value proposition, and be tailored to the needs and interests of the target consumer.
- Outline the promotional plan. Based on the needs and channels, outline how you will reach consumers. Include radio, print, posters, word-of-mouth, or other mediums as needed.
- Draft a marketing budget. Based on the promotional plan, calculate the costs of proposed marketing activities

Who should be involved?

The Executive Committee should begin answering the questions embedded in the marketing strategy with participating producers. It may be necessary to identify a member or external marketing expert to prepare marketing materials or draft a promotional plan. The group may decide to work with the original designer of the landscape label to ensure promotional material matches the label itself.

Step 9 | Prepare a business plan for the label and its products

Members may choose to develop a single business plan for the label or to develop separate business plans for each of the value chains to which the label's products will contribute. This decision will depend on the structure of the organization and how members plan to use the label. For instance, if existing producers or producer organizations plan to use the label in addition to their own brand, similar to the way producers use organic or fair-trade labels, it may work best for each business to develop their own business plan. However, if producers choose to market their products under the label as its own brand, the producers should work together to define a business plan for the label. The business plan should incorporate components developed in prior stages (see Box 4). While a business plan should be developed by the business owners or label members, they may want to invite external support for understanding the opportunities for the label and making projections for production and growth. In the end, the business plan should serve at least two purposes: 1) to guide the business in developing and refining its strategy for reaching consumers, with milestones and goals against which to measure performance, and 2) to demonstrate capacity for success to potential investors and loan officers. Because landscape labeling provides benefits beyond profit generation, business plans should also acknowledge and outline expected benefits to conservation, ecosystem services, livelihood, and coordination of activities across the landscape.

Track 1

Each business develops its own business plan

Time needed: 1 - 2 months

Cost: $ - $$

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Create individual business plans. See Box 4 for the basic components of a business plan.
- Include an additional section on the shared landscape label certification and its contribution to the business' success

Who should be involved?

Individual producers or entrepreneurs will develop plans for their own business. They can coordinate the development of their plan with other businesses under the label or the Executive Committee, if needed. An external expert in developing business plans can be brought in if necessary, but they should be intimately familiar with the business, its products and the value proposition of the landscapes label.

Track 2

The new association develops a business plan for all products under the landscape label

Time needed: 1 - 2 months

Cost: $ - $$

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Create a business plan for the label association. See Box 4 for the basic components of a business plan.
- Solicit feedback and confirmation on business plan from all participants.

Who should be involved?

The Executive Committee should develop the business plan and have it approved by the association's members. An external expert in developing business plans can be brought in if necessary, but they should be intimately familiar with the business, its products and the value proposition of the landscapes label.

Box 3 | Business plan outline

Summary
A concise statement of the highlights of the business, how it is to be implemented and the outcomes it will achieve. Imagine you have thirty seconds to interest someone in your venture—what would you say about it? (Write this section last.)

Business overview
A description of the organization (Step 3), its missions and goals, its targeted consumers (Step 5 and Step 8), and its label and value proposition (Step 3). This section should also specify what part of the value chain(s) the business plans to contribute to and work in. Include all products to be sold (Step 4).

Business strategy
How will the business be implemented? Describe specific actions required to execute the business. Also describe in more detail the management team and structure for the business (Step 3). Describe in more detail the product quality standards and monitoring plan (Step 7).

Marketing strategy
Market analysis, target consumer identification, and marketing/promotional strategy (adapted from Steps 5 and 8).

Financial budgets and forecasts
Include overall budget for business, including production, processing, and marketing costs. Forecast profit-loss scenarios based on expected sales (influenced by market analysis in Step 5).

Participants discuss the opportunities and challenges for accessing specialty markets in Mbeya (photo by John Recha)

Step 10 | Register the landscape label as a legal brand

Registering the landscape label as a legal brand or certification requires knowledge and skill in navigating national laws. Members of the landscape label may not have the capacity to register the brand on their own. An attorney with experience registering trademarks may need to be hired to help members formalize the label and prepare for sale of their products. Whether the landscape label will be used as the brand of a new business or a certification for existing brands (see Step 3), the organization should undertake the activities below.

Time needed: Highly variable depending on the country.

Cost: $ - $$$ (depending on the country)

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Research the process to understand the cost and time required for registering the label. The laws for registering trademarks vary from country to country.
- Hire an attorney or other expert in registering trademarks, if necessary.
- Register the label.

Who should be involved?

This step usually requires the group to seek legal expertise from someone familiar with navigating the countries' trademark registration process. In cases where the process is straightforward or where producers themselves have the expertise, the label organization should be able to conduct this step without external assistance.

Producers in Lari, Kenya learn about martketing strategies for the label's products (photo by Lee Gross)

Step 11 | Sell products under the landscape label

Finally the members get to put the label to the test by selling products under the new label. It may take some time to establish brand recognition and the sale approach may vary based on the marketing strategy and target consumer population.

Time needed: Indefinite

Cost: $

What actions and activities are involved in this step?

- Execute marketing strategy
- Begin selling products
- Monitor sales against business plan projections
- Set a timeline for revisiting the plan to see if sales are going as planned, make new projections for the coming period and assess the feasibility of expanding the label to include new commodities or value-added products

Who should be involved?

At this stage, producers, retailers and perhaps intermediate value-chain actors, such as distributors, will be involved. Producers should monitor sales and the Executive Committee should present regular reports on sales (quarterly or semi-annually). The Executive Committee should also plan a meeting to revisit the business plan annually and seek member approval and any changes to the plan.

Smallholder farmers in Lari, Kenya are diversifying their farming systems to support biodiversity (photo by David Kuria)

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