

# PERSONA ACTION CARDS FOR NATURAL CAPITAL THINKING

Integrating sustainability into business decision-making is a collaborative process. Each person in a company has its own role to play in driving sustainability and natural capital thinking.

These action cards assist professionals in the position of Sustainability Manager, CEO, CFO, Procurement Officer or Farmer to become more effective and deliver more impact. The action cards are developed for the Food & Beverage sector but are also applicable to other sectors. It is a product by Nature^Squared as part of the We Value Nature campaign.

Sustainability Manager



CEO



CFO



Procurement Officer



Marketing Manager



Farmer



Developed by:



Nature^Squared



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# Sustainability Manager



## Natural Capital Persona Action Card

A Sustainability Manager is responsible for shaping the company's sustainability strategy and translating it into concrete actions to improve the company's impact on the environment and society. A key part of the work is to align different requirements and goals as to help others understand how sustainability can be achieved and how sustainability can contribute to the overall performance of the business. Natural capital thinking provides Sustainability Managers a lens to take an integrated approach to sustainability and to link sustainability to the core of a company.



## Actions

- **Collaborate & identify allies** – bring on board relevant departments and colleagues, and learn from experts and other companies that have already started their journey.

**Useful resources:** [natural capital journey opinion piece](#), [WVN natural capital stories](#)

- **Identify entry points** for natural capital in the current sustainability strategy and see how it links to other ESG goals.
- **Prioritize** – perform a materiality analysis to identify the most important impacts and dependencies on natural capital across the value chain and check with your stakeholders what they find important.

**Useful resources:** [IBAT for Business](#) (identify priority locations), [ENCORE](#) (impact & dependencies at economic sector level), [I360X \(Impact 360\)](#) (impacts across natural, human, social and financial capital)

- **Mitigate & manage your impacts and dependencies** – conduct a natural capital assessment to help measure and value those impacts and dependencies. Start with a qualitative assessment to get a broader understanding of the main risks and opportunities.

**Guidance:** Take stock of what you are already doing and measuring, and decide on inhouse versus external support.

**Useful resources:** [Natural Capital Protocol](#), [Food and Beverage Sector Guide](#), [TEEB Agrifood Operational Guidelines for business](#), [SHIFT & Natural Capital Toolkit](#), [Global Standard for Nature-Based Solutions](#), [Business for Nature Steps to be Nature Positive](#)

- **Set targets** while balancing ambition and feasibility.

**Useful resources:** [Science-based targets for nature](#), [WEF ESG Metrics](#)

- **Monitor & report** – both on your natural capital journey and on relevant impacts and dependencies.
- **Integrate & take action** – align with, or adapt, the sustainability strategy and initiate projects that are working towards the identified action areas. Integrate natural capital information into decision-making processes.



## Needs

- **Cross-collaboration & support** – a conducive company environment to work on these themes.
- **Financial support**
- **More clarity on where and how to get started** – what are the most useful steps to take and which tools are relevant?



## Challenges

- **Getting internal buy-in and support** (from other departments and senior management) when there is no clear mandate or business case.
- **Translating complex environmental issues into a language that is understood by others in the company** (particularly finance and senior management).
- Dealing with **competing interests and sustainability dilemmas, balancing goalsetting & monitoring with action.**
- **Retrieving needed resources and datasets.**



## How to engage with a Sustainability Manager on natural capital?

- **Be open to making changes**, point out how your day-to-day business works, and jointly **discuss opportunities** for driving sustainability.
- **Be curious and ask questions** to understand why natural capital is important for the business.
- Discuss how natural capital relates to the **current sustainability strategy**.
- Point out the most **material natural capital impacts and dependencies**, focusing on those that are outside of the current sustainability strategy to **uncover relevant blind spots**.



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# Chief Executive Officer



## Natural Capital Persona Action Card

The CEO is in the position to drive the company's vision on sustainability and is responsible for the company's impacts on nature and the wider society, as well as the company's financial performance. A key part of the work is to transform this responsibility into the long-term success of the company's performance. Natural capital thinking helps a CEO to develop an integrated understanding of sustainability and to link sustainability to the business case.



## Actions

- **Understand your company's link to sustainability** and in particular to the current **food system challenges**.

**Useful resources:** [WBCSD CEO Guide to Food System Transformation](#)

**Guidance:** partake in relevant conferences and connect with other companies on their journey. Set a meeting with your sustainability department to get a better understanding of their work and align goals.

- **Strategize** - develop a clear vision on where your company is heading, incorporating sustainability. Give commitment even when the outcome is unsure upfront.
- **Allocate resources** – invest time and resources to ensure there is adequate internal capacity to execute the company's sustainability strategy.
- **Governance** – integrate your sustainability strategy into the overall company and engage all board members and shareholders.

**Useful resources:** [WBCSD Board of Director resources platform](#)

- **Set ambitious and robust targets** – reflecting the true financial value of externalities and which are science-based. Push for accounting and reporting against these targets.

**Useful resource:** [Science-based targets](#)

- **Develop and implement scalable solutions** to achieve the targets for your entire operation.
- **Be vocal and challenge peers** – talk at fora, commit to pledges (such as [Business for Nature](#)) and engage in coalitions to bring forward a stronger voice to have greater influence and outreach.
- **Lead** – don't be afraid to be courageous and take bold actions.



### Inspiring piece of work

- [WBCSD'S CEO guide to Food System](#)
- [Paul Polman's lonely fight](#)



## Needs

- **Clear and concise messaging.**
- Good understanding of the **urgency** of operating in **line with nature**.
- **Information** translated into actionable options that fit within the wider company strategy.
- Proper understanding of the **business case** of investing in nature.



## Challenges

- **Understanding the complexities of sustainability** and how the company can be best involved.
- **Limited time.**
- **Balancing responsibility** for nature with the **business case** & responsibilities towards shareholders.



## How to engage with a CEO on natural capital?

- **Paint the overall picture:** why is natural capital important for the company? What are the **main risks and opportunities**?
- Demonstrate how natural capital relates to the **company's current strategy**.
- Indicate what **other companies** are already **doing**.
- **Share** CEO-level platforms, pledges and initiatives on natural capital.
- Be specific on what the **first next steps** could be.
- **Ask for commitment**, even when starting small.
- **Use clear, simple language** to effectively communicate your message.



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# Chief Financial Officer

## Natural Capital Persona Action Card

The CFO is responsible for managing the company's finances and thus can make an important contribution to allocating the money where it matters most. A key part of the work is to identify risks, drive revenues and save costs. Natural capital thinking helps a CFO to uncover blind spots and identify new opportunities.



## Needs

- **Clear messaging.**
- **Information** translated in **numbers** and **material risks** to make the link with finance.
- **Good understanding** of the **business case** of investing in nature.



## Challenges

- **Understanding the complexities of sustainability** and how the company can be best involved.
- **Limited time.**
- Sustainability performance is often **not rewarded financially.**



## Actions

- **Understand your company's sustainability risks and opportunities**, also within the wider food system, and how these can impact the company's performance – perform a risk assessment and materiality analysis.

**Useful resources:** [Task Force on Climate-related Financial disclosures & upcoming Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures](#)

- **Collaborate with other departments** such as risk management and sustainability – understand what is happening in the sustainable finance arena.
- **Give commitment and allocate resources** - help plan and budget the needed financial support to operationalize the sustainability strategy and start projects.
- **Gain an understanding of which hidden costs occur as a result of natural capital impacts** and dependencies and measure wider value creation for your stakeholders.

**Useful resource:** [Integrated Profit & Loss \(IP&L\) approach](#)

- **Challenge the current risk approach and uncover blind spots** - integrate ESG risks and opportunities into your company's enterprise management processes (ERM).

**Useful resource:** [WBSCD/COSO guide on Enterprise Risk Management](#)



## How to engage with a CFO on natural capital?

- Make clear reference to the **element of risk.**

**Useful resource:** [An enhanced assessment of risks impacting the Food & Agriculture sector](#)

- **Emphasize the word "capital"** in the term natural capital to point out the benefits of improving the company's relation to natural capital.
- Prepare by performing **ballpark calculations** on some of the most material issues.
- Discuss the associated costs of environmental risks that the company is facing to help inform a **new way of measuring risk.**
- Already gotten started with natural capital projects? **Make their value tangible** - carry out a mapping exercise to compare the investment in these projects with the (estimated) return on investment.
- **Use clear, simple language** to effectively communicate your message.



# Procurement Officer

## Natural Capital Persona Action Card

Selecting, and engaging with, suppliers is an important part of the Procurement Manager's work, in addition to finalizing and signing the sourcing contracts. The Procurement Manager is therefore well-positioned to turn the company's sustainability commitments into reality. A key challenge of the work is to balance sustainability goals with pricing goals. Natural capital thinking sheds light on the impacts and dependencies further down the supply chain that may ultimately (or already) affect continuity and prices of required ingredients.



## Needs

- **Cross-collaboration & support.**
- **Holistic & efficient implementation** approach.
- **Processes, methods and tools** (including performance measurement systems) made available to drive an efficient implementation.



## Challenges

- **Need to engage with many different actors** (e.g. operations, suppliers, senior management, sustainability department).
- **Embedding** sustainable procurement within the **company culture** takes time.
- **Conflicting priorities** - reconciling the ambition to implement greener alternatives with pressure on costs.



## Actions

- **Understand the business case for sustainability in supply chains** and the corresponding risks and opportunities to ensure continuity of supply.
- **Take stock** of how your current **purchasing processes** and **certification schemes** include natural capital.
- **Get a thorough understanding of your supply chain** (up until the farmer) and identify the most pressing natural capital issues along the chain.

**Guidance:** even if it's not possible to identify individual farmers, try to get a grasp of how they work, what challenges they are facing and what sustainable production of your ingredients would entail.

- **Engage with supply chain partners** and discuss how collaboration on natural capital could be improved.
- **Intensify sustainable sourcing** by sourcing products that have a sustainable life-cycle and/or are third-party certified or by looking for substitutes for scarce resources.
- **Measure** progress against **Key Performance Indicators**.
- **Monitor & report** – both on impacts and on improvements.
- **Integrate & take action** – align with/adapt the sustainability strategy and initiate projects that are working towards the identified action areas.



Inspiring piece of work

[WBCSD'S procurement professionals report](#)



## How to engage with a Procurement Officer on natural capital?

- Make clear how natural capital is **related to direct business operations** (for example through dependencies).
- Discuss potential (operational) **risks and opportunities** related to natural capital (e.g. price volatility, continuity).
- Be understanding of the **complexity of supply chains**.
- Illustrate how **industry standards and certifications** take (or not take) natural capital into account
- **Create new incentives** for procurement, not only measuring success by lowest cost.
- **Use clear, simple language** to effectively communicate your message.





# Marketing Manager

## Natural Capital Persona Action Card

The Marketing Manager is in charge of developing and improving brand value. An increasingly important part of the work is to communicate the company's sustainability journey to the outside world. But which story to tell? The Marketing Manager is responsible for finding the right entry point in order to create the largest value for the company. Natural capital thinking can help tell the stories that matter and create brand value around sustainability efforts.



## Needs

- **Cross-collaboration & support.**
- **Understandable and easy-to-communicate information** on natural capital and the company's distinctive efforts.



## Actions

- **Get familiar with the company's sustainability goals and efforts.**
- **Identify a good entry point for natural capital** – how does it fit into the overall storyline/branding of the company? A materiality assessment can support you in developing a narrative around taking action where it matter most.
- **Find a strong communicative angle to communicate about natural capital** – e.g. what aspects are highly valued by your customers and partners?
- **Develop a narrative on how your products can be part of the solution**, rather than part of the problem.
- **Leverage storytelling** to enable employees to own the company's sustainability commitment, to connect with clients and partners, and to stay ahead of the competition on emerging sustainability themes.
- **Engage your stakeholders on the topic of natural capital** by pointing out that the key to positive change lies in their hands. Make it personal and practical.
- **Investigate new opportunities**, e.g. new segments and consumers trends, for marketing natural capital, creating value for the brand and the company.



## Challenges

- **Simplifying & adapting messaging** for many **different stakeholders** who each have a different entry point to sustainability.
- Bringing the **narrative to life** in an inspiring manner.
- **Integrating the sustainability brand & vision** into the **corporate culture**.



### Inspiring piece of work

[UNEP's publication on communicating sustainability](#)



## How to engage with a Marketing Manager on natural capital?

- Be clear and specific about the company's work on natural capital. **Keep your message clear and simple** and avoid using technical language.
- Collaboratively discuss the **best angle to communicate** the company's work and commitment on natural capital and ask the marketing manager to create a narrative.
- Invite the marketing manager to **collaboratively think about creating a new product, service or proposition**.

# Farmer

## Natural Capital Persona Action Card

As a Food & Beverage company, you are closely connected to the farmers who are farming the food and ingredients for your end products. As farmers are working closely with nature, you can make significant steps on your natural capital journey when successfully engaging with farmers on this topic. But what can farmers do in their day-to-day operations and what do they need? And what to do if you don't know who farms the ingredients for your products?



## Needs

- More coherent **policies & financial rewards** to incentivize sustainable land management and regenerative farming.
- **Collaborative action** between **business & farmers**.
- **Consistent metrics for companies** to transparently track & disclose progress.



## Challenges

- Farmers are often **not connected** with the companies that **process and market their products**.
- Misalignment between **short-term** and **long-term** goals.
- **The cost of measuring and verifying emissions** throughout the value chain at the farm level.



## Actions

- **Think about how natural capital benefits your farming operations and how your farming practices impacts natural capital** (impacts and dependencies).
- Identify challenges on **water, soil and biodiversity**.
- Think of the future: **how do you see your farming operations in the next 10, 20 or 50 years?**
- **Identify alternative, regenerative farming practices** and/or invest in innovative technologies to enhance sustainability and productivity

Useful resource: [SAI platform](#)

- **Ask questions and collaborate with other farmers** and other stakeholders (e.g. buyers and researchers).

Useful resources: [WBCSD Farm of the Future workstream](#), [Scaling Positive Agriculture \(SPA\) project](#)

- **Ask for support in your transition** and demonstrate what your costs and benefits are.
- **Quantify your contributions to water, soil and biodiversity**, e.g. how much CO2 can you store by implementing alternative practices?



## How to engage with a farmer on natural capital?

- **Have conversations with cooperatives/suppliers** and try to understand the local context by **sitting down with farmers in your sourcing areas**. This will help you to get a better understanding of what farmers want to do and can do on this topic. **If you don't know the farmers you are sourcing from**, you can select a reference area to still increase your understanding of the daily reality of farmers producing your ingredients.
- Make sure to grasp **what farmers are already doing** and use practical language. Talk about **climate, soil, water availability**, and **biodiversity**, rather than using natural capital as an entry point.
- **Use a positive angle**: talk about soil health rather than pesticide use, climate adaptation rather than footprint, and securing water availability, rather than aquifer depletion? Compliment them on the work they are already doing.
- Provide support in **moving from a short-term to a long-term perspective**, also financially.
- Do not reason from ecology alone, but also to understand the **financial reality** of the farmer.
- Take a **landscape perspective** and help develop new landscape governance platforms and collaborations.