



# **Embedding nature in business decision-making: challenges and gaps**

Synthesis of findings from the A-Track  
needs assessment survey

February 2025

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# Executive summary

Nature is fundamental to human survival and the health of global economies, yet escalating crises, such as biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and climate disruption, pose unprecedented challenges to societies and businesses alike.

Recognising the urgent need for action, the A-Track project, supported by the European Union's Horizon Europe program, seeks to empower businesses to integrate nature into their decision-making processes through natural capital approaches. By enhancing existing tools and knowledge and addressing identified gaps, A-Track provides organisations with actionable insights to navigate their unique paths toward nature-positive outcomes.

This report is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges businesses face to integrate the value of nature into their strategies. It synthesises findings from the 2024 A-Track Needs Assessment survey involving 84 business leaders and stakeholders in diverse industries, conducted to understand how businesses are addressing nature-related challenges. The survey explored their capabilities and challenges to incorporate nature into decision-making. *Section 1* offers a concise overview of the A-Track project and the role of the needs assessment in addressing capacity gaps. *Section 2* analyses the current state of nature and business integration, highlighting trends and barriers. *Section 3* details the key findings from the needs assessment, and *Section 4* proposes actionable recommendations for stakeholders, outlining pathways for collaboration and exchange.

**Key findings include:**



**Varying adoption of nature strategies:** Two-thirds of respondents reported they have a nature strategy, but the approaches vary significantly.



**Data challenges:** Limited access to sector-specific insights and difficulties in data accessibility remain significant barriers.



**Low adoption of tools:** The use of such tools as life cycle assessments and footprinting is currently low, though interest is growing.



**Leadership and collaboration:** Senior management engagement and cross-departmental collaboration are critical to advance nature-positive efforts.

The A-Track project addresses these needs by bringing together existing tools and knowledge and developing them further. A-Track helps to make it easier for organisations to identify the most appropriate way forward for their sector and size, to unlock the most relevant natural capital and biodiversity information for a range of applications and, ultimately, to make more informed decisions that accelerate action for nature-positive outcomes.

Beyond its immediate objectives, the A-Track project contributes valuable insights to the broader knowledge community. By engaging a wide array of stakeholders – non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governments, academia and businesses – A-Track fosters collaboration to amplify the impact of its findings and initiatives. This approach ensures that knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities extend beyond the project's life cycle, driving transformational change in how businesses value and protect nature.

This report not only serves to inform about the design and implementation of A-Track's activities but also provides actionable recommendations for stakeholders working with businesses on nature-related issues, proposing pathways to more transformative outcomes.

# 1 Introduction

## About A-Track

A-Track is a transformative project funded by Horizon Europe, the European Union's scientific research initiative. With an €11 million budget and a four-year timeline, A-Track is designed to accelerate nature action in businesses, governments and financial institutions. Its mission is to simplify the integration of natural capital assessment and accounting (NCAA) into organisational strategies, ensuring that decision-makers can navigate this complex landscape effectively.

**The overall goal of A-Track is to consolidate and mainstream activities to accelerate transformation in organisations, such that, by the end of the project, a critical mass of businesses, financial institutions and governments integrate the value of natural capital into their decision-making, helping to halt and subsequently reverse biodiversity loss.**

The project builds on existing frameworks, such as the Natural Capital Protocol (2016) and the high-level business actions on nature – Assess, Commit, Transform and Disclose (ACT-D), while addressing critical gaps in tools, data and methodologies. A-Track’s objectives include:

- consolidating and harmonising guidance for measuring and valuing impacts on nature;
- enabling organisations to identify sector-specific actions that align with biodiversity goals;
- bridging the gap between global frameworks and local implementation needs.

A-Track brings together existing tools and approaches and develops them further (*see Box 1*). The project will make it easier for organisations to identify the most appropriate way forward for their sector and size, to unlock the most relevant natural capital and biodiversity information for a range of applications and to make more informed decisions that accelerate action for nature-positive outcomes.

### **Box 1: A-Track’s theory of change**

A-Track aims to find the connections between the different strands of work, fill the gaps and set out an accessible, easily navigated pathway for users. This systemic approach will lead to faster uptake and, ultimately, to the conservation and restoration of nature.

#### **The A-Track project design is based on the following assumptions:**

**Assumption 1:** Natural capital approaches and footprinting are effective means to enable the transformation of companies and business models. While such approaches are proven solutions to raise awareness more generally about risk and operational issues, there is not yet enough evidence to show if/how they have been used at the transformational level for businesses.

**Assumption 2:** Those in target functions are aware of the importance of nature and are willing to use natural capital approaches to inform thinking. However, this interest is not (yet) proven.

**These two assumptions are explored and challenged during the needs assessment.**



## Scope of this synthesis report

This report synthesises findings from the 2024 A-Track Needs Assessment survey, conducted to understand how businesses are addressing nature-related challenges. The survey involved 84 respondents in diverse industries and geographies and was complemented by in-depth interviews and desk research.

***It aimed to identify:***

- the current capabilities of businesses to integrate the value of nature into decision-making;
- the barriers and challenges organisations face to increase nature-positive actions;
- the support needed to operationalise strategies and achieve measurable outcomes.

The findings in this synthesis report offer a timely update on the challenges business leaders face to integrate the value of nature into corporate decision-making. The report offers practical insights for stakeholders collaborating with businesses, highlighting key areas to address challenges regarding tools, data and capacity building, while accelerating efforts to tackle biodiversity loss.

The needs assessment methodology as well as the survey and interview questionnaires are available in *Annex 2* and can be downloaded separately [a-track.info/needs-assessment](https://a-track.info/needs-assessment)



## 2 Business and nature: The state of play

### The urgency of business action to address nature loss

The natural world is the foundation of human life and economic activity, yet it faces unprecedented threats. Biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate instability have escalated to critical levels, threatening not only the environment but also global food security, water availability and economic resilience. Reports from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and Stockholm Resilience Centre reveal the current state of play:

- Over 73% of wildlife populations have been lost since 1970<sup>1</sup> ([WWF, 2024](#)).
- Over 85% of wetlands, essential for water filtration and biodiversity, have disappeared due to human activities ([IPBES, 2019](#))<sup>2</sup>.
- Six of nine planetary boundaries, thresholds for maintaining a stable Earth system, have been breached, placing humanity at risk of sudden, irreversible changes ([Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2023](#))<sup>3</sup>.

The implications of nature loss are far-reaching and unprecedented. It poses not only financial risks to businesses but also significant physical risks, including wildfires, floods, soil degradation. As societies and economies transition to a low-carbon and nature-positive future, businesses face additional transition risks, such as adapting to new regulations. Ultimately, systemic risks arise when an entire system breaks down<sup>4</sup> ([WWF, 2024](#)). As global populations rise and natural resources diminish, businesses are uniquely positioned to address their role in both driving and alleviating these crises and diminishing the risks.

Nature is not only a moral concern but a business imperative. Ecosystems provide vital services – clean water, fertile soil, pollination and climate regulation – upon which industries and economies depend. Recent research by PwC estimates that 55% of global GDP, equivalent to USD \$58 trillion, is moderately or highly reliant on natural systems. Industries such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and manufacturing rely heavily on these natural systems for their operations and long-term viability<sup>5</sup> ([PwC, 2023](#)).

The last decade has seen significant activity on the measurement and valuation of natural capital and biodiversity. This includes the Natural Capital Protocol<sup>6</sup> ([Capitals Coalition, 2016](#)) principles and framework, the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) final recommendations<sup>7</sup> ([TNFD, 2023](#)) released in 2023, and the Science-based Targets for Nature by the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN), launched in 2023 and updated in 2024<sup>8</sup> ([SBTN, 2024](#)).

Political support for nature action is gaining momentum, with key frameworks and regulations driving change. The Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted in 2022<sup>9</sup> ([Convention on Biological Diversity, 2022](#)), and its Target 15 emphasise the need for businesses to disclose nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities (DIROs). This is increasingly reflected in mandatory reporting requirements emerging in various regions, including Europe (especially the set of European Union regulations), Asia (China, Indonesia), Latin America (Brazil, Mexico) and Africa, but more countries need to take steps in this direction to ensure Target 15 delivery.

The International Sustainability Standards Board has also signalled its intent to integrate biodiversity and ecosystems into its frameworks, underscoring the growing importance of mandatory disclosures. These new frameworks and regulations will affect how businesses manage and address biodiversity, not just in their direct operations but in their value chain, especially upstream<sup>10</sup> ([KPMG, 2023](#)).

However, corporate progress on nature is slow. A review of Fortune Global 500 companies by McKinsey found that while 83% have climate-related targets, only 25% have set targets for freshwater consumption, 20% for chemical and plastic pollution, and 9% for forest and seabed loss<sup>11</sup> ([McKinsey Sustainability, 2022](#)).

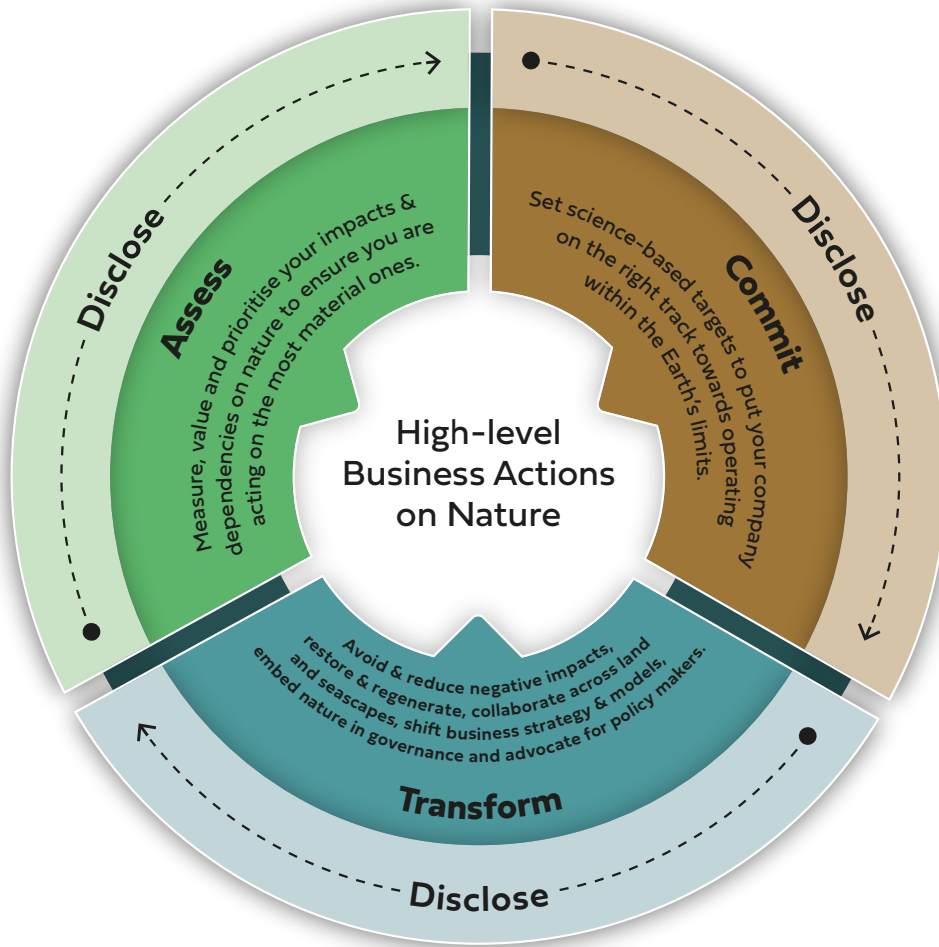
**The urgency for businesses to act on nature has never been greater.**

## Breaking down the nature journey business

To coordinate business efforts and apply a consistent approach to accelerating nature action, leading organisations developed the ACT-D high-level business actions on nature (*see Figure 1*). They build on existing action frameworks and guidance, including the [Natural Capital Protocol](#), [Science Based Targets Network's target-setting guidance](#), [World Business Council for Sustainable Development \(WBCSD\) Roadmaps to Nature Positive: Foundations for all businesses](#) and [Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures framework](#).

**Figure 1: High-level business actions on nature (the ACT-D framework)**

Source: Business for Nature in collaboration with PwC (2023)<sup>12</sup>



**Assess:** Measure, value and prioritise your impacts and dependencies on nature to ensure you are acting on the most material ones.

**Commit:** Set transparent, time-bound, specific, science-based targets to put your company on the right track towards operating within the Earth’s limits.

**Transform:** Avoid and reduce negative impacts, restore and regenerate, collaborate across land and seascapes, shift business strategy and models, and advocate for policy ambition.

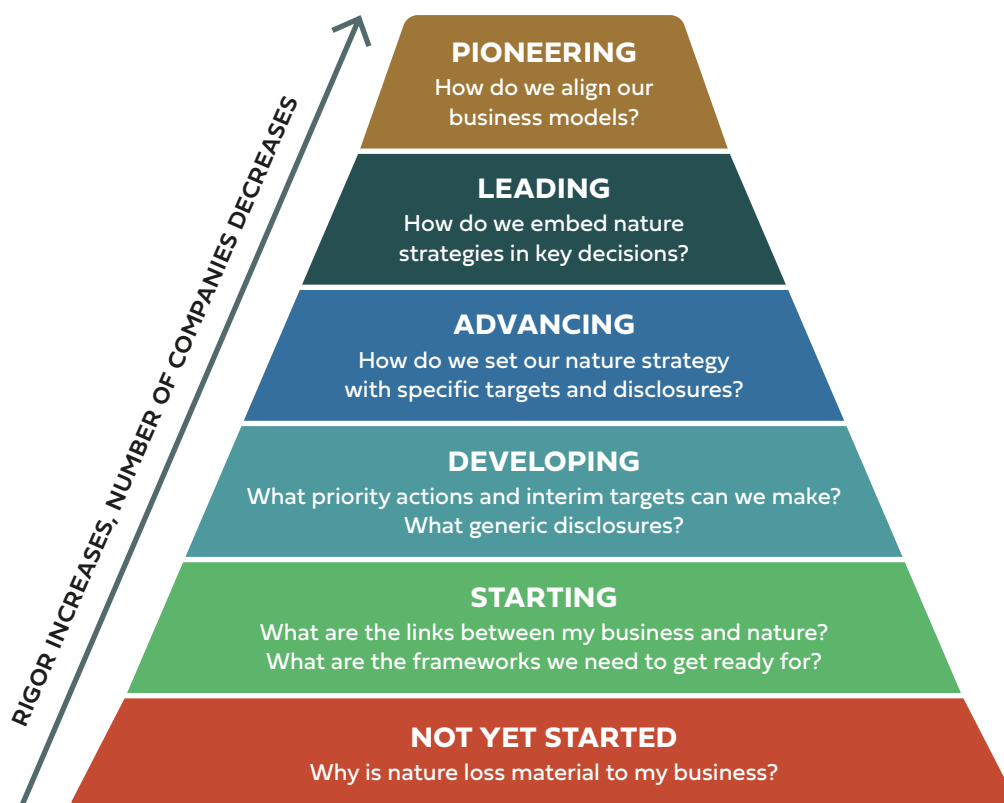
**Disclose:** Track performance and prepare to publicly report material nature-related information throughout your journey.

By integrating nature-related risks and opportunities into every part of the strategic and performance management processes, companies can provide financial markets – and other stakeholders – with well-managed, consistent and comparable information. This information can be used to further inform the allocation of capital away from nature-negative toward nature-positive outcomes. Such actions will enable business to align their valuation and capital allocation models and unleash transformation in line with a nature-positive world<sup>13</sup> (WBCSD, 2024).

The high-level actions are by necessity ambitious, however, and companies build up their approach over time, expanding scope and granularity as resources and internal buy-in increase and the collective knowledge base grows.

Although every company’s nature journey is unique and non-linear with diverse triggers for action, typical questions can still be identified, *as highlighted in Figure 2.*

Figure 2: Corporate journey on nature with typical questions (WBCSD, 2025) forthcoming



General guidance related to ACT-D is available, such as the Nature Strategy Handbook<sup>14</sup> ([Business for Nature in collaboration with PwC, 2023](#)), and associated sector guidance; these are framed for companies at the earlier stages of the corporate journey. Less guidance is available for leading and pioneering companies, related to implementation and business models.

While needed guidance exists on the “Assess” action area, including TNFD’s LEAP approach and SBTN’s Steps 1 and 2, less guidance is available for more advanced assessments, especially related to interpreting location-based data. Assessing nature-related DIROs is a critical first step to be able to successfully incorporate material nature-related issues into corporate decision-making and therefore take relevant actions to halt and reverse nature loss.

**NCAA** offers a structured way to measure and value nature’s benefits, enabling easier integration into business strategy consideration. As businesses mature on their nature journey, NCAA becomes increasingly critical to navigate complex data and inform decision-making in a structured way. This, in turn, can allow making a more compelling business case across functions and tracking progress in a meaningful and comparable way. NCAA can be used at all maturity levels, helping businesses navigate challenges to address nature-related risks and opportunities.

Despite progress, however, businesses face barriers to integrate the value of nature into decision-making, varying by their stage of maturity, as set out below.

Now is the time to accelerate corporate action by further harmonising efforts, which is the objective of the A-Track project.

## The role of natural capital approaches in addressing challenges to integrate the value of nature into decision-making

Business leaders face a number of challenges when integrating nature into decision-making.

Identified in academic and gray literature, the typical challenges *as shown below* reflect how they vary across advanced and less advanced organisations *as presented in Figure 2*. They also show how NCAA approaches can help to address the challenges.



## Awareness gaps

Awareness gaps refer to the varying levels of understanding and recognition of nature's relevance to business operations and decision-making. These gaps are influenced by an organisation's maturity level, significantly shaping how companies approach and integrate nature into their strategies.

STARTING/DEVELOPING BUSINESSES	ADVANCED/LEADING BUSINESSES
often struggle to recognise the relevance of nature to their operations, particularly its materiality in risk and opportunity management.	are aware of these connections but face challenges to integrate the interlinkages between nature, equity and climate into decisions.

**NCAA bridges this gap by providing tangible data on dependencies and impacts, helping companies quantify nature's value and prioritise actions.**

## Regulatory complexity

Regulatory complexity refers to the challenges businesses face to navigate a rapidly evolving landscape of voluntary and mandatory disclosure requirements. The shift toward greater accountability in addressing environmental and nature-related risks has increased demands on businesses to align their operations with commonly agreed frameworks.

Perceived and real divergences in voluntary (e.g. TNFD) and regulatory (e.g. under the European Union Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) disclosure requirements create a resource burden.

STARTING/DEVELOPING BUSINESSES	ADVANCED/LEADING BUSINESSES
face resource constraints to adapt processes and understand evolving requirements.	while experienced, need more standardised approaches to implement requirements effectively in their value chains and to aid benchmarking.

**NCAA simplifies compliance by aligning internal assessments with regulatory requirements, enabling smoother adaptation to emerging policies.**



## The business case

Building a persuasive business case to integrate the value of nature into decision-making is essential but challenging for organisations, regardless of their maturity level. Success depends on clearly showing how nature action contributes to financial performance, operational resilience and long-term value creation.

### STARTING/DEVELOPING BUSINESSES

struggle to quantify the financial benefits of nature action, making it difficult to justify investments to internal stakeholders.

### ADVANCED/LEADING BUSINESSES

need robust models to show a return on investment, link nature-related actions to core business goals and expand initiatives effectively.

**NCAA provides data-driven insights that translate nature's value into financial terms, enabling businesses to identify new opportunities or reduce costs.**

## Organisational capacity and alignment

Building organisational capacity and achieving alignment across functions and stakeholders are critical to mainstream nature-related issues into business decision-making. However, limited skills, resources and communication pathways often create barriers that slow progress, regardless of a company's maturity level.

### STARTING/DEVELOPING BUSINESSES

lack technical expertise and struggle to engage beyond sustainability teams.

### ADVANCED/LEADING BUSINESSES

need specialised tools and processes to expand nature strategies effectively, as well as communication support with internal and external stakeholders.

**NCAA creates a shared understanding and common metrics, raising awareness and capacity, easing dialogue across functions and with external partners.**

## Supply chain complexity

Globalised supply chains pose significant challenges for businesses aiming to address nature-related DIROs. The complexity of multi-tiered supply networks often limits visibility, making it difficult to assess and manage risks effectively. This challenge affects organisations at all maturity levels but manifests differently based on their stage of development.

### STARTING/DEVELOPING BUSINESSES

lack traceability in commodities, hindering the upstream assessment of nature-related issues (DIROs).

### ADVANCED/LEADING BUSINESSES

struggle with the volume of data to manage from diverse suppliers, including inconsistencies in data.

**NCAA enables companies to map impacts and dependencies throughout supply chains, identifying high-priority areas for action and mitigating risks.**



### 3 Insights from the A-Track Needs Assessment survey

The key findings from the A-Track Needs Assessment survey and follow-up interviews reveal considerable progress in how businesses are engaging with nature but also underscore persistent gaps in strategy, data, tools and leadership. Addressing these aspects through targeted interventions can help organisations align more effectively with global goals, mitigate risks and unlock new opportunities.

*As outlined in Box 2*, the majority of survey respondents reported high levels of individual expertise in sustainability and natural capital. Over half of the responses came from advanced and leading companies actively integrating the value of nature into their decision-making processes.

The survey covered a diverse range of sectors, with representation mostly from large companies. More than two-thirds of the responses came from organisations headquartered in Europe. One-fifth were from small and medium-sized enterprises and a few from NGOs and academia.

While the questionnaire was tailored to various corporate functions, including through shorter survey branches with specific questions targeting procurement, finance and operations, most respondents were members of sustainability teams or senior management. This highlights the limitations of engaging other critical business functions in mainstreaming nature's value into corporate decision-making. A-Track seeks to address this issue through targeted outreach and training.

Five companies were then interviewed to complement the survey findings, particularly with respect to needs for specific job functions.

## Box 2: About the survey

The A-Track Needs Assessment survey, titled **“Mainstreaming Nature in Business Decision-Making: Capabilities and Needs”**, took place from 6 May to 14 June 2024. The survey gathered insights from 84 businesses in various sectors to explore their capabilities and challenges to integrate the value of nature into decision-making.

## Key features:

### Structured in three parts:

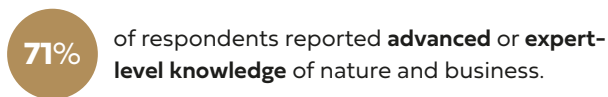
- Respondent and organisation details
- Targeted questions for roles, including C-suite, sustainability managers, finance, procurement and operations
- Options for continued engagement or anonymity

## Respondent profile:

### Gender representation:

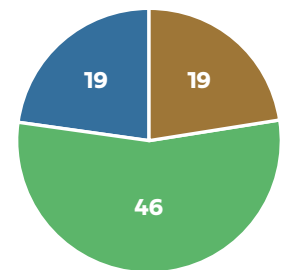


### Expertise:



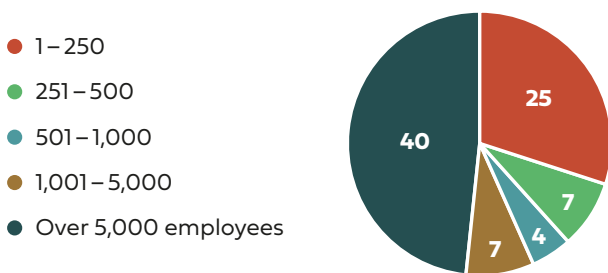
### Roles:

- Board, C-level and top management
- Sustainability and nature expertise
- Other functions (finance, risk, operations, procurement, etc.)

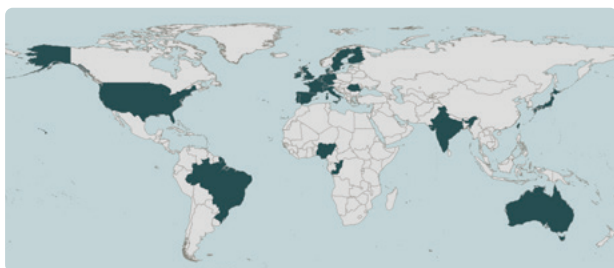
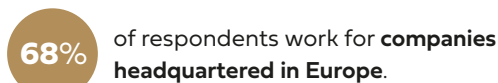


## Company profile:

### Size:



### Geography:



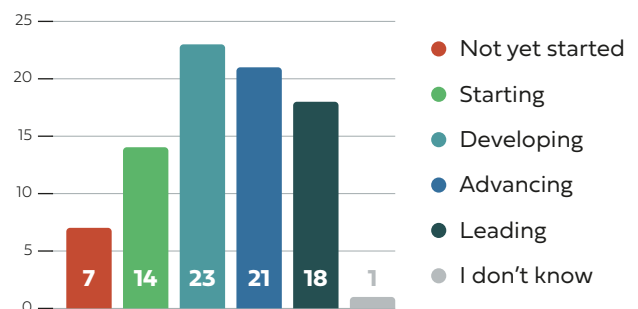
### Sector:

Most sectors were represented, with the majority of respondents from **built environment, forest products, energy and service providers (consultancies, advisors)**.



### Maturity level:

A balanced mix of companies at advanced and early stages of integrating nature strategies. **The high expertise of respondents reflects a greater understanding of nature than average.**



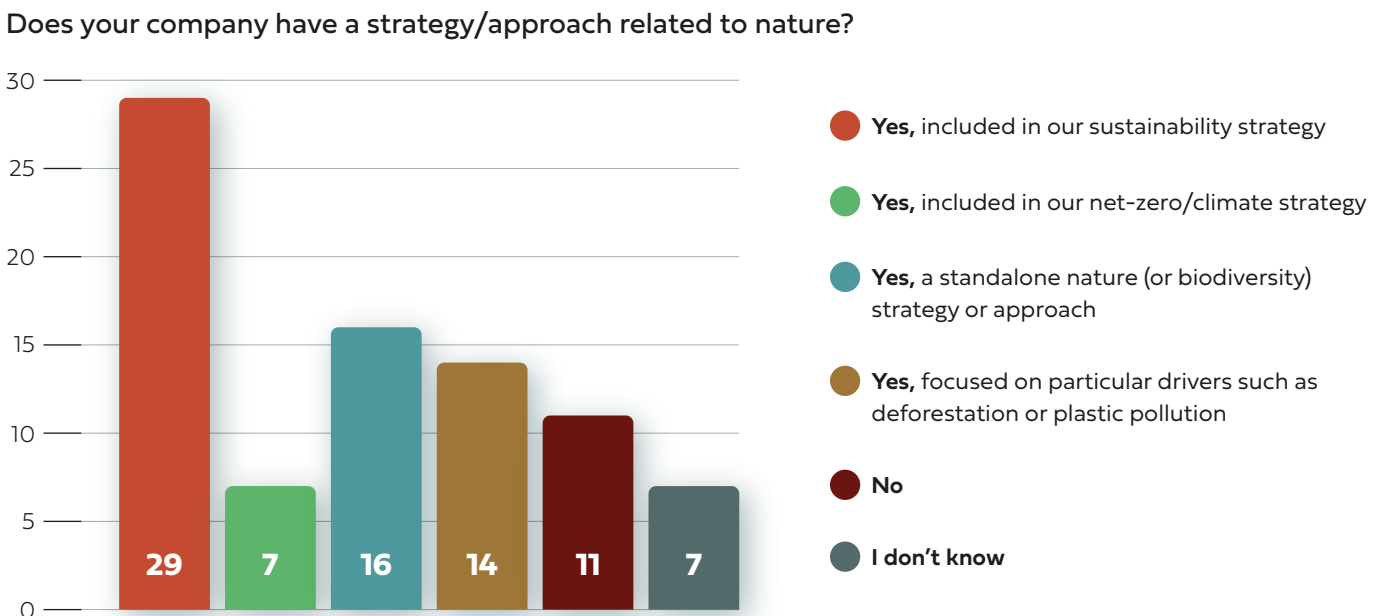


## Strong uptake of corporate nature strategies and approaches

A large majority (78%) of respondents reported having a nature strategy (see Figure 3). Of these, approximately half have embedded nature within broader sustainability frameworks, while the other half have standalone strategies or focus on specific drivers (such as deforestation or plastic pollution). This diversity reflects differentiated progress related to diverse maturities and sectors and also highlights gaps in the standardisation of the design of nature strategies and approaches.

Interviewed businesses emphasised the need to explore interlinkages with climate, as well as social and financial elements when mainstreaming nature-related issues into decision-making processes.

**Figure 3: Survey answers on whether companies have a nature strategy**



### **Key insights:**

- **Climate action overlap:** Building on existing climate efforts, like decarbonisation and circularity, can drive nature-positive actions.
- **Maturity levels matter:** Companies with advanced sustainability strategies achieved better alignment and overall integration of nature-related issues, while those at earlier stages struggled with specific challenges, such as defining material issues and setting measurable targets.
- **Diverse approaches:** Companies are at varying stages in their nature journeys. While some have seamlessly incorporated nature into their sustainability strategies, others have opted to create distinct nature-focused strategies.
- **Clear business goals:** Establishing practical, well-defined goals for nature-related actions, supported by a clear vision and actionable steps, can guide companies on their nature journey.
- **Tailored business cases:** Adapting the business case for nature action to suit different teams and maturity levels helps secure internal buy-in and align stakeholders.

## **Gaps in cross-functional collaboration**

For the implementation of nature strategies to stand the greatest chance of success, they need to be designed with departments beyond the sustainability team and involve multiple functions in operationalisation.

### ***In specific questions for sustainability managers:***

- Almost one-third (31%) of the 46 respondents mentioned the **board and senior management** as top functions most relevant to advancing the company on the nature journey.
- Roughly one-fifth (17%) of respondents mentioned the **sustainability team**, recognising their transversal role in driving the implementation of a nature strategy.
- The next “key” functions appear as **procurement (13%), operations (11%), finance (9%) and risk (6%)**.

The sustainability/nature managers struggle, however, to engage these internal stakeholders, resulting in fragmented implementation.

**The survey revealed a series of common challenges in collaboration.**

- The lack of shared understanding, especially with senior management: Departments outside sustainability often lack knowledge and awareness of how nature-related issues intersect with their respective roles. This is especially true of senior leaders who often struggle to connect nature-related actions to core business priorities like profitability and risk management. Competing priorities, such as decarbonisation, can overshadow biodiversity-related efforts.
- Silos in decision-making: Procurement teams may prioritise cost savings over nature-based considerations, while finance departments may struggle to quantify the return on investment of nature-related actions.
- The lack of compelling business cases, hindering internal support: The business case to convince and obtain buy-in to integrate the value of nature into decision-making is an ongoing issue within companies, whether they are advanced or less advanced on the nature journey.

**As a general reflection, most respondents were experts from advancing and leading companies. Challenges such as awareness and knowledge gaps persist, however, indicating that awareness-raising efforts remain essential even at advanced levels. At these stages, the focus shifts from understanding “why nature loss matters for business” to addressing “how nature loss is imperative and what concrete actions can be taken.”**

“There is a need for senior management to recognise the priority for action and the business case for doing so, particularly considering demands being made related to climate. This will flow through potentially to product development.”

(Sustainability manager, *Utility company*)



“Operations still have a low level of understanding on the issue and prioritise other issues (e.g. climate) in their work.”

(Nature manager, *Manufacturing company*)

## Varying access to and use of nature-related data

The perceived lack of data is an often-quoted barrier to taking action on nature. While leading companies confidently use data to assess dependencies and impacts on direct operations and seek ways to manage supply chains, smaller and/or less mature businesses struggle to identify reliable datasets.

*Issues related to accessing data include:*

- **Fragmented data systems:** Many companies rely on disconnected data sources, leading to incomplete or inconsistent insights.
- **Sector-specific gaps:** Businesses need data tailored to their industries, such as impacts of agricultural supply chains or water dependencies of manufacturing processes.
- **Cost and accessibility:** Costs and licensing issues prevent some companies from accessing some datasets when they have not been able to demonstrate a business case.

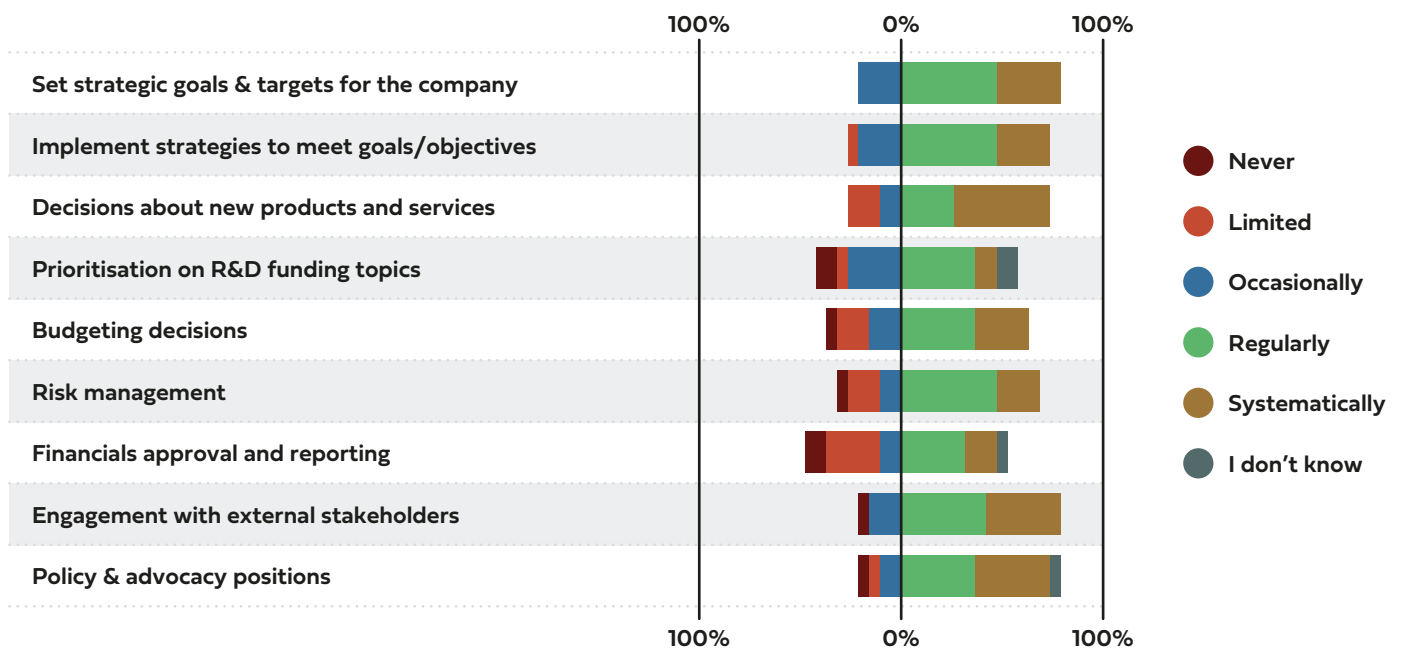
Regarding the **use of data**, senior managers mostly responded that they were regularly or systematically using nature-related DIRO considerations in different types of decisions (*see Figure 4*), compared to sustainability managers who reported occasional or limited use (*see Figure 5*).

One hypothesis is that when the strategy is agreed at the most senior level, it is more likely to be mainstreamed throughout the organisation’s decision-making. It is also possible that middle management does not yet have the legitimacy or buy-in they need to integrate nature-related DIRO information into the different uses.

**Figure 4: Survey answers from senior management on the consideration of DIROs in their decisions**

How often have nature-related issues (dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities) been considered in the following decisions your organisation in the last year?

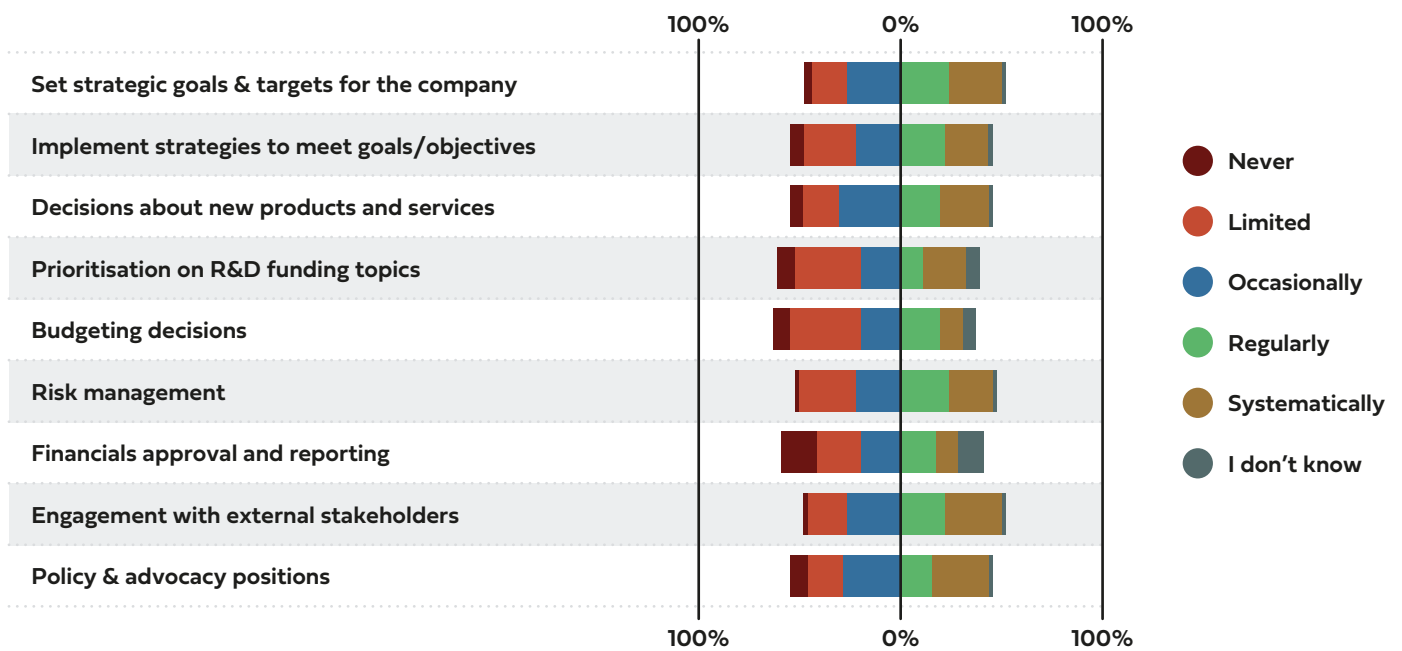
**Answers from C-suite, board, directors**



**Figure 5: Survey answers from sustainability experts on the consideration of DIROs in their decisions**

How often have nature-related issues (dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities) been considered in the following decisions your organisation in the last year?

**Answers from sustainability experts**



The types of data vary with respect to specificity and granularity, ranging from broadly indirect data, such as modelling, toward direct data, including related to specific pressures and location-based information. When asked what categories of data are used to assess nature-related DIROs, the answers of senior leaders and sustainability managers again differ. Half of senior managers responded they are already using data for each category (see Figure 6), while more than 50% of sustainability managers “would like to use” more data in at least three categories (see Figure 7):

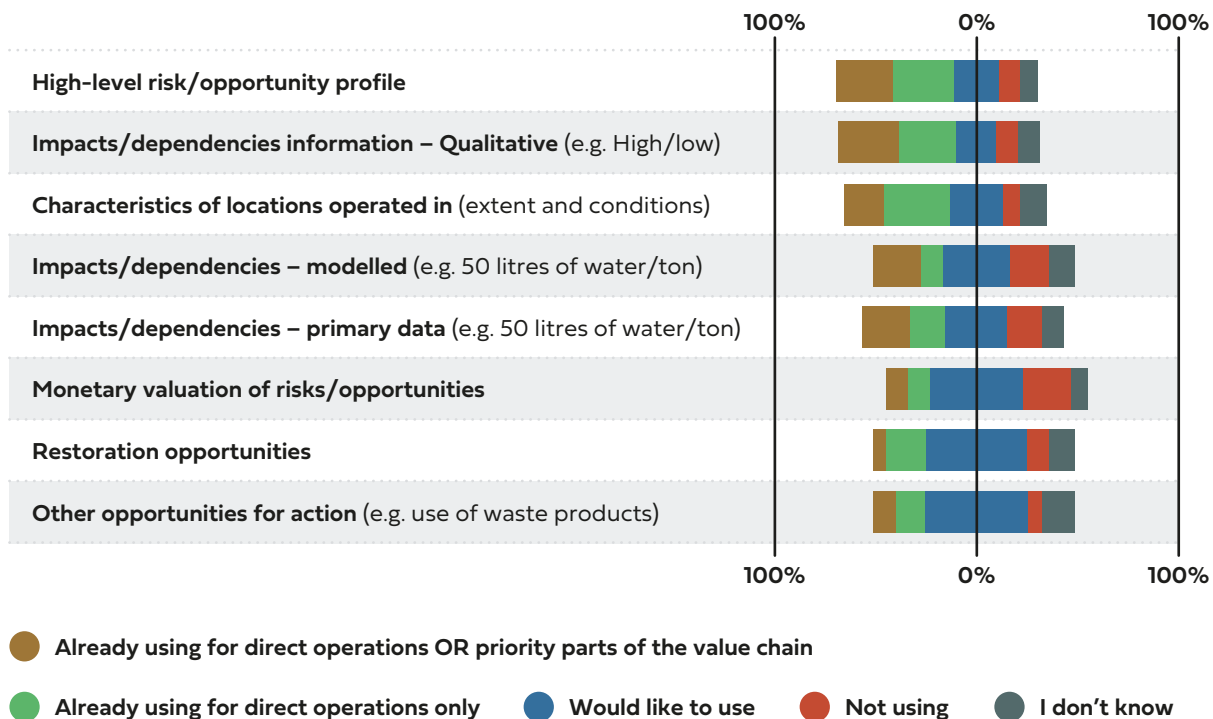
- 1 monetary valuation of risks/opportunities;
- 2 restoration opportunities;
- 3 other opportunities for action (e.g. use of waste products).

Less than one-fifth of respondents (both senior and sustainability managers) answered “not using” or “I don’t know,” showing that the awareness of the need for data is well established with advanced companies and job functions.

**Figure 6: Survey answers from senior management on the categories of data used for DIROs**

What categories of data are you using for nature-related issues (DIROs) within your direct operations and/or priority parts of your value chain?

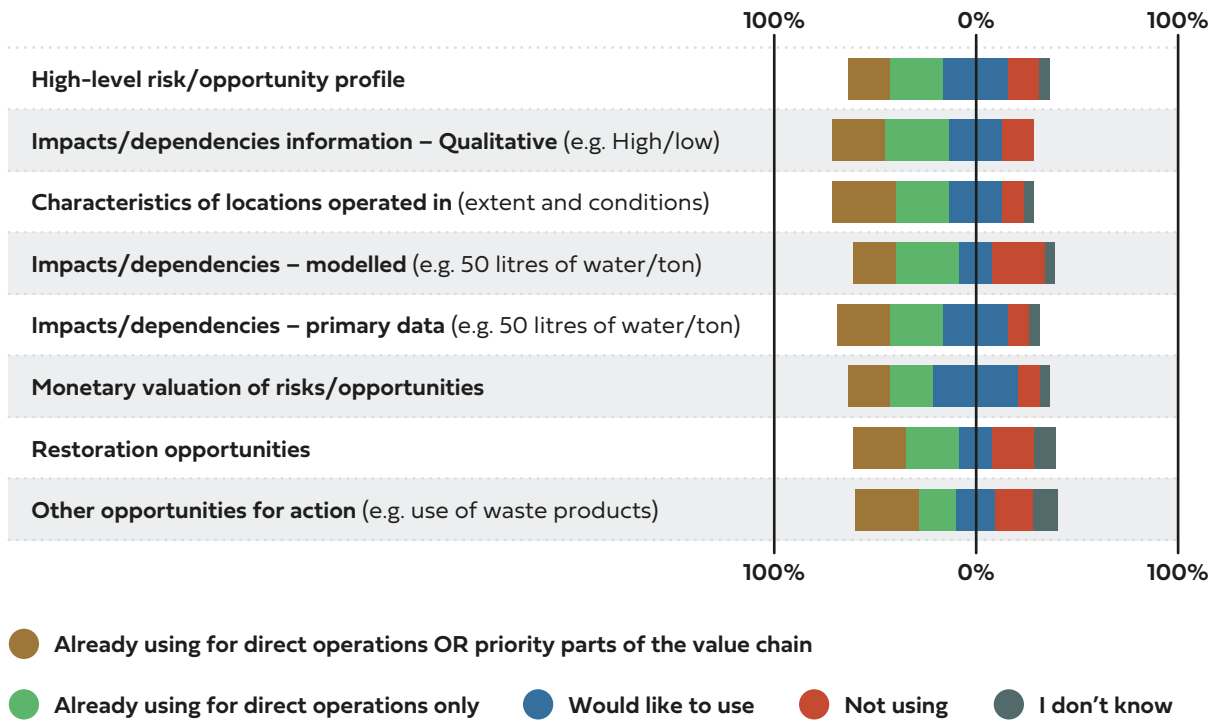
**Answers from C-suite, board, directors**



**Figure 7: Survey answers from sustainability experts on the categories of data used for DIROs**

What categories of data are you using for nature-related issues (DIROs) within your direct operations and/or priority parts of your value chain?

**Answers from sustainability experts**



“Our challenge is not data collection or analysis, but actually what to do with data and how to translate it into meaningful change – turning insights into practical, actionable goals that drive measurable progress.”

(Nature manager, Manufacturing company)

## Low use but significant interest in NCAA

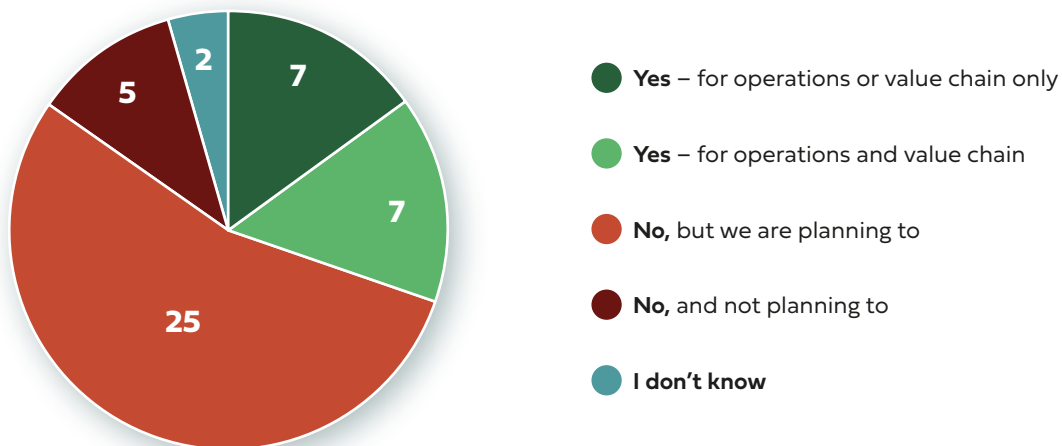
Given the focus of A-Track on NCAA, two survey questions assessed the current uptake of biodiversity footprints and natural capital accounts as typical types of assessments that fall under this category.

- While almost one-third of responders already estimate the **biodiversity footprints** of their company's operations and/or value chains, around half indicated that they are planning to do so (*see Figure 8*).
- There is less maturity in the use of **natural capital accounts**, as fewer than one-fifth of respondents have or are building one in their company. However, again the interest is high, with around 40% interested in developing a natural capital account (*see Figure 9*).

The interest in applying NCAA approaches is an opportunity for A-Track partners and other practitioners in the natural capital space to support companies, especially in their efforts to communicate more effectively with other functions and make the case for action.

**Figure 8: Survey answers on estimating biodiversity footprints in company operations and/or value chains**

Has your company estimated the biodiversity footprints of your operations and value chains?



**Figure 9: Survey answers on building natural capital accounts in the company**

Has your company built or is currently building Natural Capital accounts?



## Lack of practical support to operationalise nature strategies

Both the responses to the surveys open questions and to the interview questions revealed that business leaders are eager to operationalise nature strategies but face difficulties bridging the gap between frameworks and actionable steps.

They lack clarity on how to answer key questions that would support strategy development and implementation, such as:

- 1 What actions create real impact?
- 2 How do science and business align in a practical, nature-focused approach?
- 3 How can goals for nature be effectively communicated and implemented in the organisation?

Similarly, the issues they face as they expand and grow included:

- embedding nature strategies throughout the organisation;
- expanding nature projects across value chains;
- prioritising high-impact actions and tracking measurable benefits for nature.

Indeed, a “pioneer gap” exists, whereby actionable guidance is not yet available to a greater number of leading companies, such as to implement strategic actions into specific decisions, including integrating them into the business model.



“At this level, we don’t lack awareness or will – our challenges are more nuanced, like scaling projects and measuring progress.”

(Senior leader, *Consumer Goods company*)



“We don’t need additional frameworks or guidance; we need actionable support to operationalise nature strategies.”

(Nature manager, *Manufacturing company*)

When asked what support they further need to engage with key functions, the sustainability managers answered they would appreciate more “strategy to action” support, including:

- case studies and practical examples;
- improved clarity and coherence of the existing guidance, enriched with summaries and methodologies targeted to businesses;
- communication materials to support buy-in;
- tips for integrating nature-related risks into the climate strategy;
- more information on the financial aspects of nature-related risks and opportunities (including budgeting guidance and how to factor in the cost of a net-positive impact/biodiversity restoration).

## 4 **Way forward:** Coordinating efforts for business capacity building on nature

The task of making businesses aware of the imperative to address nature loss is urgent. Many organisations, such as academia, NGOs and business networks, are already working to ease and accelerate business action on nature. Collectively, they form part of a “knowledge community” that is serving businesses across the globe. Multi-stakeholder collaboration can offer coherent support to businesses, including capacity building, policy updates and the alignment of frameworks and business guidance.

**The insights below aim to offer inspiration and direction to other organisations working on the business and nature agenda.**

### **Challenging A-Track assumptions and building better approaches**

The A-Track Needs Assessment survey helped uncover key challenges businesses face to integrate nature’s value into decision-making and tested our A-Track project assumptions. We invite the knowledge community to reflect on how these insights may test their own assumptions.

#### **Assumption 1: *Natural capital approaches and footprinting enable business transformation.***

While these methods effectively raise awareness of the risks and operational issues, evidence of their use for deep business transformation remains limited. To unlock their full potential, natural capital approaches must be paired with a clear change agenda and strong leadership support.

**Assumption 2: Targeted functions are aware of and willing to use natural capital approaches.**

Survey responses revealed limited engagement from functions outside sustainability and senior management. This shows that mainstreaming nature-related issues requires a broader focus on **decision-making contexts** rather than on individual functions. A “functions filter” will remain for tailored outreach, but decision-making as a whole will guide our efforts.

## Key insights and opportunities beyond A-Track

### The A-Track approach to capacity building

Companies at the beginning of their nature journey should understand “what nature means for business” and “why nature is important.” At this stage, high-level introductory content is needed to **onboard** them on the journey without yet going into detailed specifics.

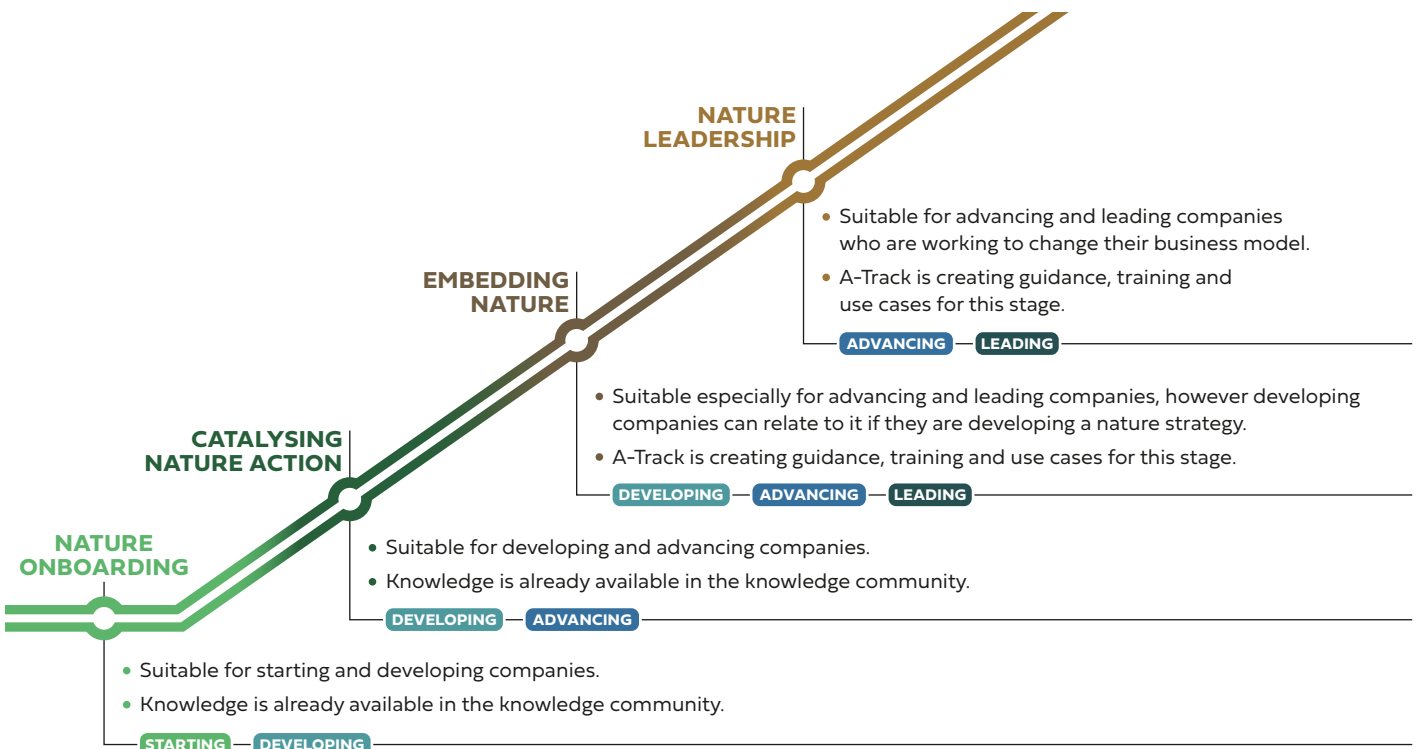
Companies starting to advance on their journey need more nuanced support, for example on how to develop first assessments or how to set initial targets and strategies to address priority impacts and dependencies. *As detailed in Figure 10*, to support businesses in this stage, specific content will be curated from existing resources, including Business for Nature’s It’s Now for Nature campaign and TNFD’s white label training materials.

As companies then start embedding nature strategies into their company decision-making, we will draw on existing resources related to transition plans and fill gaps related to more advanced assessments as applied in operational and financing decisions.

Ultimately, companies need to transform their business models. This is a newer area, so we will work to build on the latest academic literature to help identify how companies can start to shift business models away from risk-based approaches toward the stewardship of nature.

Figure 10 sets out how capacity-building support will be tailored throughout the A-Track project, either by curating existing resources (where possible) or by creating novel resources to fill the gaps, especially at the more advanced levels of maturity.

**Figure 10: The A-Track user journey to support businesses to integrate nature into their decision-making**  
 Source: A-Track – with concept and design realisation by Oppla & WBCSD





## 1 Leverage existing resources to accelerate awareness-raising

Business leaders mentioned that they do not lack guidance or frameworks; rather, they would appreciate practical support to raise awareness and embed nature strategies into their corporate decision-making. Therefore, support from the knowledge community should be targeted and tailored to the individuals who are making decisions, to their level of understanding and expertise, as well as to their sector and the type of decision.

### **A-Track will:**

- curate resources from trusted partners, while aiming to accelerate learning at all levels of maturity;
- work with leading companies and partners to develop new resources, including cross-functional targeted training (for procurement, finance and operations, among others) to support advanced decision-making as well as offer a mechanism to develop the pipeline of companies at the earlier stages of maturity on nature.

## 2 Close the “pioneer gap” through collaboration

Leading companies face a lack of actionable, sector-specific support as they integrate nature into their climate and sustainability strategies.

### **A-Track will:**

- engage NGOs, governments and academics to co-develop solutions and share best practices;
- provide tailored “how-to” case studies and interpretations of existing frameworks to bridge this gap;
- highlight overlaps between climate, equity and nature to support integrated action.

## 3 Align nature with business realities

Effective support must align with tangible business challenges. Companies need guidance on implementing nature strategies in real-world contexts, with an emphasis on change management and incorporating business realities, such as needs for increasing internal support, developing budgets and finance, and responding to business opportunities. Framing support in business-relevant language and offering leadership-focused tools will be critical.

### **A-Track will:**

- improve data infrastructure by collaborating on open-access tools that simplify decision-making;
- build the business case by showing the return on investment of nature-positive strategies through sector-specific models and examples.



## Final call to action

While the above insights were initially targeted primarily at A-Track partners, they are also useful to others in the business and nature knowledge community to collectively support businesses to accelerate their contributions to halting and reversing nature loss.

We invite you to consider how these insights can be integrated into your own capacity-building programs. If you are already addressing some of the challenge areas and/or would like to work with us to implement the resources, please contact [info@a-track.com](mailto:info@a-track.com).



# Annex 1: Glossary

**Biodiversity:** A subset of nature, the variability among living organisms from all sources, including, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part. It includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

**Biodiversity loss:** The decline in the number, genetic variability and variety of species, and the biological communities in a given area. This loss in the variety of life can lead to a breakdown in the functioning of the ecosystem where decline has happened.

**Capitals approach:** When the value of the impacts and dependencies on capital stocks (e.g. natural, human, social and produced capital) are taken into account to inform decision-making<sup>15</sup> ([Capitals Coalition, 2021](#)).

**Ecosystem services:** The contributions of nature to human well-being. These include provisioning services, which are material outputs from ecosystems including food and water; regulation and maintenance services, which are the less-direct benefits, such as flow regulation and water purification; and cultural services, which include the tangible recreational uses (e.g. kayaking, fishing, and walking along a river) as well as the less-tangible benefits, such as aesthetic or spiritual benefits as well as research and educational values.

**Environmentally harmful subsidies:** Subsidies or incentives that unintentionally encourage unsustainable production or carbon-intensive consumption, the depletion of natural resources or the degradation of global ecosystems.

**Natural capital:** The stock of renewable and non-renewable natural resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people.

**Natural capital accounting:** The compilation of consistent and comparable data on natural capital and the flow of services generated, using an accounting approach to show the contribution of the environment to the economy or business and the impact of the economy or business on the environment<sup>16</sup> ([European Commission Eurostat, 2021](#)).

**Natural capital assessment:** The process of measuring and valuing relevant (“material”) natural capital impacts and/or dependencies, using appropriate methods.

**Nature:** All elements of the natural environment, including the interdependence of abiotic or non-living elements (e.g. climate, soil, water, air) and biotic or living elements (e.g. the biodiversity of all living things, including terrestrial life, freshwater, marine life and soil) at the level of ecosystem, species and genes.

**Nature positive:** A global goal to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 so that nature is restored and regenerated rather than declining. It refers to outcomes that are net positive for biodiversity, directly and measurably increasing in the health, abundance, diversity and resilience of species, ecosystems and processes. For biodiversity, the global goal is to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030; expressed as nature positive by 2030. This is defined as codified in the mission of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

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***A-Track is a four-year, €11 million project that will accelerate action for nature by business, financial institutions and government.***

A-Track brings together leading thought leaders and practitioners who have been driving change in the measurement and valuation of natural capital and biodiversity in business, finance and government.

Partners have led the development or implementation of guidelines and standards for measurement of nature impacts and dependencies for improved decision-making, including: biodiversity footprinting, natural capital assessment and accounting, and business models and finance that contribute to nature positive outcomes.

Find out more at: [a-track.info](https://a-track.info)

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