

Should Companies Mitigate Their Impacts On Nature?

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Should companies mitigate their impacts on nature? The short answer, of course, is yes.

On this point, most of the participants in a two-day biodiversity conference opening today in London would agree. The conference is titled “**To No Net Loss of Biodiversity and Beyond,**” and bills itself as “the first global conference on approaches to avoid, minimise, restore, and offset biodiversity loss.”

Most encouragingly, a large number of key players from the public, private and NGO sectors are participating and it has the support of the following sustainability leaders:

- The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, makes clear that “Adopting a no net loss approach in a responsible manner, including respect for the rights of indigenous and local communities, can help countries and companies achieve conservation and economic development goals.”
- IUCN’s Director General, Julia Marton-Lefèvre, explains that “IUCN firmly believes that society must urgently find better ways to avoid, reduce, and minimise negative impacts on the environment to ultimately deliver positive outcomes to both nature and people.”
- WBCSD’s President, Peter Bakker, states that “Achieving no net loss is a bold ambition and an appropriate goal for any business that is looking to drive positive change that is aligned with long-term economic, social and environmental resilience and well-being.”



Yes, companies should aim to mitigate their impacts on nature which in the language of this conference means achieving no net loss of biodiversity. In this respect, the conference is exploring the adoption of a **Mitigation Hierarchy** which includes:

- **Avoiding** creating impacts where possible through careful of infrastructure
- **Minimising** a company’s operational footprint on the natural environment
- **Rehabilitating or Restoring** degraded landscapes following construction phases
- **Compensating or Offsetting** adverse impacts on nature that cannot be avoided

How? Some of the sessions of the conference are discussing available tools for applying the mitigation hierarchy including the following:

- IFC Performance Standard 6 on Biodiversity
- Verified Conservation Areas (VCA) Platform
- BBOP Biodiversity Offset Standard and Toolkit
- LIFE Certification

The conference is also addressing who and why – who should be mitigating impacts on nature and why should they? As well, it is addressing the critical question of financing. Who can and should pay for biodiversity mitigation? Hence, it is very good to see several companies in the conference programme including Athelia Ecosphere, Biotope, CDC Biodiversité, Credit Suisse, the Environment Bank, Golder Associates, Shell, and Total.

By the end of the conference, it will most interesting to see what next steps are proposed. In the meantime, more information on the conference, including live webcasts, can be found at:

<http://bbop.forest-trends.org/events/no-net-loss/>.

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