



Wellbeing of rural communities

H. Wellbeing of rural communities

Land and forest resources represent not only a source of food and shelter for rural communities, but are also the basis for their social, cultural, and religious practices, and a core factor in local economic growth (FAO, 2012). As the livelihoods of the rural poor are based on secure and equitable access to and control over these resources, local communities can be condemned to hunger and poverty if they lose their tenure rights to their homes, land, and forests (FAO, 2012 and 2014). Furthermore, the participation of local communities is essential for the success of sustainable management and conservation initiatives (Wali, Alvira, Tallman, Ravikumar & Macedo, 2017).

During the last decades, and in a context of rising global populations, increasing living standards, rising commodity prices, global trade, and the use of food crops as biofuels, unsustainable agricultural practices coupled with weak governance of land and natural resources and lack of secure land tenure have placed heavy pressure on farmlands and forests. Ill-regulated land acquisition and expansion of the agricultural frontier have also become a major problem in many developing countries, posing a major threat to food security, sustainable natural resource management and local livelihoods. Land and resource access pressure have triggered land conflicts and human rights abuses of marginalized social groups, such as indigenous peoples, other customary landowners, women, lower caste people, and ethnic minorities (FAO, 2014).

Based on the concepts of legitimate land use rights, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), community rights, and respect of socially, culturally, biologically, environmentally, and religiously important areas, SAN proposes a series of best practices that:

- require production units to demonstrate legitimate land use rights;
- respect areas of social, cultural, biological, environmental, and religious importance to the local communities;
- apply FPIC processes to obtain community agreement before initiating activities that may diminish land and resource use rights or collective interest of communities;
- encourage effective communication between the agricultural operations management and local communities;
- identify potentially affected communities and follow up on their complaints; and
- encourage agricultural operations to provide training opportunities to community members, give preference to local providers; and
- offer resources and support to community efforts, to boost local development.

The Sustainable Agriculture Framework is designed to ensure that agriculture and livestock operations fully respect the rights of local communities, secure favorable and sustainable livelihoods and divert pressure away from areas that are fundamental for local livelihoods or have SAN higher conservation values.

H.1. Sustainability goal: Protection of communities' rights

Expected outcome	ID	Performance Indicators /Best practices
Farming and indigenous communities' rights to use their land and resources, are fully respected.	H101	Operations have a legitimate right to use the land and resources within their scope; and demonstrate it by ownership, leasehold, or other legal documents or by demonstration of traditional or community use rights.
	H102	Operations demonstrate that right to use the land is not legally disputed by current or former residents or local communities, including in relation to past dispossession or forced abandonment. In the event of land conflict, operations demonstrate legitimate land use right if a conflict resolution process has been implemented, documented, and accepted by the affected parties.
	H103	Neighbors, workers, and representatives of neighboring communities confirm that the operations' infrastructure and activities respect the community's cultural, religious, and social areas and activities.
	H104	Operations implement and document an FPIC procedure to reach community consent before initiating any activity that diminishes the land and resource use rights or collective communities' interest.
	H105	Communities and local stakeholders verify the results of the operations' FPIC procedures.
	H106	If community rights are diminished or there is a major impact on the collective interests of communities, operations negotiate a compensation commensurate with the loss.
	H107	If important social, environmental, cultural, or religious sites are found within the operations' scope, operations cooperate with competent authorities and take steps to prevent, reduce and control the impacts on these sites.

H.2. Sustainability goal: Support to local communities

Outcomes	ID	Performance Indicators /Best practices
Operations support the development of local communities and reduce potential negative impacts of their activities into the local livelihoods.	H201	Operations identify nearby communities potentially affected by their activities, and to establish effective communication mechanisms with community leaders and local authorities.
	H202	Operations receive, address, and follow up on community complaints that are accessible to and understood by community members according to their literacy levels and language.
	H203	Operations give preference to local service providers, if available and economically feasible.
	H204	Operations supply resources and labor or contribute in some other way to the economic development of the surrounding communities.
	H205	Operations protect and conserve the natural and cultural resources shared with local communities.