

Earthworm /Rurality

PUTTING THE FARMER AT THE HEART OF SOCIETY



Global supply chains
driving entrepreneurial
and resilient farming
communities and
creating value for all



WHAT IS RURALITY?

Rurality is an Earthworm Foundation (EF) programme launched in 2015 to drive transformation and innovation at the farmer level. Our mission is to empower farmers to create, tap into and own the mechanisms that will strengthen their resilience and improve their livelihoods.

Rurality works with independent farmers who we understand as entrepreneurial small business owners with innovative ideas, a business vision and the will to invest in their farm. These independent, small farming businesses contribute a significant percentage of raw materials to nearly all commodity supply chains, and represent a large percentage of the world's agricultural work force.

EF members – multinational corporations with complex global supply chains – have committed to ridding their supply chains of deforestation and labour and community exploitation, and promoting farmers' inclusion. Rurality enables such corporations to meet their commitments while creating positive impact at the farmer level.

Rurality is built around four goals to build strong and fruitful relationships along the supply chain, improve farmers livelihood and social conditions, protect the environment and scale-up successful approaches.

WHY RURALITY?

Because everyone in the supply chain benefits from connected, entrepreneurial, and resilient farmers

By 2050, global food demand is expected to increase by over 50%, while various factors like climate change and fertilizer use deplete arable land on an unprecedented rate. Without farmers, how will we meet this demand? Farmers produce the raw materials that make their way into our homes. Yet, their value is often not acknowledged by industry and society.

Being a successful farmer requires entrepreneurial skills, including experience and knowledge in agriculture, management and negotiation, as well as people skills and the ability to innovate. Rurality aims to connect farmers to tools, knowledge and information that can strengthen both their economic position and the stability of the supply chain.

Farmers and the companies they supply will enjoy greater productivity, increased sustainability, stronger relationships, and responsible business practices. Collaboration and transparency along the supply chain will increase the involvement and the commitment to deliver quality products.

Because we have the opportunity to transform the global agricultural ecosystem

Global commodities markets continue to not account accurately for externalities from agriculture, despite increasing evidence of irreversible impacts and growing consumer demand to change business practices. Rurality believes we can do better.

We believe the basis of a prosperous future lies in valuing the way commodities are produced. It is the connection between farmers, producers and consumers through commodities markets which provides the fertile ground to incentivize true transformation of behavior and to focus on healthy farms, healthy soils and healthy consumer goods. Rurality aims to bring those key stakeholders together to forge the kind of partnerships that make change happen.

Because farming communities play an integral role in safeguarding key ecosystems

Agriculture is the world's leading cause of deforestation, especially in the fertile tropics and subtropics where large-scale commercial agriculture accounts for 40% and local and subsistence agriculture for 33% of deforestation.

Forests are vulnerable to small-scale farms because farmers are vulnerable to environmental and economic shocks, and resort to deforestation to make up for negative livelihood impacts. Yet, farmers possess a precious pool of knowledge, passed on from generation to generation, that can help agriculture adapt to changing climates or better coexist with fragile ecosystems. Rurality intends to harness this knowledge, putting farmers in their rightful position at the heart of the supply chain, to achieve EF and its members' shared vision of a world that works better for people and nature.

OUR STRATEGY



Goal 1

Strong and fruitful relationships between farmers, first buyers, and other key stakeholders along the supply chain

The relationship between farmers and buyers (mills or middlemen) is often interrupted or reduced to a 'pick-up and go' strategy. This limits relevant information and network exchanges that can be a source of innovation to grow more profitable farming business.

Fixing this relationship to the market can create resilience and value for all. For this Rurality works with farmers, mills, factories and traders to increase product traceability, transparency, trust, solidarity and efficiency in their interactions.

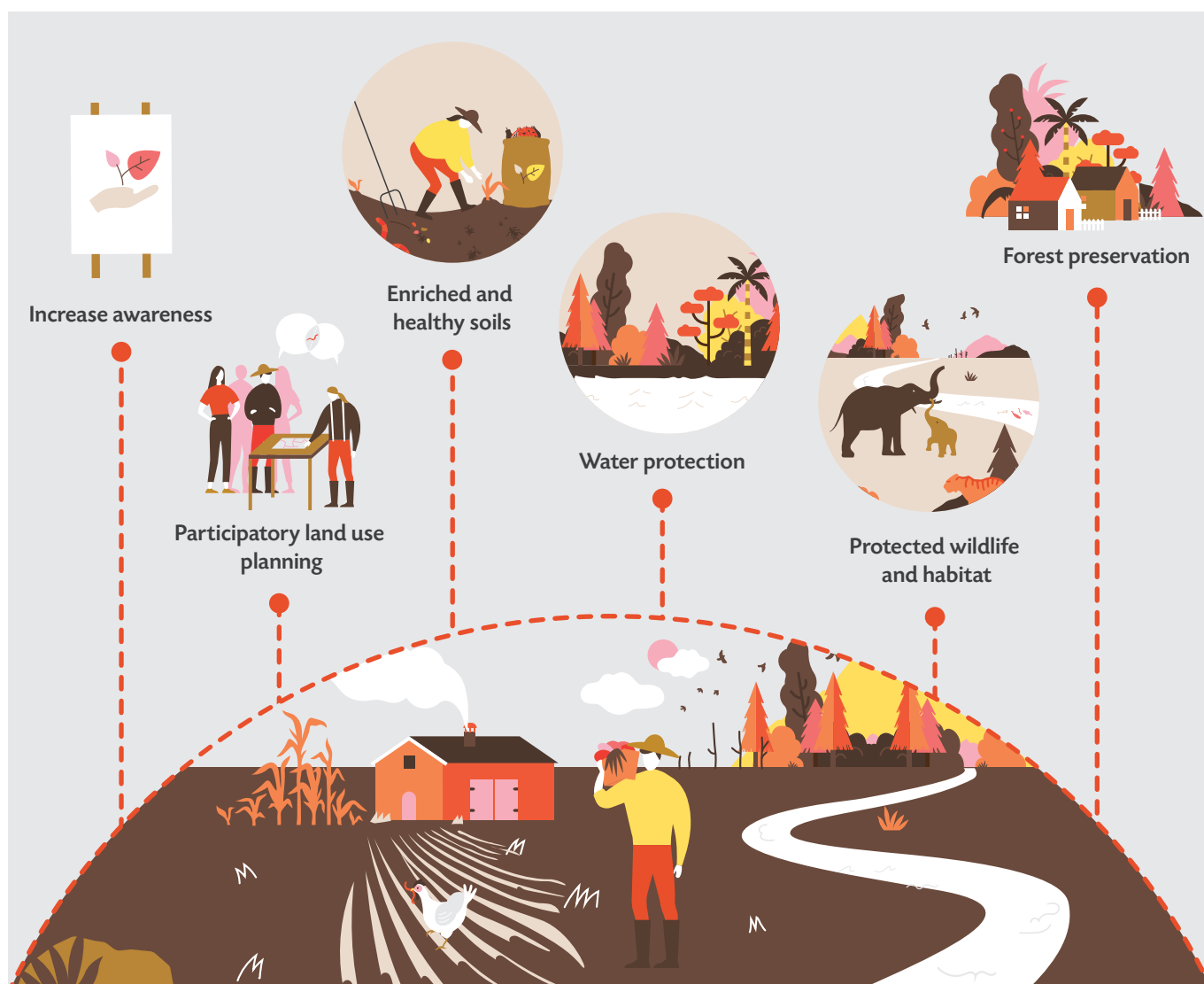


Goal 2

Farmers with improved livelihoods and social conditions

Rurality defines resilience as “the capacity to adapt positively to adverse changes and challenges.” In this context, Rurality seeks to re-center agriculture development narratives on the farmers’ and farmer families’ capacity to better their livelihoods.

Rurality and their partners aim to empower farmers to become stronger and more successful entrepreneurs, capable of making their own choices for prosperous and stable farming businesses. This includes taking up responsibility of safe working conditions for themselves, their families and workers as well as stewardship over the local environment. It also includes increased value creation from cash crops, diversification of products and stable access to food. There is an unlimited range of innovations, including from farmers themselves, which Rurality aims to identify and incorporate into all its activities.



Goal 3

Farming communities maintain and enhance the quality of their natural environment and key habitat areas

Small farming businesses make up a significant percentage of commodity supply chains. Their contribution to environmental degradation and deforestation should not be ignored. But, this makes them also a key partner in reducing environmental pressures and conserving important ecosystems.

By involving small farming businesses in decisions and actions on environmental protection, Rurality can deliver a major piece of companies' commitments to preserve forests and peatlands. Rurality provides opportunities for livelihood improvements that do not need to come at the expense of the environment and in particular forests.



Shared values, strong partnership,
joint implementation



Measured and
communicated impacts



Innovative scalable solutions



Visibility and outreach



Goal 4

Rurality approach and solutions adopted at scale

The continuous growth and outreach of Rurality activities have the ambitious goal to inspire transformation throughout entire industries and across landscapes. Through our approach, connections on the ground and jointly developed innovations, we seek to inspire not only immediate stakeholders that collaborate directly with us, but also our wider network of industry actors.

For this to happen, communication of success and failure is key. The implementation of participative action plans with all key stakeholders, undertaken during the transformation phase, provides useful lessons and important opportunities for uptake and scale up. Active participation and contribution from immediate stakeholders is promoted at all times.

OUR APPROACH

Every experience is unique! This is why Rurality takes the time to understand the local context and the real challenges faced by farmers.



THE SPIRIT OF RURALITY

We work with farmers, develop their trust and earn their respect

We respect the nobility of farming and farm products

We acknowledge that being a farmer is hard work, takes courage, and requires tough decisions

We have a connection with the food that we eat; with where it comes from and how it is produced

We enjoy being in the country; we do not ascribe to the fly in – fly out model

We enjoy getting our hands dirty

We share a connection with farming, to the land

We are pragmatic and strive to co-create solutions with farmers

We are open-minded; we listen first, ask questions second, and speak last

We do not teach; we learn from and share knowledge with farmers

We are a sound board for farmers, supporting them to find their own answers

We do not tell farmers what they should do, we exchange and inspire

We are partners, not consultants

We act as a bridge for farmers, connecting them to peers and stakeholders, empowering farmers to define their own journey

We see nature as the foundation of our existence; it should be respected and given space to thrive

We respect culture, diversity, gender and independence

We speak up to tackle challenges and bring about positive change

We embody and share Earthworm values with those we engage

We bring value to supply chains for farmers and businesses

Entrepreneurs are our source of inspiration.

