

# Rurality

*Putting the farmer at the heart of society*

Rurality is an Earthworm 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.

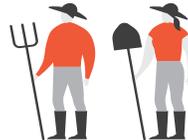
We are working in 11 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, with 17 activities projects spanning 6 commodities. We've supported over 1,500 farmers and collaborate with over 60 partners.

## Snapshot of our work



### Malaysia

Rurality inspired a collaboration between a farmers' organisation, the local wildlife department, local NGOs and research centres to set up an elephant monitoring system that allows to preserve wildlife corridors and prevent elephant encroachments and crop loss on small-holder land.



### Thailand

To strengthen rubber farmers' resilience, Rurality initiated diversification activities, focusing on food crops and livestock. So far, 160 farmers have embarked on new and additional farming activities.



### Ivory Coast

Rurality engaged with farmers, cooperative and mills to establish an oil palm fruits collection schedule that would optimise use of trucks, reducing the risk of economic losses due to poor coordination.

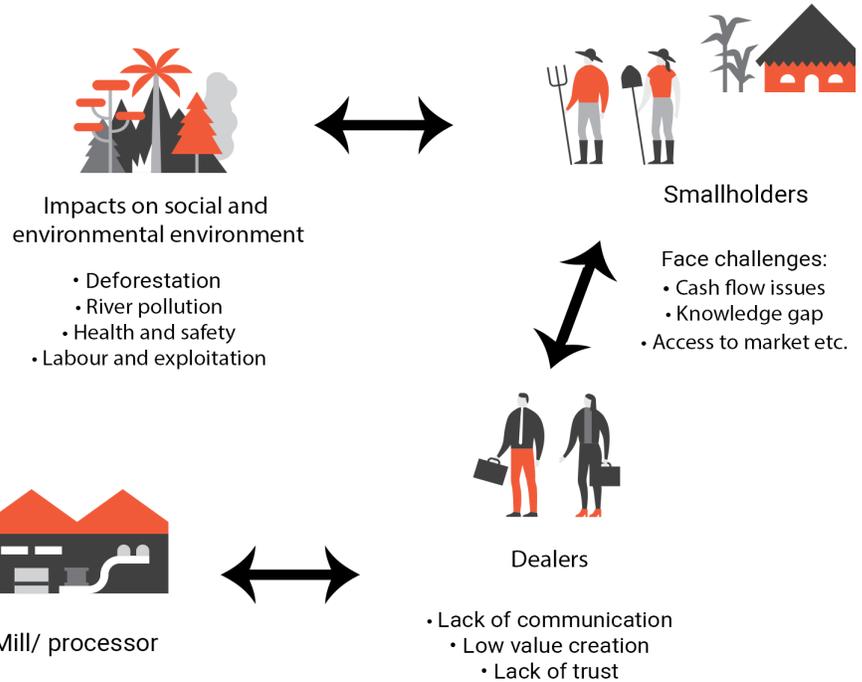


We work with independent farmers who we understand as entrepreneurial small business owners with innovative ideas, a business vision and the potential to profoundly and positively impact the human and natural ecosystems surrounding them. These independent, small farming businesses contribute a significant percentage of raw materials to nearly all commodity supply chains, and represent a large percentage of the world's agricultural work force.

## The challenges we are addressing:

### • Lack of recognition:

Close to 2 billion people around the world live and work on small farms, often family-run. They provide a significant input to the world supply of food crops. The value and contribution of smallholder farmers to societies and industries is often not recognised and neither are the problems faced by these farmers. For the majority among them, it is a daily struggle to earn enough income to support their families.



### • Environmental protection:

Often unintentionally, these farmers contribute to environmental degradation, like deforestation and the overuse of chemical substances. On a regional scale, this results in the degradation of entire landscapes through the action of multiple stakeholders, contributing to or even causing social conflicts among local communities.

### • Poor business connections:

First buyers collect the fruits, seeds or grains but invest little effort in the development of a business relationship. As a result, farmers are lacking information and networks, face isolation and limitations to grow a more profitable farming business.

## Our strategy

1. Create strong and fruitful relationships between farmers, first buyers and mills
2. Improve livelihoods and social conditions at farmer and village level
3. Support farmers to maintain and enhance the quality of their natural environment
4. Scale-up successful approaches through supply chain connections

Building on the Earthworm Foundation traceability work, Rurality zooms into the local context to find the right partners (smallholders, first buyers, mills, middlemen). A Rural Dynamic Diagnostic allows to understand the local circumstances as well as strengths and weaknesses of stakeholders. A joint participative action plan kick-starts the transformation process.

Rurality takes the engagement with smallholders one step further by developing a holistic approach of the farm business; by collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders including cooperatives, local government and agencies, and; by identifying innovative solutions with business potential. The continuous growth and outreach of Rurality activities have the ambitious goal to inspire transformation throughout entire the agro-industrial sector.

## Our approach

- **We have a business-minded approach.**

Solutions need to make economic sense to be self-sustaining in time. At the same time, they need to carry ambitious environmental and social values. Our experience showed us that this apparently difficult equation can be solved through innovation which businesses do all the time to adapt to their changing environment.

- **We work with the supply chain.**

Farms are businesses who sell produce to clients. We believe that recognising this interdependence by working with both farmers and their clients is key to Rurality's approach.

- **We don't believe in one size fits all solutions.**

We approach every situation as a unique one, with its cultural, social and economic specificity. Only by analysing it entirely and openly can we design with the stakeholders what the right solution might look like.

- **We work in the field.**

We believe that it is only by being close to the issues, alongside farmers and stakeholders that we can understand their perception of reality and work together from there to jointly create innovation.

- **Empirical and practical.**

We believe that it is only by testing out new ideas that they can prove – or not, to be of value. Being practical and empirical is our goal to bring innovation to life and scale it up when and where possible.



## About Earthworm Foundation

Earthworm Foundation is an impact-driven, non-profit organisation registered as a Swiss Foundation with 20-years of experience creating conditions for people and nature to thrive. We envision a global society that respects itself and the needs of nature because, ultimately, they are one and the same. We believe in a global economy that is not built on destruction but on equilibrium and innovation, where all can thrive and contribute to the betterment of our social, environmental and economic state.