

A vibrant green landscape of terraced tea plantations in Kenya. The hills are covered in rows of tea bushes, with a winding road visible in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

# How we're making a difference in the South West Mau Forest in Kenya



the sustainable  
trade initiative

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## To date, IDH has been able to:

- ✓ Bring together key stakeholders in a multi-stakeholder coalition to protect the forest.
- ✓ Secure private sector commitment and investment in the program.
- ✓ Set-up an aerial surveillance scheme with coalition members, start a livestock intensification project with the communities around the North Eastern Boundary of the South West Mau Forest, raise community awareness on forest protection, and prepare for a game proof electric fence to reduce human wildlife conflict and improve forest management.

## The challenge

In the recent decades, more than 25 per cent of the South West Mau forest has been either cut down or degraded as a result of growing populations, livestock overgrazing, charcoal burning, and timber extraction. Unsustainable livestock grazing poses the biggest threat, as more than 24,000 heads of livestock graze illegally (grazing in the forest is mostly illegal), putting industry production and community livelihoods at risk.

## Our approach

IDH convenes key actors from the tea, hydropower and timber industry, whose core business depends on the sustained presence of forest, to work together with the public sector to protect the South-West Mau forest. By leveraging private sector resources (finances, expertise and leadership), as well as aligning public and private sector interests, we aim to catalyze landscape investments towards forest conservation, along with the improvement of smallholder livelihoods among surrounding communities.

- **60,000 hectares of the South West Mau forest protected**
- **Restoration of at least 3,000 hectares of previously degraded land**
- **Natural regeneration of at least 10,000 hectares of previously degraded land**

[Read more on our South West Mau Forest program](#)

## Improving Landscape Governance

Prior to IDH's intervention, coordination among different stakeholders in the region was lacking and partnerships were non-existent. With many different vested interests in the landscape, it was not easy for stakeholders to align, especially owing to the political sensitivities around the South West Mau forest.

Since 2014, we have played a profound role as neutral convener bringing stakeholders together. To date, the program has built a strong coalition comprising county governments and companies from the tea, energy, and timber sector, as well as a range of civil society and knowledge institutions.

The coalition works through a governance model that has a board, a secretariat (currently IDH), and technical working groups. Now, key landscape actors engage in dialogue and agree on intervention strategies, such as the development of a landscape action plan and aerial surveillance flights.



**“In the last two years, we have been successful in aligning key stakeholders of the South West Mau forest. This was possible because some pre-conditions for stakeholder cooperation were already in place when we started: the private sector had a business case to protect, there was no conflict with the community, the political sensitivities surrounding the forest were less pronounced than before, and, importantly, most stakeholders already agreed on the need to conserve the South West Mau.”**

IDH

**“A multi-stakeholder coalition] might have happened at a later stage. We knew the South West Mau forest could be the next potential target, but we did not have yet the capacity to move in.”**

NGO

**“The government has tried to conserve and convene but it was too politicized. IDH was needed as a neutral convener.”**

Community

**“The multi-stakeholder coalition convened by IDH came at the right time to bring [all stakeholders] together.”**

Public sector/Government

### Output

Support to a multi-stakeholder coalition

### Outcome

Regulatory framework and enforcement capacity strengthened and improved land-use planning

### Impact

Governance structure in place to sustainably manage the South West Mau Forest

## Increasing Field-level Sustainability

For field-level results, we look at the on-the-ground effects of conservation and restoration in the South West Mau forest.

Through on-the-ground projects, such as tree enrichment planting and aerial surveillance flights, the landscape program set up by IDH helps to restore and protect the South West Mau forest — ensuring sustainable use of land, water, and natural resources to improve resilience to climate change and to secure strategic agricultural commodities such as tea.

With the exception of tree planting, on-the-ground projects of this nature began only recently in the South West Mau forest. As such, little evidence is yet available to show significant impact at field level.

However, the prognosis is positive for key projects recently started or currently under development — including livestock intensification for communities to reduce over-dependence on the forest for grazing, and the installation and maintenance of a fence and tea buffer zone as mechanisms for the Kenya Forest Service to control access to the forest and enforce forest laws. Through IDH, these interventions have been investigated extensively through feasibility studies and results show the effects were promising in other regions, and are very likely to help reduce deforestation in the South West Mau.



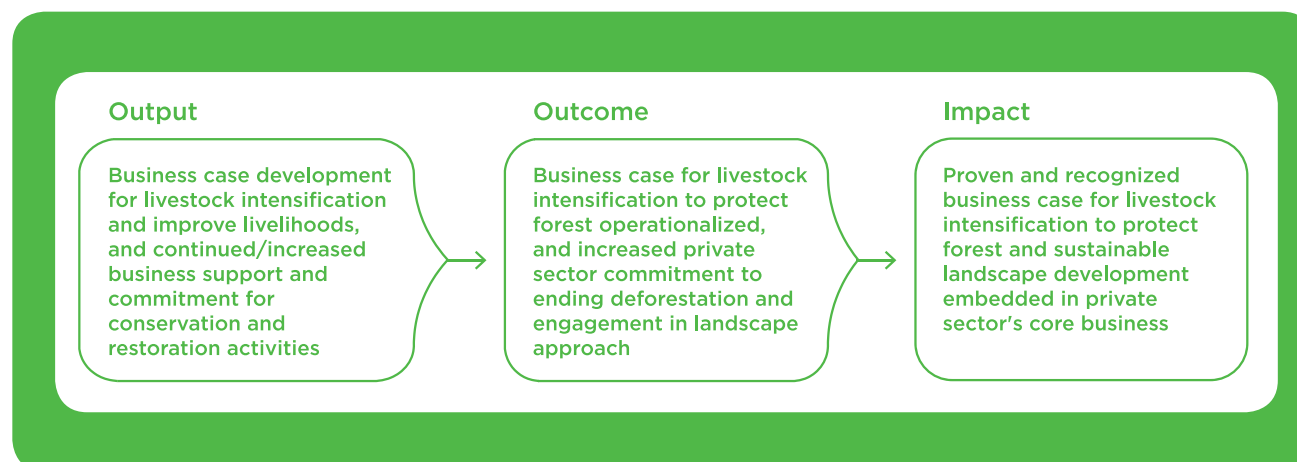
## Advancing Business Practices

In the South West Mau forest landscape, IDH leverages private sector resources to fund conservation and restoration projects. The private sector includes the tea, hydropower, and timber industries, who benefit greatly from the improved flow of ecosystem services (e.g. regulation of temperature, rainfall, humidity, biodiversity) provided by the forest.

Although the major tea companies attempted to initiate a union of different stakeholders to protect the forest, it was not until our landscape program began that the private sector was able to pool resources and collaborate with the non-private sector to establish a common strategic framework to reach bigger impact.

In terms of financing of interventions by the private sector, to date four of the companies have each committed to an annual contribution to projects.

Because of the multi-stakeholder coalition convened, the private sector has shifted from financing small-scale projects mainly confined to the tea value chain or forest areas close to their location, to greater investments beyond their immediate farms and factories. For instance, we and the private sector co-fund an aerial surveillance to fly regularly over the South West Mau forest to spot illegal activities (e.g. charcoal kilns, logging, cultivation, livestock). The private sector has also started to work with the local community on the rehabilitation of the forest and to help them find alternative livelihoods in order to reduce pressure on the forest.



**“The Mau forest is the lifeline of tea industry. Without it, there is no tea production in this area.”**

Private sector

**“We’ve introduced new projects we weren’t doing before. Aerial surveillance is one of the most important additions. We wouldn’t necessarily have done that on our own as a stakeholder.”**

Private sector

**“The private sector is getting braver [to act in terms of protecting an otherwise very politically sensitive landscape]. Usually, the private sector would not be able to provide [much leverage] in public institutions, but, thanks to IDH, because of the multi-stakeholder nature of IDH’s approach, this is much less the case.”**

Private sector

## Next steps

Despite the many successes — including establishing a legitimate stakeholder coalition, guaranteeing private sector participation in actively working towards protection of the South West Mau forest, and developing key interventions that will reduce deforestation — there are several challenges ahead.

## Establishing an official trust

It's important for the program to establish a formalized coalition to create shared responsibility and ownership among stakeholders. The multi-stakeholder coalition will run under a trust and has to lay down specific roles for all the members. Currently, IDH is able to convene stakeholders as a neutral actor in the landscape. The trust will be set up for the continuation of the program beyond funding cycles of current donors. It's foreseen that an endowment fund will be set up which can raise funds for and manage the South West Mau forest landscape program future activities, including long-term maintenance of the game proof electric fence.

## Overcoming illegal activities

There is a worrying lack of enforcement against illegal activities in the area. Stakeholders within the partnership agree that more should be done to enhance the capacities of local Kenya Forest Service and Kenya Wildlife Service teams who currently lack resources to intensify their work in the area. A dialogue with these partner institutes and with the national government of Kenya is ongoing. Furthermore we consider community inclusion key for the South West Mau forest landscape program to succeed in achieving its goals — to create shared responsibility, increase adoption of best forest management practices and enhance the opportunities for alternative livelihoods.

## Fostering private and public sector commitment

Moving forward, for the private sector to become even more involved, it is essential to implement projects that will generate real impact on the ground, together with all key stakeholders from the private and public sector, and civil society. In parallel, IDH must build long-term commitment from the public sector beyond election cycles and engage more with the counties leadership.