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REGENERATIVE PRODUCTION LANDSCAPE COLLABORATIVE

Launch of Madhya Pradesh Compacts

29 APRIL 2022

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh



Event Proceedings

Summary

Regenerative Production Landscape (RPL) Collaborative is an innovative jurisdictional model being implemented in Madhya Pradesh, India to foster agricultural ecosystems that conserve and enhance natural resources and build community resilience whilst enabling businesses to source responsibly. Originally founded by Laudes Foundation, IDH The Sustainable Trade Initiative and WWF India, the Collaborative aims to catalyze and scale a model where producers grow agri-commodities using natural and regenerative farming principles that restore natural resources and reduce emissions from farming systems; smallholder farmers and communities thrive through improved economic stability, enhanced livelihoods and greater participation in decision-making; and businesses source responsibly while creating inclusive supply chain relationships.

The RPL Collaborative will work towards the formation of two Compacts by 2026. A Compact is a local multi-stakeholder coalition in a sourcing region with an agreement to address sustainability challenges in a coordinated, time-bound, and resource-committed manner.

On 29 April 2022, multiple stakeholders who are committed to strengthening regenerative agriculture in the region came together to launch the Madhya Pradesh Compacts. This report captures the proceedings of the launch event.

Opening Remarks



Moderator: **Jasmer Dhingra,**
Senior Manager-Landscapes,
IDH The Sustainable Trade Initiative

Jasmer Dhingra opened the event by welcoming the participants and thanking them for their commitment towards building regenerative production landscapes to make agriculture more sustainable in the region. Mr. Ajit Kesari, unable to attend the event in person, sent a recorded message welcoming everybody to the event on behalf of the Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Mr. Kesari highlighted the State Government's commitment towards adopting the regenerative landscape approach to promote sustainable agricultural practices and improve the lives of smallholder farmers. The Madhya Pradesh Government prioritizes the promotion of organic production, and the regenerative approach is a significant step in this direction with its innovative approach, which involves multiple stakeholders. It is expected that the Compacts will lead to new innovations, ideas, processes, and linkages, thus setting a new framework for the government to scale organic agriculture.



Speaker: **Mr. Ajit Kesari**
Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Farmer Welfare and Agriculture, Government of Madhya Pradesh

From the Founders of the RPL Collaborative







Speakers:

Dr. Charu Jain
Senior Advocacy Manager, Materials, Laudes India LLP

Vidya Soundarajan
Director, Ecological Footprint, World Wild Fund (WWF)

Daan Wensing
CEO, IDH - The Sustainable Trade Initiative

> *"Landscape is one cohesive and coherent unit in existence. When the landscape exists as a single unit, it restores the balance between humans and nature."*
> *- Vidya Soundarajan*

Laudes Foundation, working towards creating a climate-positive and inclusive global economy in partnership with the government, aims to channel philanthropic capital, industry connections, and global expertise towards catalyzing systemic change. Dr. Charu Jain invited the representatives from industries and the financial sector present at the event to bring their expertise and strengths to the table to make the Collaborative more robust.

The foundation has funded multiple projects in the cotton growing areas of Madhya Pradesh with help from their implementing partner, WWF India, as well as from the relationships they have built over the years with governments, the private sector, and agricultural universities. In the second phase of the project, the focus is on modifying these business models to go beyond cotton and strengthening regenerative production landscapes. The Collaborative aims to holistically cover diverse areas rather than single crop commodities. This will have an impact on the whole region and lead to alliances with many new stakeholders. The Foundation envisions a landscape-sourcing model that is inherently regenerative and sustainable; which rewards the producers equitably. This model will create better businesses for farmers by connecting them to businesses and brands directly.

Adding to Dr. Jain's remarks, Vidya Soundarajan, Director, Ecological Footprint, WWF, emphasized that it is time to restore the balance between humans and nature, with a focus on wildlife, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems. Across the globe, agriculture often leads to large-scale felling of trees and unfavorable interference with the natural ecosystem. However, what is present in India is a forest-agriculture mosaic, which helps in ensuring the integrity of nature. The Regenerative Production Landscape Collaborative goes beyond just conservation and focuses on seeing how biodiversity can enrich agriculture.

Ms Soundarajan also spoke about the impact of climate change on agriculture in India. Agriculture is one of the most-affected sectors by climate change in India, and farmers are on the frontlines . There is an urgent need to build resilience of these communities so that their livelihoods can be future-proofed.

Ms. Soundarajan expressed gratitude for the support the WWF's ideas have garnered from the larger group, and said that it is great to see nature get its due share of attention in a farmer and civil society-led movement.

Daan Wensing, CEO at IDH, shared a recorded message. He stated that IDH partners with the pubic and private sector towards delivery of Sustainable Development Goals, unlocking investments, technology, innovation, capacity building and sourcing capacity. IDH has a strong track record of working with smallholders around the world, on issues of access to land, finance, markets so that farmers can prosper.

IDH also focuses on the nexus between smallholder agriculture and natural ecosystems to safeguard and restore natural environment and continue on the path of sustainable development. This is where regenerative agriculture models become critical, and integrate issues such as soil health, access to water, biodiversity and incomes. IDH is excited to build this work in India, with committed partners and ambitious targets. *"We hope that what we develop in Madhya Pradesh, will be scaled by partners in other regions, and vice versa – we look to bring in learnings from other geographies to strengthen our interventions in India."*



About the Regenerative Production Landscape Collaborative



> *"We cannot succeed if we only focus on one piece of the puzzle. The Collaborative brings a broad spectrum of stakeholders together to delineate and work on impact areas."*

Speaker:

Pramit Chanda

Global Director, Textiles & Manufacturing, IDH

Mr. Chanda pointed out that one doesn't need to go far to feel the impact of climate change; one only needs to step outside.

The key impact areas of RPL Collaborative are to improve soil health, improve smallholder farmer incomes, reduce greenhouse gases, provide producers with better access, preserve biodiversity, and protect the environment. The Collaborative is also committed to working towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The session touched upon what a Regenerative Landscape Collaborative would look like and how it would help farmers strike a balance between their income requirements and environmental considerations. The Collaborative aims to work holistically on-ground through sustainable supply chains and is forming the first Compact in Madhya Pradesh covering more than nine districts by 2026. The Collaborative aims to cover a multitude of crops and commodities as part of the value chain.

The Collaborative looks to bring together and collaborate with over 120,000 farmers, while aligning with Government priorities in the state. The Collaborative will bring 100,000 hectares of cropland under regenerative practices, and bring over 300,000 hectares under landscape governance.

IDH works using a Protection, Production, Inclusion (PPI) model . This approach is driven by a strong local and representative governance structure comprising of community, government, and markets, which ensures accountability to and of all key partners. This approach also looks to create market incentives by bringing local and global demand into the geography, and supporting the transition to regenerative farming through innovative and blended financing.

Developing Shared Goals for the RPL Collaborative Compacts in Madhya Pradesh



Speaker:

Dr. Sheetal Sharma

Scientist - Soil Science and Research Leader - Digital Tools and Big Data, CGIAR - IRRI

> *"There is no single solution. As we move forward and develop this Compact, a lot will change and we need to be agile."*

Dr. Sheetal Sharma spoke about the importance of using robust monitoring and evaluation systems to accelrate landscape goals. The Collaborative kicked off a baseline study to identify and evaluate agronomic practices, categorize the landscape based on needs and design a roadmap, create data informed interventions, and create learning loops for continuous reclaibration. With this aim, CGIAR-IRRI conducted the first socio-spatial biophysical assessment of the landscape. This assessment brought to light the ecologically sensitive nature of the area, which is home to two of the country's oldest wildlife reserves. This is also a topographically diverse region representing different cropping systems and climate patterns, which impact the income status of farmers. The findings point to scope for revitalizing the land and soil health through mosaic restoration.

Dr Sharma spoke about findings related to changes in land use and land cover; soil degradation resulting from heavy usage of chemical inputs, extensive tillage and low adoption of good agricultural practices; soil pH and nutrient composition; greenhouse gas emissions by crop and potential reduction through technology; water use efficiency; crop productivity; potential for biodiversity; farmer incomes and gender.

Key issues that emerged were the lack of access to information, training, and inputs. These aspects could be addressed as a result of the convergence between the multiple stakeholders of the Collaborative.

Dr Sheetal stated that a shared understanding of the landscape would lead to shared goals and interventions, shared convergence of resources, towards food and income security and a sustainable landscape. The full baseline report is available with the Collaborative, for those interested in knowing the findings in detail.



Launching the RPL Collborative Compacts in Madhya Pradesh



Speaker:

Ms. Preeti Maithil Nayak

IAS, Director, Farmer Welfare and Agriculture Development, Government of Madhya Pradesh

“There is now a need for a fresh approach to farming that looks beyond production and productivity and focuses on diversification. The Compact will help stakeholders focus on these issues.”

Addressing the gathering on behalf of the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Ms. Preeti Maithil Nayak shared that the State Government’s work had increased the area under paddy cultivation from 20 lakh hectares to 38 lakh hectares in the past year. The State has also doubled its summer crop area in the past two years. As a result, Madhya Pradesh has been the recipient of the Krishi Karman Award for seven consecutive years in recognition of the highest agricultural productivity in the country.

However, this has also led to an increase in the cost of procurement on the support price. So, the Government has launched the Madhya Pradesh Crop Diversification Promotion Scheme, to encourage adoption of organic farming area, protect the environment, biodiversity, reduce the government’s procurement at MSP, reducing dependency on import of pulses and oilseeds. The Government hopes to promote investment in agriculture and help farmers get maximum returns from the land they own.

Ms. Nayak’s address was followed by a lamp-lighting ceremony by the stakeholders to officially launch the Collaborative.





Fireside Chat with Compact Members

Role of the Private Sector in Scaling Regenerative Systems

Speakers:

Suhas Khandagale
Manager, Material Innovation & Strategy, H&M Group

Srinivasan Krishnamurthy
Material Development Lead, IKEA Group

Syamala Gowri Lingala
Manager - Sustainability, Jayanti Herbs & Spice

Dr. Susheel Sankhyan
Senior Manager Agro, PepsiCo india

Hemant Gaur
Promoter Director, Siddhivinayak Agri Processing Ltd.

Mayank Kaushik
Director Sustainability India & Sri Lanka, Inditex

Moderator:

Lakshmi Poti
Senior Programme Manager, Laudes Foundation

Ms. Lakshmi Poti opened the session by acknowledging the power of the Collaborative and that the representation of diverse industries at the gathering was reflective of the diversification that can help in scaling regenerative systems. Ms. Poti anchored the discussion by asking members of the chat their reason for joining the Collaborative.

H&M has been sourcing organic cotton from Madhya Pradesh for quite some time and sees a three-pronged benefit in working with a Compact. Firstly, it allows them to strike a balance between the impact and scale of production. Secondly, when sourcing organic cotton, there is always a need to look beyond certification and to build trust within the supply chain. These are aspects the Compact can help them achieve. Thirdly, as Mr. Suhas Khandagale said, H&M will benefit from the learnings that will arise from the collaborations within the Compact.

IKEA shared that the landscape approach aligns with their own sustainability strategy. Mr. Srinivasan Krishnamurthy explained that the traceability of every product is important today, and that IKEA wishes to make the farmer, who is presently an invisible part of the supply chain, a prominent and visible component. This can be best achieved through a collaborative approach and partnerships.

Mr Hemant Gaur, from Siddhivinayak Agri Processing, additionally remarked that as a company that seeks to offer sustainable and healthier options to both farmers and consumers, a Compact provides an opportunity to conduct trials in places like Chhindwara and evaluate the results.

Mr Mayank Kaushik from Inditex believes a Compact can help identify routes to creating systemic change. A Compact provides companies with the opportunity to learn from the ground up.

Furthermore, as Ms. Syamala Gowri Lingala of Jayanti Herbs and Spice observed, a Compact enables connections with and sharing of knowledge between experts.

PepsiCo was the first company to introduce contract farming in India and has since built a successful model around it, working with farmers and agricultural institutes. Dr. Susheel Sankhyan acknowledged that the government will play a very important role in helping the Collaborative create beneficial impact for the farmer and the planet.



Fireside Chat with Compact Members

Smallholder Inclusion through Value Chain and Landscape Finance

Speakers:

Savita Gadare
Board Member, COFE Farmer Producer Company

Sushila Bai
Board Member, Petlawad Tribal Farmers Producer Company, Jhabua

Suwalal Solanki
Director, Niwali Farmers Producer Company Limited, Barwani

Ashish Mondal
Director, Action for Social Advancement

Naveen Patidar
CEO, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme India

Prasanna Khemariya
CEO, Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action

Hari Rajagopal
Vice President - Capital Markets & Strategic Initiatives, Samunnati Capital Markets Group

Moderator:

Vidya Soundarajan
Director, Ecological Footprint, WWF

This panel discussion explored different perspectives on how stakeholders can collaboratively enhance the resilience of value chains.

Mr. Prasanna Khemariya opened with the statement that civil society organizations cannot address issues on their own; and rely on collaboration, knowledge-sharing, financing, and expert advice to create improved and informed systems. Mr Naveen Patidar, CEO at AKRSPI, stated that Initiatives like the Aga Khan Rural Support Program, which collaborate with thousands of farmers, have also realized practices for better agronomic productivity can be implemented at the grassroots level only if other stakeholders are willing to make long-term investments. Moreover, the value chain needs to be inclusive of land, water bodies, crop diversity, etc. This forms the very foundation of the value chain and ensures greater confidence for brands as well as for buyers.

The discussion also underlined the need to ensure that farmers and producers get fair prices for their products; an aspect that Ms. Sushila Bai, Board Member at Petlawad Tribal Farmer Producer Company highlighted that collaborating with larger companies has enabled them to achieve. Before such linkages with private sector partners, they were unable to access markets and processes as successfully as they are able to today.

Presently, there seems to be a lack of trust between buyers, sellers, collectives, and off-takers in supply chains. The need of the hour, as Mr. Hari Rajagopal from Samunnati Capital Markets Group, pointed out, is to create trust amongst all players, and the Compact can play a pivotal role in doing exactly that by bringing producers, financiers, and consumers to one table to strategize collectively. Finance is the lubricant that makes this transaction happen by ensuring that inputs and commodities can flow smoothly. There is also a need to work on solutions that enable farmers to be paid upfront so that working capital is flowing within the system. Samunnati Capital Markets Group is addressing these issues to support farmers' collectives.

Mr. Suwalal Solanki from Niwali Farmer Producer Company drew attention to the fact that water is one of the most vital commodities for tribal farmers. Revitalizing land by using fertilizers is yet another issue that farmers face, and often leads to smaller outputs. Moreover, transporting produce from one place to another adds to overhead costs.

The topic of diversification in agriculture was also raised during the session. Common yet counter-productive agricultural practices such as stubble burning and the use of chemical fertilizers have led to the degradation of soil quality. Farmers need to now concentrate on growing organic produce, which will improve land quality and output, and consequently their income. Ms Savita Gadare of the COFE Farmer Producer Company shared insights into their initiative towards producing organic custard apples and using fruit pulp to diversify their income. When COVID-19 disrupted the pulp business, they started processing green peas and invested in organic farming.

The problem, as Mr. Ashish Mondal of Action for Social Advancement pointed out, is that various stakeholders often look to find a solution for a common problem from their own, isolated perspective. Instead, it could be more beneficial to have better coordination between production and market system, which can only happen if a platform is created where the two can align and figure out the way forward. Mutual trust is an integral component and can be built by adhering to certain principles that all parties agree on, such as transparency, mutual respect, and equality. Stakeholders also need to recognize each other's weaknesses and work towards uplifting one another, and go the extra mile to benefit the entire ecosystem.

Address by AIGGPA



Address by:

Mr. Lokesh Sharma

Additional CEO, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis (AIGGPA), Bhopal

Mr. Lokesh Sharma expressed that it was good to see CSOs, farmers, and experts come together. Agriculture is a primary source of livelihood for a large number of people in India and needs to be made sustainable. While we focus on the larger technicalities, we must also be aware of the on-ground economics.

He spoke about the State government's interventions in agriculture and the need to address the challenge of scaling models for innovations in agriculture. He concluded with appreciating the Compact and landscape methodology and voicing his support for the project.

Concluding Remarks and Way Forward



Address by:

Preeti Maithili Nayak

IAS Director, Farmer Welfare and Agriculture Development, Government of Madhya Pradesh

Ms. Nayak delivered the concluding remarks by thanking the Collaborative for working on this important issue in Madhya Pradesh. The Collaborative's efforts have helped in providing opportunities to farmers and could give a boost to the economy. It is important for all partners to cover the risks that farmers face, which is the one area where farmers need most support. While the State Government has launched some schemes to cover their risks against vagaries of nature, the private sector should step in and cover the risks associated with marketing, pricing, and value-addition. Only when all concerned stakeholders provide farmers with such a cushion will the future of sustainable land economy be secured. Preserving the environment is, by no means, the responsibility of farmers alone; rather, it requires active participation from everyone.

Moving forward, the Collaborative will implement a baseline study in Western MP, and initiate proof of concept projects with private sector and CSO partners. The Collaborative will also complete in-field validation of Chhindwara baseline findings and recommendations, and formalize these targets with Compact members.

Ms. Dhingra brought the event to a close by expressing her gratitude to all the stakeholders who had attended the launch of the Compact, saying that she looked forward to strengthening the work of the Collaborative together.

Event Participants

We would like to extend our gratitude towards the following organisations for joining us at the Compacts Launch, and showing their commitment to together building a regenerative landscape that benefits people, nature and economy!

Government Of Madhya Pradesh

- Farmer Welfare & Agriculture Development
- Horticulture & Food Processing

Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis (AIGGPA)

Civil Society Organizations

- Abhinav AHRDO
- Action for Social Advancement
- Aga Khan Rural Support Programme - India (AKRSP-I)
- Agri-Entrepreneur Growth Foundation (AEGF)
- Green Foundation
- SRIJAN
- Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR)

Farmer Producer Organizations

- Balwadi Farmers Producer Company Limited
- COFE Producer Company Limited
- Nimad Farmers Producers Company Limited
- Niwali Farmers Producer Company Limited
- Petlawad Tribal Farmers Producer Company

Technical Agencies & Experts

- CGIAR IRRI
- GIZ
- International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
- World Economic Forum

International Agencies & Experts

- E&H - Ecocert Group
- MicroSave Consulting
- Organic Cotton Accelerator
- TechnoServe
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- True Quality Certifications Pvt Ltd

Private Sector

- Arvind Ltd
- C&A
- Cargill India
- DeHaat
- Fruitfal Technologies India Pvt Ltd
- H&M Group
- Hindustan Unilever Foundation
- IKEA Group
- Inditex
- Jain Farmfresh
- Jayanti Herbs and Spice
- Nature Biofoods (Dawaat Group)
- Neutral
- PepsiCo
- Ploughman Agro Pvt Ltd
- Primark
- S.V. Agri
- Vasudha Swaraj Pvt Ltd
- Zomato

Funders & Inverstors

- JP Morgan Foundation
- Rainmatter Foundation
- Samunnati Finance
- Kotak Mahindra Bank


Regenerative Production
Landscape Collaborative
People, Nature, Economy
Regenerative Production
Landscape
Collaborative
Mr. Ajit Kesarl,IAS
Additional Chief Secretary-Agriculture
Government of Madhya Pradesh
Regenerative Production
Landscape Collaborative
People, Nature, Economy



Laudes Foundation

Providing its partners with philanthropic capital, expertise and connections, Laudes Foundation helps catalyze systems change. It works across all industries, influencing the financial sector to move towards a new economy that values all people and nature. These two strategies are designed to help accelerate the existing movement towards a just and regenerative economy. Over the last five years, the Foundation has funded several projects in the cotton belt in Madhya Pradesh and built key relationships with local agri-universities and government.

IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative

IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative convenes companies, CSOs, governments and others in public-private partnerships and drives the joint design, co-funding and prototyping of economically viable approaches to realize green & inclusive growth at scale. In 12 sectors and 12 landscapes in over 40 countries worldwide, IDH leverages business interest to drive sustainability from niche to norm, creating impact@scale on the Sustainable Development goals. For sustainable landscape management, IDH has developed a three-pronged approach of Production, Protection & Inclusion.

WWF India

In its mission to take forward the agenda of environmental protection, WWF India works with varied groups of individuals and institutions across different sections of society. These alliances strive to address the common goal of conserving biodiversity, sustainably using natural resources and maintaining ecosystems and ecosystem services for the survival of wildlife and people depending on them. WWF India has implemented organic cotton program with 6,000 cotton farmers in Chhindwara.



To learn more about how your organisation can get involved, contact:

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