

POLICY BRIEF

Priority policy entry points for biodiversity and ecosystem services in Ethiopia

Using biodiversity and ecosystem services evidence in national policy, planning and decision-making

Purpose of this brief

This brief identifies practical entry points for strengthening the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services evidence in Ethiopia's national and sectorial policies, strategies, plans and programmes. It focuses on policy processes that have been formulated, updated, improved or implemented since 2022. These include Ethiopia's updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), national development planning, agriculture, agroforestry, forestry, watershed management, wildlife, climate action, landscape restoration and wetland governance. It also explains, briefly, how the operational National Biodiversity Platform of Ethiopia can help connect biodiversity evidence with policy and implementation.

About this brief

This brief draws mainly on Ethiopia's Rapid National Landscape Review of Existing Policy, Planning, and Decision-making Processes and Initiatives, prepared for the Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute in 2023 through the Ethiopian National Biodiversity Platform (Mellese Damtie and Woldeamlak Bewket, 2023). Unless otherwise stated, information on Ethiopia's policy and planning instruments, implementation challenges, and practical entry points is drawn from that review and the documents listed in the references. The brief also reflects country input provided in 2026 to update and refine selected policy information. The brief is intended to support country-led dialogue on how biodiversity and ecosystem services evidence can inform national policy, planning, and decision-making in Ethiopia.

Key messages

- Biodiversity and ecosystem services support Ethiopia's economy, food security, water resources, forests, agriculture, and pastoral livelihoods.
- Ethiopia has several policy entry points where biodiversity evidence can inform implementation, investment, and monitoring. These include the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2025-2030, the Ten-Year Development Plan 2021-2030, the National Agroforestry Development Strategy 2026-2035, the Green Legacy Initiative, the Climate-Resilient Green Economy Strategy, Ethiopia's Nationally Determined Contribution 3.0, forestry and watershed proclamations, wildlife legislation, and the emerging wetland policy process.
- The National Biodiversity Platform of Ethiopia is operational and can help connect evidence, institutions, and policy processes. Detailed information on the platform is provided in the companion CABES policy brief.
- One immediate opportunity is to use the platform to support Ethiopia's wetland policy process, including evidence review, technical input, stakeholder dialogue, and validation.

Why biodiversity and ecosystem services matter for Ethiopia

Ethiopia's biodiversity and ecosystem services support agriculture, forestry, water resources, and pastoral livelihoods. They sustain rural livelihoods, support food production, and contribute to national

development. Healthy ecosystems also support soil fertility, water regulation, climate resilience, forest productivity, livestock systems, and the restoration of degraded land. The country's ecosystems are under pressure from land degradation, deforestation, agricultural expansion, overgrazing, and climate change. While current policies and strategies establish a strong foundation, there remains an opportunity to further enhance the conservation of biodiversity against ongoing environmental pressures. Ethiopia's 2023 rapid national landscape review identifies a constructive path forward, noting that while biodiversity is well-integrated into various policy frameworks, achieving consistent implementation remains a priority. Addressing this more effectively may involve strengthening multi-sectoral coordination, expanding available financial resources, and further embedding scientific evidence into the decision-making process.

Priority policy entry points for evidence use

The policy processes and instruments below provide practical entry points for using biodiversity and ecosystem services evidence in implementation, investment, monitoring, and decision-making.

Policy process or instrument	Why it matters	Practical opportunity
National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030	Ethiopia's updated NBSAP provides the current framework for aligning national biodiversity priorities with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and guiding implementation.	Use biodiversity evidence to support implementation, prioritization, resource allocation, monitoring and reporting. Build on lessons from the previous NBSAP 2015-2020.
Ten-Year Development Plan 2021-2030	This is Ethiopia's main development planning framework for 2021-2030. It recognizes the role of healthy ecosystems in sustainable economic growth, human well-being and climate resilience.	Make biodiversity and ecosystem services more visible in economic planning, public investment, land-use decisions and sector implementation.
National Agroforestry Development Strategy 2026-2035	This strategy provides a framework for scaling agroforestry to improve soil health, livelihoods and climate resilience.	Use evidence to identify where agroforestry can deliver the greatest benefits for people, soils, water and biodiversity.
Green Legacy Initiative	This is a major national tree-planting and restoration initiative launched in 2019.	Strengthen attention to native species, ecological suitability, long-term survival, community benefits and landscape-level outcomes.
Updated Nationally Determined Contribution and Climate-Resilient Green Economy Strategy	These instruments guide Ethiopia's climate and low-carbon development priorities, including forest conservation, reforestation, renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture.	Ensure climate and restoration actions also strengthen biodiversity, ecosystem services and community resilience.
Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Policy and Strategy, 2007	This policy aims to maintain natural ecological balance through forest conservation and development.	Use biodiversity evidence to support sustainable forest management and ecological restoration.
Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Proclamation No. 1065/2018	This proclamation recognizes the role of forest development, conservation and use in preventing soil erosion, desertification and biodiversity loss.	Strengthen implementation through evidence on forest condition, restoration needs and ecosystem services.
Development, Management and Utilization of Community Watersheds Proclamation No. 1223/2020	This proclamation supports watershed management and community-based natural resource governance.	Use evidence to identify priority watersheds and improve restoration, soil protection and water regulation.
Development, Conservation and Utilization of Wildlife Proclamation No. 541/2007	This proclamation provides a legal basis for wildlife conservation and sustainable use.	Strengthen links between wildlife conservation, habitat protection, livelihoods and ecosystem management.
Ethiopian Wildlife Development and Conservation Authority Establishment Proclamation No. 575/2008	This proclamation establishes the Ethiopian Wildlife Development and Conservation Authority.	Support stronger institutional coordination on wildlife, protected areas and biodiversity evidence.
Climate Resilient Forest and Landscape Restoration Programme	This programme supports restoration of forests and agricultural lands, alongside renewable energy solutions.	Use biodiversity evidence to ensure restoration supports ecological health, species diversity and local livelihoods.
Wetland policy process	Wetlands provide water regulation, biodiversity, livelihood and climate benefits. The 2023 landscape review identifies the absence of wetland protection laws as a policy gap.	Use the National Biodiversity Platform of Ethiopia to support evidence review, technical input, stakeholder dialogue and validation of wetland policy instruments.

Source note: The policy entry points in this table are drawn mainly from Mellese Damtie and Woldeamlak Bewket (2023), updated with Ethiopia country input (2026) and selected Ethiopian national policy documents listed in the references.

Main policy gaps and implementation challenges

1. Enhancing the Impact of Existing Policy Frameworks: Ethiopia possesses a robust suite of policy instruments designed to foster biodiversity conservation and sustainable practices. A key opportunity for further progress lies in more fully integrating biodiversity-related evidence into implementation phases, investment planning, and sectoral monitoring to ensure consistent application across all decision-making processes.

2. Optimizing the Integration of Research into Policy Action: Comprehensive assessments provide valuable insights into biodiversity trends, ecosystem services, and the various factors influencing environmental change. There is a meaningful opportunity to further refine how these research findings are synthesized, ensuring they are consistently presented as concise, actionable information that directly supports practical policy application and decision-making

3. NBSAP implementation needs evidence, coordination, and monitoring: The NBSAP 2025-2030 can provide an important framework for aligning national biodiversity priorities with global commitments. Evidence can support priority-setting, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

4. National development planning can make biodiversity and ecosystem services more visible: The Ten-Year Development Plan recognises the importance of healthy ecosystems for sustainable economic growth, human well-being, and climate resilience. Biodiversity evidence can be used more clearly in development planning, sector investment, land-use decisions, and monitoring of development outcomes.

5. Climate and restoration programmes need biodiversity safeguards and ecological criteria: Ethiopia has major climate and restoration initiatives. These include the Climate-Resilient Green Economy Strategy, the Green Legacy Initiative, forest and landscape restoration programmes, watershed resilience projects, Ethiopia's Nationally Determined Contribution 3.0 and the updated NBSAP. These initiatives can deliver stronger long-term benefits when they are guided by evidence on native species, ecological suitability, species diversity, water regulation, soil health, and community benefits.

6. Forestry, watershed, and wildlife instruments need better joined-up implementation: Forests, watersheds, wildlife habitats, agricultural lands, and restoration areas are part of the same landscape. Policy instruments in these areas should therefore be implemented in a coordinated way, rather than as separate sector activities.

7. Wetlands need stronger policy attention: Wetlands support water regulation, biodiversity, livelihoods, and climate resilience. The wetland policy process provides a practical opportunity to show how biodiversity and ecosystem services evidence can support a live national policy process.

Practical policy options

1. Use the National Biodiversity Platform as a practical evidence and coordination mechanism: The platform can be used as an active mechanism for solving policy problems, not only as a discussion forum. It can link evidence, institutions, and decision-making.

2. Support implementation of the NBSAP 2025-2030: The platform can help identify priority actions, evidence needs, implementation gaps, responsible institutions, and monitoring approaches.

3. Enhancing the Accessibility of National Biodiversity Targets: To ensure broad alignment and effective action, it is essential to translate complex national biodiversity objectives into clear, accessible

language. Streamlining this communication will facilitate better understanding and engagement across all stakeholder groups, from local communities to cross-sectoral partners.

4. Strengthen biodiversity integration in development planning: Biodiversity and ecosystem services can be linked more clearly to economic planning, public investment, and sector delivery, especially in agriculture, forestry, water, energy, tourism, climate and land-use planning.

5. Use biodiversity evidence to improve agroforestry, restoration, and climate action: Agroforestry, restoration, climate, and tree-planting programmes can use evidence to guide where and how interventions take place, which species are suitable, and how benefits are monitored.

6. Support implementation of forestry, watershed, wildlife, and wetland instruments: Evidence and dialogue can help avoid fragmented implementation across forestry, watershed management, wildlife conservation, wetland policy, and land-use planning.

7. Produce short evidence products for decision-makers: The platform can prepare policy briefs, evidence notes, maps, presentations, and decision-support summaries. These should be short, practical, and written in plain language.

8. Strengthen monitoring, learning, and accountability: The platform can help Ethiopia track what is working, what is not working, and where policy implementation needs to improve. This can help move biodiversity commitments from policy documents into measurable action.

How the National Biodiversity Platform can support this agenda

The National Biodiversity Platform of Ethiopia is already operational and can support the policy entry points identified in this brief. Its main value is that it can bring relevant institutions and knowledge holders together around practical policy questions. In this brief, the platform is treated as a mechanism for evidence use, coordination and implementation. The companion CABES policy brief provides more detail on the platform's establishment, membership, governance and role in IPBES uptake.

For the policy entry points in this brief, the platform can:

- identify policy questions where biodiversity and ecosystem services evidence are needed;
- connect policymakers, scientists, practitioners, civil society organizations and partners;
- translate evidence into short, clear policy messages;
- support national ecosystem assessment work and the use of IPBES assessment findings;
- strengthen dialogue between agriculture, forestry, water, energy, climate, wildlife and development planning actors; and
- support live policy processes, including Ethiopia's wetland policy process.

Concluding message

Ethiopia has several policy entry points for strengthening the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The priority now is to use evidence more consistently during implementation. This means linking biodiversity knowledge to national development planning, NBSAP implementation, climate and restoration programs, forestry, watershed and wildlife instruments, and wetland governance. The National Biodiversity Platform of Ethiopia can help make this happen by connecting institutions, translating evidence into practical policy messages and supporting country-led dialogue on implementation. With clear priorities and well-targeted evidence products, the platform can help move biodiversity commitments from policy documents into practical action.

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