



PRACTICAL  
GUIDANCE  
DOCUMENT

# Sustainable Natural Rubber

Pathways, Policies  
and Partnerships

RAINFOREST ALLIANCE  
EARTH NET FOUNDATION  
EINBOHN PRODUCTS GMBH  
AND MIGHTY EARTH

SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RUBBER —  
PATHWAYS, POLICIES, AND PARTNERSHIPS

PRESENTED BY





RUBBER AGROFORESTRY SYSTEM

# Introduction

We are providing this practical guide based on the expressed demand from our Hat Yai Workshop (for a short flash-back to the workshop, watch **this** two minutes-video) follow-up survey respondents. It is our hope that this resource will be used to continue supporting companies interested in expanding their work to obtain sustainable natural rubber.

This project is a collaborative piece consisting of four different – yet complementary – perspectives on the theme of proactive steps to engage with your natural rubber supply chain. It is important to note that the approaches in this guidebook are merely four ways out of a long list of courses of action a company may find themselves interested in pursuing.

The goal of this resource is to encourage companies interested in establishing a combination of sustainability initiatives to expand their knowledge of other potential paths and further learn how they can best accomplish each route.

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# A Farmer's Perspective

BY MICHAEL COMMONS  
EARTH NET FOUNDATION



The modern rubber cultivation system has converted millions of hectares of tropical forest into rubber monocultures bringing a loss of forest with ensuing disruption of ecosystem functions and loss of biodiversity, habitat, food, and fodder. This however was not always the case, but quite a recent transition. Elder farmers have seen the full transformation and loss. Some understand both the causes and the remedies, and a few strong communities and more isolated farmers with courage are going against the trend and working to restore the prior ecological health and abundance on their own lands. Here is a great opportunity to work with and build on this indigenous wisdom and drive to support ecological restoration.

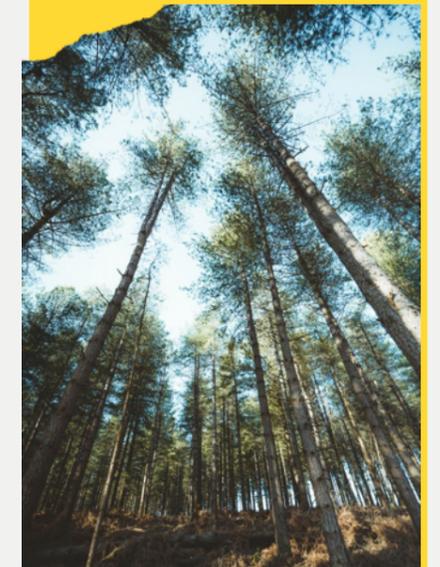
Understand that farmers in general are not trying to destroy their lands, but the transformation has been largely driven by policies and trade practices, and that there is great wisdom and knowledge of the forest and restoration in farmer communities and if given support through collaboration, good policies and/ or market incentives, this potential can be unleashed to great good.

To support farmers, companies must connect with and get to know the rubber producing communities they are supplying from to try and learn where there are farmers or communities who are innovating with more sustainable and ecological practices. Alternately you may search for rubber farmer communities that are innovating in ecological restoration. Even if the communities you are sourcing from do not appear to have examples of more sustainable or regenerative practices, you may work to link these communities with model ecological rubber farmers to learn from and provide support for them to start adapting and adopting more ecological practices.

As has been recounted to me by a number of farmers not only in Thailand but also from Sri Lanka within their lifetimes there has been a transition from ecological health and abundance to a much degraded state with regular issues of flooding, drought, loss of biodiversity, wildlife, and the local foods and materials that once provided for almost all of their community's needs.

My farmer friend Suphap Kaewdaipan from Thepa district in Songkhla province, now 63, explained this to me in detail, describing how when he was a boy, they still practiced swidden agriculture in 10-year cycles and there was such great abundance from nature, whether mouse deer, barking deer, jungle fowl, or bamboo bats. They bought almost nothing, even growing their own tobacco, coffee, betel nut and making their own gunpowder from charcoal dust and sulfur collected from hot spring vents. Rubber at that time was grown as "jungle rubber" from seed and it was interspersed with diverse fruit trees and wild trees and herbs grew within these gardens as there was no use of herbicide. These spaces were still abundant with wildlife, habitat, foods, medicines, and materials.

Suphap, Suwat Tongraksa, and many others see the clear crux point coming with the policy and funding support to grow improved rubber varieties in monoculture rows with use of chemical fertilizers and eventually herbicides. This transformation then reduced and removed self-sufficiency and the ecological functions of the once forest. Without self-sufficiency, relying only on money both to care for the rubber and for all the daily needs, meant a need to exploit more and more area, and thus so much of the forest was converted to monoculture.



SAWAT TONGRAKSA IN AGROFOREST



CHORTHIP PRABPREE IN AGROFOREST

The path to restoration is to restore the forest in rubber lands which Suwat Tongraksa captures beautifully in his writings “We should grow trees for our children on their wedding day, to build a house for our grandchildren to stay, to sell some to send our great-grandchildren off to study, to link us together from generations past and beyond, to return the moisture back to our land and its flora, to restore our soils to be of good neutral Ph and productive, that our relatives are happy, comfortable, and free from worries. Even the threats and effects of global warming are relaxed.”

Farmer Chorthip Prabpree whose rubber agroforestry is filled with fruits, herbs, and local vegetables explains “Rubber agroforestry provides food security, financial security, and ecological security.” The transformation is not only personal. “When we have abundance, we can share” this leads to “more cooperation, sharing, mutual care” The benefits to others and self-go even farther.

“Having a forest, I help improve the air quality for everyone. I feel even as I sleep, I am making merit.”



In the “Buddhist Way of Farming” concept and practice of Vitoon Noosen, which relinks Dharma with Dharmachat (Nature in Thai) forest destruction and degradation are the root cause of many problems for “Healthy forest with water, good soil, pure air, is the starting capital for agricultural production.” so our action is to “Plant trees and build forest on the lands you have tenure for life and for society” for just protecting our forest reserves is not enough and thankfully rubber comes from the most diverse forests of this earth and as found by all of these farmers performs better in a forest than a monoculture.

The benefits from switching to agroforestry can be impressive. Samak Thepbutra and his wife Kamolpatara in Chanthaburi share “The soil has improved greatly. The soil is full of life and nutrients. Wildlife has returned and we have wild mushrooms to collect. We have been able to reduce our expenses for fertilizers and chemicals. We have fewer problems with pests and diseases. Our yields increase year to year such that we feel this is what sustainable farming is for our family.”

“Rubber agroforestry provides food security, financial security, and ecological security.”



VITON NOOSEN TAPPING

All of the farmer elders cited in this piece are practitioners of rubber agroforestry — for more about rubber agroforestry you may visit  
**Para Rubber Agroforestry:** <https://youtu.be/3713pveLcqQ>  
**einhorn auf Fairstainibility Mission in Thailand:** <https://youtu.be/VY1k-1looc4>

# Engaging With Your Suppliers

BY LINDA PREIL  
EINHORN PRODUCTS GMBH

Transparency in supply chains is the key in identifying the hot spots and areas of actions as well as highlighting what is running well already. Thus, getting in contact with suppliers and understanding their realities makes it easier to work with a supplier and agree on common values to do business together.

COOPERATION MAKES IT EASIER TO  
SEE WHERE TO WALK TOGETHER,  
AND HOW TO SUPPORT AND  
BUILD A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP.

A company has responsibility to make decisions with suppliers and stakeholders along the supply chain. This being said we would like to encourage you to find out different ways of working together and what dependencies exist and to not just put pressure and expectations on stakeholders in the supply chain – talking only about price and deliverables, but to understand local realities and act together with your supplier.



UNDERSTANDING LOCAL REALITIES AND  
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES



TEACHING FARMERS HOW TO USE EQUIPMENT  
TO CHECK LATEX QUALITY TO DEVELOP A NEW  
AGROFORESTRY RUBBER VALUE CHAIN

## HOW TO START BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:

- Get in contact with the people in your supply chain directly
- Understand the dependencies and systems your suppliers are operating in
- Learn about the national policies, local NGOs and research that has been done on the commodity / industry you are working with → The experts are there!
- Build trust through disclosing to your supplier what you do and whom you are working with

HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT MAY HELP START  
THE PROCESS NOT JUST WITH YOUR SUPPLIERS BUT  
ALSO WITHIN YOUR OWN COMPANY TO UNDERSTAND ISSUES,  
THEIR CAUSES AND WHAT DRIVES THESE CAUSES.

Starting conversations to understand the system better is key.  
Don't see it as a survey but as part of the discussion and a learning experience.

## SOME EXAMPLES FOR YOUR SUPPLIER:

- Why are your production systems set up the way they are?
- What are the reasons behind different management practices?  
Is it price? Is it vision? Is it fear of something?
- If money wasn't a constraint, what would be your biggest wish?
- What rules and regulations do you have to stick to?
- How does the remuneration system function on your plantation?  
As a farmer and as a processor, what would you wish for from us as a company?
- For a joint project on environmental education—what do you know about your waste disposal? How is your waste system functioning?

## SOME EXAMPLES TO ASK WITHIN YOUR COMPANY:

- How can I support my supplier in solving obstacles he / she is facing?

## SYSTEMIC QUESTIONS

- How has a certain policy come into being?
- Are there experts in that region who have looked into a certain problem in detail and can provide scientific data?

Listen to Linda talk more about building relationships in her TEDx talk:  
**THE MEANING BEHIND RELATIONSHIPS FOR RUBBER(S)**

# Managing Risks in Natural Rubber Supply Chains

BY HEATHER WEISS  
MIGHTY EARTH



Climate change is changing the world and threatening business now and for future generations. Forest protection, Indigenous and Local Community Rights, and sustainability are issues that are important to people right now and that are only getting more pressing. Business as usual is not enough and greenwashing isn't going to cut it. The risk is too great, and we all know it.

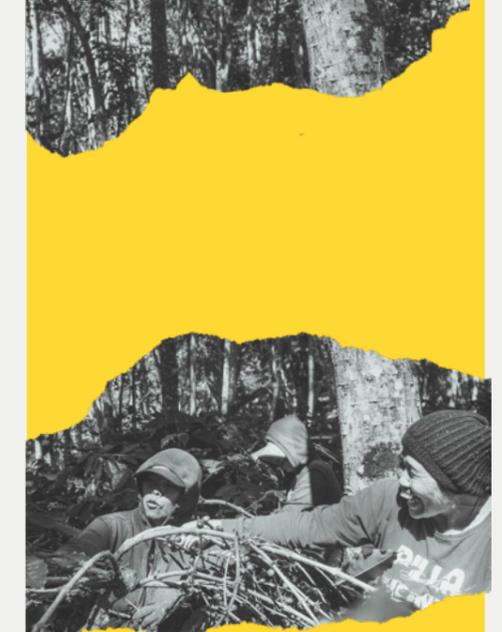
The risks to your company from irresponsibly produced rubber include:

- Delayed operations due to land & social conflicts
- Sudden changes to concession areas, or operating conditions
- Legal actions
- Costs of clean-up of polluted water or forest restoration
- Impacts from industrial action by workers
- Civil society actions/ NGO campaigns
- Decline in brand value
- Loss of investor confidence

TO AVOID THE THREAT OR REALITY OF THESE VERY REAL RISKS, SUSTAINABLE RUBBER IS THE PATH FORWARD — AND YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Companies across the world and across commodities have recognized the importance of avoiding the risks associated with deforestation, environmental degradation, and labor and human rights abuses. Here we have broken down some steps toward sustainability and how others across commodities have taken them:

- Make a public corporate, group-wide **commitment to no deforestation no exploitation**
  - \* Draft a **policy** that specifies those commitments. The **CCCMC Guidance for Rubber** is a great tool for drafting these policies. The **GPSNR commitment Policy guidance Framework** is another excellent template for policy commitments.
  - \* The **Accountability Framework Initiative (AFI)** has broader policy template guidelines as well
- Work with **civil society** to test and improve the draft policy, then publish the final version on your website.
- Create an **implementation plan** and “roadmap” for operationalizing the policy on the ground.
  - \* Support and create **traceable and transparent** supply chains, know who your suppliers are and who supplies them. Publish your list of suppliers on your website to increase transparency and supply chain accountability. An example of this transparency can be seen in Hershey, a chocolate company which has a progressive group-level cross-commodity palm oil policy and is transparent in revealing its sourcing practices and suppliers with a goal to trace back to plantation level
  - \* Actively support and invest in more sustainable rubber cultivation practices like **agroforestry** rubber. More sustainable practices can allow for better social and environmental outcomes and a more sustainable, resilient, and robust industry. Lindt is a chocolate company that has done an excellent job promoting sustainability and driving a sourcing model for cocoa that encourages equitable and ecologically conscious farming programs



- **Collaborate** with other companies in your supply chain – both upstream and downstream – to normalize industry sustainability standards and enact industry-wide joint monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
  - \* The **Global Platform for Sustainable Natural Rubber (GPSNR)** is a multistakeholder platform that brings together rubber end-users, processors, smallholder farmers, and civil society. It is good example of collaboration because there is equitable and inclusive decision-making and an ambitious sustainability agenda.
  - \* **Policy advocacy** can move industry forward and create a level playing field. Mondelez is a snack food company that has engaged in policy work, **publicly supporting** the European Union's efforts to regulate commodity production and enforce due diligence standards.
- Finally, it is important to **monitor and report** on progress every year to ensure that companies and industry are continuously improving social and environmental sustainability. Only then can industry be sure that there will still be productive rubber trees, tappers, smallholders, and a thriving rubber industry moving forward.

Sustainability is an essential business approach that company executives consider a strategic necessity based on the link between environmental and social risks and business productivity, performance, and bottom line. Ensuring implementation of sustainable practices can support local and Indigenous communities and the environment—and ensure a safe, productive, and livable future for us all.

# Responsibility in Sustainable Supply Chains

BY CHRIS SCHWARZ  
RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

Today, companies are expected to have commitments towards sustainability and supplier management systems for all supply chains that are covered by these commitments, or are otherwise subject to environmental or social risks.

However, many companies - particularly those with supply chains that involve indirect suppliers and where visibility to the supply-base level is limited - face challenges in ascertaining that all sourcing complies with their commitments and their perception of who is responsible is unclear. In part these challenges exist as implementation and monitoring processes can intersect with dynamics that are beyond the company's control, such as those driven or impacted by policies, programs, and actions undertaken by other companies, government entities, communities, and other actors. In addition, the fulfillment of sustainability commitments is almost always affected by—and should be informed by—the geographic, political, social, economic, and institutional contexts where commodities are produced, traded, and financed.



Fortunately, the importance of these problems has inspired the development of various **tools**, strategies and **services**, many of them specific to particular geographic and commodity contexts. This pathway's purpose is to provide a high-level overview of a system that may be useful:

Although companies are encouraged to use their influence to incentivize and support upstream suppliers to develop comparable and robust implementation systems that apply to the scope of their entire business, the **ultimate responsibility rests with companies to fulfill their own supply chain commitments, and demonstrate such fulfillments.**



EINHORN CONDOM PRODUCTION FROM NATURAL RUBBER AT RRT IN MALAYSIA

**Embracing their responsibility, rather than putting all responsibility on their suppliers, companies should actively engage and support them in the fulfillment of their own commitments**

- or to set appropriate commitments for the supplier's entire business. Such support might include technical assistance or incentives such as financing linked to improved performance, sharing costs for certain activities, market access, increasing volume purchased, longer-term contracts, and reduced monitoring and verification (M&V) requirements based on performance.

TYPICAL RUBBER MONOCULTURE WITH USE OF HERBICIDE (LEFT)



IN CONTRAST WITH ALLOWING NATURAL VEGETATION TO RECOVER OVER A COUPLE YEARS (RIGHT)

A key tool for passing company commitments up the supply chain is the assessment of supplier management (or control) systems.

- The buyer assesses the control systems of its direct supplier to determine their adequacy to ensure compliance either at the supply-base level or at the level of the next upstream supplier (i.e., the buyer's indirect suppliers).
- The direct supplier either monitors environmental and social performance and outcomes at the supply-base level or it assesses the control systems of its supplier. This process of cascading upstream continues until assessment at the supply-base level is possible.
- If a buyer's direct and / or any indirect suppliers do not have effective control mechanisms or monitoring at the supply-base level, then the buyer cannot be assured that its supply chains comply with its commitments.

Using this approach, downstream companies work with their direct suppliers to push commitments, monitoring, and supplier engagement activities upstream to all indirect suppliers and spot markets.

Monitoring of suppliers' management and control systems provides companies with information to help assess and prioritize risks across their supplier portfolio and it can serve as a proxy for monitoring outcomes at the supply base level when such systems exist and when downstream companies do not have traceability information (linked with compliance information) to monitor outcomes directly.

If suppliers have effective control systems in place, then in many cases buyers will not need to carry out further monitoring upstream of the given control system. In such cases, downstream companies should monitor the presence, effectiveness, and outcomes of their suppliers' management and control systems to ensure that these systems are indeed providing the needed level of monitoring data and assurance regarding compliance with the downstream company's commitments. Elements of supplier management and control systems that should be monitored include:

- Risk assessments
- Supply chain mapping and traceability activities and status
- Procedures for identifying and addressing non-compliance, including grievances lodged and their status
- Activities related to responsible land acquisition and development practices, including impact assessments and the use of FPIC when appropriate
- Monitoring, verification, and reporting systems—including appropriate tools, methods, and data sources—that are able to assess and communicate impacts and outcomes of their operations and supply chain
- Additional control measures such as certification or other credible third-party verification

POEM

# Plants Trees — Just Do It

BY \* Sawat Tongraksa

From here forward, may everyone help plant trees.

Trees are at the heart of nature, both to protect and to restore,  
farmers in particular when they are without trees, poverty follows everywhere.

Without trees there is poverty everywhere.

The forest loses its diversity of animals, people are at a loss,  
there is a lack of water, the weather is so hot even the grass dies.

The people struggle and stress lacking food and villages are poor,  
the wildlife goes extinct, the grain is gone, and the people go without.

The soil is dry and cracks with the droughts.

The soil dead, the trees that are left fall to the ground, there is heat without any shade.

The greenhouse over us punctures our planet.

Help to heal, help us to reflect.

Before this poisonous disaster of no more trees in the forest, we should be concerned.

Our own vices have come to trap us like a noose.

Living in this era when we must be selfish, we should all take consideration.



\*

"DEVELOPMENT OF THE RUBBER  
ECONOMY TOGETHER WITH  
GROWING FOREST TO REDUCE  
CRISES", APRIL 2020 Translation by  
Michael B. Commons

## Rainforest Alliance



The **Rainforest Alliance** is an international non-profit organization working in more than 70 countries at the intersection of business, agriculture and forests. We are building an alliance to create a better future for people and nature by making responsible business the new normal.

## einhorn Products GmbH



Founded in 2015 **einhorn** produces vegan condoms and fair organic menstrual products. Design, sustainability and fairness play a huge role in fulfilling einhorn's mission. The goal is to create an economically successful, sustainable, and eco-friendly company. This is why einhorn reinvests 50% of its profits in sustainable projects.

## Earth Net Foundation



**Earth Net Foundation** is an agency that supports the development of organic agriculture and fair trade. Providing knowledge management, training, and research on organic agriculture and fair trade in Thailand and Southeast Asia.

## Mighty Earth



**Mighty Earth** is a global campaign organization that works to protect the environment. We focus on the big issues: conserving threatened landscapes like tropical rainforests, protecting oceans, and solving climate change.

### PHOTO CREDITS

1, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16  
5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 18  
6, 7, 12, 13

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