To further elevate noteworthy Bankable Nature Solutions (BNS) projects, the BNS Network shares brief write-ups about excellent case studies. The following second set of 4 BNS case studies have been selected from over 50 publicly announced projects that have received support from 2 of the BNS funds & facilities with the engagement of WWF since 2021: the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD) and Mobilising More for Climate (MoMo4C). These projects work in sustainable agriculture and freshwater aquaculture, and sustainable forest management sectors in Africa, Asia, and South America, and seek opportunities for collaboration and further scaling.
BNS CASE STUDY #1: CINCH

DUTCH FUND FOR CLIMATE AND DEVELOPMENT
WWF PROJECT LEADS: KEIRON BRAND AND IAN ISHERWOOD

Project snapshot
Local partner/operator: Cinch Markets Ltd.
Sector type: Sustainable agriculture
Country of interest: Kenya
Funding and TA support received: 300,000 EUR grant from DFCD in 2023
Financial instrument: Debt or Equity
Proof of concept: Implementation

Overview: Cinch, launched in 2019, has developed an innovative model to overcome the lack of scale which holds back farmers’ incomes. Groups of interested smallholders can lease their agriculturally non-productive land to Cinch. The company consolidates the management and farming of their land to grow more valuable cash crops, raising the productivity of the land by up to 20 times, while improving the farmer’s income and environmental conditions on the farm. The landowner gets a guaranteed income from a monthly cash lease payment, a quarterly dividend from the proceeds of the produce, and a weekly salary if the farmer chooses to work on the land as an employee.

Investment and operating model: With end-to-end farm management, Cinch produces and sells products directly to major buyers under contract. Cinch unlocks the potential of the land held by smallholder farmers by aggregating groups of interested smallholder farmers and consolidates the management of their land with leases. Cinch makes key infrastructure investments in the land to support the transition into high revenue-generating activities, like export horticulture, with demonstrated ROI.

Impact measurement: The company is aiming to achieve the following impact yardsticks for the scaled-up project by 2028:
• 26,273 tons CO2e sequestered per year
• 61,750 direct and indirect beneficiaries
• 809 hectares of land under sustainable management
• US$ 24 million of private finance mobilized

Use of grant funds: The company is using the DFCD grant to hire technical expertise to further develop the farming model, an environmental and social impact assessment, and expand its community engagement to attract and educate farmers. It needs technical support to install the most cost and water-efficient irrigation on the farms, understand which tree species are best suited for the areas they intend to reforest and what are the best cash crops.

Current status: Cinch is operating their first tree farm, and are looking for partners with financing instruments to scale to additional farms.

Successes or innovative features: Cinch has already demonstrated its ability to work with both cash crops, like chia, flax and horticulture, as well as trees like avocados. The company is looking to integrate agroforestry into its farming model to increase the long-term resilience of the farming land, diversify its income streams and increase revenues. Cinch will intercrop a cash-generating crop, such as potatoes or pyrethrum, between rows of a tree crop, like jackfruit, pomegranate or moringa. The cash crop can pay for the long-term investments in irrigation with short-term cash flow. Over time more land initially used for growing cash crops can transition to growing tree crops, which generates reliable revenue over the years and improves the value of the land. For every acre Cinch manages, the company is creating 2-3 full-time jobs, which are primarily for women. The company aims to bring people in and then graduate them towards higher levels of responsibility and income, representing a form of women empowerment.

Scalability and replication: Cinch sees the DFCD’s support as an opportunity to bring demonstrated parts of its business together to create a new business designed to restore degraded land, turning unproductive or unused farming plots into valuable climate-resilient arable land. The model aligns incentives and removes risks for landowners. It can replicate this approach even across Kenya’s northern dryland regions, so long as there is a reliable water table. When the project is investment-ready the company will be seeking EUR 10 million and above to scale up this business to an additional 1,000 acres in three years. In the future, the model can also move from investment-ready to other types of land use.

Learn more: DFCD Grant Announcement
Cinch Video

More than 20 times higher farmland productivity can be achieved
BNS CASE STUDY #2: FINANCOOP

DUTCH FUND FOR CLIMATE AND DEVELOPMENT
WWF PROJECT LEADS: FABRICIO DE CAMPOS AND TANIA EVIA

Project snapshot

Local partner/operator: Financoop
Sector types: Sustainable agriculture, green financial services
Country of interest: Ecuador
Funding and TA support received: 235,000 EUR grant from DFCD in 2022
Financial instrument: Debt
Proof of concept: Implementation

Overview: Financoop is a cooperative financial institution in Ecuador that develops a sustainable credit line for its members to encourage sustainable agriculture. Ecuador relies heavily on the agricultural sector, with nearly 20% of its population depending on it as their main source of income. Most farmers are smallholders who own on average two hectares of land and tend to have little or no access to formal credit. Financoop is a central cooperative that acts as a common reserve for a total of 135 financial cooperatives, providing investments, financial services and technical assistance to other financial cooperatives that serve local smallholders.

Use of grant funds: The DFCD supported the organization in setting up a so-called green credit line that will finance smallholders’ investments, improving their resilience to the effects of climate change. The grant funds will be used to implement green credits at ten member cooperatives to fine-tune their new financial offering, work on a monitoring system to see how cooperatives use the credit line, and develop an Environmental and Social Management Risk System (ESMRS) for cooperatives.

Investment and operating model:

This collaboration marks a significant milestone in Financoop’s journey towards sustainable finance. Tailoring the ESMRS to cooperative needs and regulatory requirements empowered participating cooperatives, establishing them as leaders in the system.

Successes or innovative features: In 2020, the financial institution set up a pilot to test new agricultural financing focused on adaptation to climate change. This resulted in the disbursement of US$ 5 million in loans to three member cooperatives. The project is successful in involving a process of collaborative engagement and offering training sessions with cooperative officials for the creation of the Climate Resilient Agriculture Protocol, ensuring a widespread acceptance and ownership.

Impact measurement: Key impact metric is the expected number of hectares of farmland under sustainable management improving resilience to climate change: Costa 20% (5,600 ha), Sierra 70% (19,600 ha), Oriente 10% (2,800 ha). Total: 28,000 ha. Estimated number of beneficiaries at project maturation: 14,000 agricultural producers in 5 years.

Scalability and replication: Climate Resilient Agriculture Protocol can be adapted for use in financial institutions with various characteristics. This is the first off-the-shelf product developed by DFCD that can be replicated by other financial institutions.

Projected 28,000 hectares of farmland under sustainable management improving resilience to climate change

Learn more: DFCD Grant Announcement

FINANCOOP

Dutch Fund for Climate and Development

Development / Commercial Bank

Cooperative

Associate

Financoop

Credit line to finance mitigation and/or adaptation activity

Cooperative

Credit analysis according to mitigation/adaptation methodology, to offer financing for relevant activities

Financoop

Funds with mitigation and adaptation focus. Conducts credit analysis according to mitigation/adaptation methodology

Credit payment

Repayments

 Loans

Grant and technical assistance

DFCD Grant Announcement
BNS CASE STUDY #3: MINH PHU

DUTCH FUND FOR CLIMATE AND DEVELOPMENT
WWF PROJECT LEAD: STUART BEAVIS

Project snapshot

Local partner/operator: Minh Phu Seafood Corporation

Sector types: Sustainable agriculture and freshwater aquaculture

Country/region of interest: Vietnam (Mekong Delta)

Funding and TA support received: 350,000 EUR grant from the DFCD

Financial instrument: TBD

Proof of concept: Implementation

Overview: The Mekong Delta Integrated Rice and Aquaculture Project has designed mixed rice-shrimp aquaculture ponds, to create a climate-resilient landscape. The ponds produce rice and freshwater shrimps in rainy seasons, and raise brackish-water shrimps in dry seasons and periods of saltwater intrusion. While the production of rice adds a resilient revenue to the model, the project is mainly financed through its shrimp production. The main focus of this rotation model is to improve natural farming methods, strengthen the production value chain, promote the role of private enterprises, and increase livelihoods.

Use of grant funds: The DFCD approved a 350,000 EUR grant for Minh Phu Seafood Corporation, the country’s largest shrimp processor. Minh Phu drove the project from the feasibility survey to supporting households participating in rice production according to organic standards.

Current status: Minh Phu is currently finishing the pilot with an existing proof of concept.

Impact measurement: Communities’ livelihoods improve, farming becomes more effective, generates higher income, and is less vulnerable in the future. The average shrimp productivity doubled, to 408 kg per hectare. Rice crop yielded 4.5 tons per hectare. Profit per hectare reached approx. 3,708 EUR, with income tripling compared to households not participating in the project. Minh Phu was awarded the first ASC international certification in Vietnam for practicing responsible aquaculture. Moreover, through the change in sediment flows, clay and gravel are carried and deposited, compensating for 10–40% of the land subsidence, where the ground was previously sinking.

Scalability and replication: The sustainable rice-shrimp farming model was piloted in Ca Mau, Tra Vinh and Ben Tre provinces, covering a combined area of 110 hectares and involving 69 households. Building on this success, Minh Phu Group is entering the implementation phase, with potential to scale up the model over the next decade. A replication of this model is feasible around any deltas in Asia, as long as the basis of shrimp farming is given for viability.

Successes or innovative features:
To create a climate-resilient landscape, the project has designed mixed rice-shrimp aquaculture ponds, replacing the intense monoculture of the original model. Minh Phu, supported through the DFCD, has built a bankable model for responsible farming that supports low income communities by benefiting farmers, shortening the supply chain, and attracting private finance. The project improves an existing model by working with nature to contribute to the restoration of the long-term resilience of the Delta. So far, the project has already helped to double shrimp production and to triple participating households’ incomes.

Investment and operating model:
CASE STUDY #4: WUCHI WAMI

MOBILISING MORE FOR CLIMATE

WWF PROJECT LEADS: SOPHIA MUTALANI MULUNDIKA AND FUNGAI MUSANA

Overview: Established in 2018, Wuchi Wami produces and distributes local raw and organic honey, sourced from the wild Miombo forests in North-western Zambia. By collaborating with rural communities, the company aims to safeguard the environment by utilizing environmentally sustainable top bar beehives instead of traditional bark hives, which contribute to deforestation. Their model relies on easy to plant pine, minimizes labor and encourages participation from women, men, and youth in beekeeping activities. This approach also curtails charcoal burning, a major driver of deforestation and forest degradation in Zambia, reducing carbon emissions and preserving wood resources. Currently, Wuchi Wami works with 1,244 smallholder farmers practicing beekeeping. The firm utilizes a sustainable business model by providing modern beekeeping training, as well as facilitating financial inclusion models such as Saving and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) for the smallholder farming groups.

Impact measurement: Currently Wuchi Wami has 1,244 farmers practicing beekeeping with 5,020 modern beehives, that are yielding 125 tons of honey annually, and are estimated to be saving over 300,000 trees, which cover almost 68,000 hectares. Working with soft wood modern beehives which are easy to manage and are less labor intensive allows women and youth to participate in beekeeping. Wuchi Wami thus far has improved the monthly income of these smallholder farmers from $14 to $48, and created 44 jobs in Mwinilunga and Lusaka, improving the livelihoods of vulnerable and socially disadvantaged communities, and empowering the local population.

Scalability and replication: The firm is projected to create over 100 jobs in the next 5 years, and to offer further increments in income through an increase in scale. Wuchi Wami is interested in expanding their export activities, from current exports to Norway, Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. The model is easily replicable in areas where there’s ability to harvest wild honey.

Successes or innovative features: Wuchi Wami uses top bar beehives that are environmentally sustainable, instead of the traditional bark hives that contribute to deforestation. These top bar beehives also enable women and youth to participate in beekeeping. Their success is underscored by awards, such as the SEED Climate Adaptation award.

Use of technical assistance support: Wuchi Wami seeks to automate their processing and packaging infrastructure and onboard Pick N Pay, a Southern African grocery and general merchandise retailer. Technical Assistance (TA) aids Wuchi Wami in expanding into regional and international markets like Europe and the USA, thereby expected to empower an additional 10,000 smallholder farmers and to boost their revenues by an estimated 43% by 2025. Additionally, TA supports enhancing marketing and sales strategies in regional markets and procuring raw materials for eco-briquette production.

Current status: MoMo4C is assisting Wuchi Wami in preparing materials to seek partners with financing instruments to scale to additional farmers.

Investment and operating model:
OUR MISSION IS TO CONSERVE NATURE AND REDUCE THE MOST PRESSING THREATS TO THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE ON EARTH.