FSC Verified Impact

Five ways to make 2026 more sustainable

Forest Stewardship Council

FSC FORESTS® FOR ALL FOREVER

Top five things to do now for a sustainable 2026

Your sustainability strategy starts in the forest. But how can this drive real change in business?

Here are the top five things your organization can do right now to prepare for, and implement, your 2026 sustainability strategies, and turn promises into proof.

1. Prepare for evidence-based sustainability: treat ESG data like financial data

With CSRD, California Climate Acts, and green claims laws taking effect, it's time to make sure that your organization's sustainability data is traceable, verifiable, and ready for audit. Vague claims won't satisfy regulators. Instead, define what you can reliably measure now and regularly record the data. That could include:

- Carbon emissions
- Biodiversity, including the abundance of species and habitats
- Water quality, soil health and air pollution
- The impact projects have on indigenous communities, such as how they respect governance and culture.

Verified Impact uses rigorous, science-based methods and tools to validate your sustainability efforts, track data and make sure your work follows credible, global standards. So every sustainability claim you make has the rigour of our research behind it.

Build nature intelligence into your supply chain strategy

Nature-based solutions, biodiversity metrics, and land-use data are becoming core to risk management. Companies should map nature dependencies and invest in credible impact data, especially for forest-linked commodities.

Here are just a few examples of the impact we're making

- In a certified community-managed Amazonian forest in Brazil, between 2016 and 2023, the forest cover increased by 402 hectares.
- In Gabon and the Republic of Congo, FSC-certified forests have 2.7 times more larger mammals and critically endangered species, such as gorillas and elephants, compared to non-FSC certified forests.
- In the southeast of the USA, more than 7,000 ha in an FSC-certified forest have been restored to native forestland. A portion of the carbon credits from this Chestnut Carbon Project was bought by the Mercedes F1 team as they aspire to become one of the most sustainable global sports teams.

2. Use technology responsibly to build a smarter supply chain

Modern technology makes it easier to connect and communicate with each link in the supply chain, giving you complete traceability and visibility.

Technology worth investing in this year includes:

- **AI:** use it to evaluate your inventory to reduce waste; optimise logistics to cut emissions; track equipment performance; and analyse product lifecycles to identify improvements
- **3D printing:** use it to reduce shipping and manufacturing costs by enabling local production. You can also use recycled and plant-based filaments to limit plastic waste
- **Blockchain:** strengthen your record-keeping; improve accountability and cut fraud with a secure digital ledger
- **Cloud enterprise resource planning (ERP) software.** Automate end-to-end processes and connect suppliers in real time for greater efficiency and flexibility.

But remember all technologies come with an environmental footprint. So, as you invest, adopt efficiency frameworks to balance introduce innovation responsibly.

3. Set realistic expectations with suppliers to bring down your Scope 3 emissions

According to the MIT Sloan School of Management, Scope 3 emissions account for around 75 per cent of an organization's total emissions on average. To help you work with your suppliers and gradually bring those emissions down, start by asking:

- Which practices can reduce emissions, waste, or social risk?
- What sustainability measures can suppliers reasonably meet?
- Where are the main challenges or resource gaps?
- How will compliance and progress be monitored?
- Are sustainability activities aligned with standardization frameworks, like the EU taxonomy?

Then agree manageable targets that your suppliers will be able to hit without cutting corners.

4. Close the green skills gap inside your organization

According to LinkedIn's 2025 Green Skills Report, demand for sustainability and data capabilities is outpacing supply. If you don't have the green talent you need to drive your sustainability strategy, let this be the year you help your teams level up and build essential skills. Only you will know the specific gaps in your business, but a study from Grant Thornton suggests seven core sustainability skills most organizations need:

- **Sustainability management:** who is equipped to implement new strategies and handle mandatory ESG reporting?
- **Environmental science:** who has a clear picture of the environmental risks in your organization? Is anyone on top of emerging environmental trends?
- **Energy management:** is anyone looking at your overall energy consumption – or how to cut it?
- **Waste and natural resource management:** could you cut your energy impact by managing your resources and recycling more effectively?
- **Green building design:** if your current workspace isn't as energy efficient as it could be, who can help you upgrade it – or find a more sustainable location?
- **Renewable energy:** are you still running on fossil fuels? If so, who can do the cost analysis and recommend alternatives that could lower your carbon footprint?
- **Corporate social responsibility:** who's handling your CSR initiatives and reporting on them to stakeholders and the team? Make sure you have strong communicators in this team who can share your goals and inspire the entire business to get behind them.

And if you'd like to learn more about the FSC and how our work relates to your business, we also run a series of webinars, including promotional licence holder and FSC Chain of Custody courses.

5. Position sustainability as a driver of profit – not cost

Protecting your triple bottom line and supporting a circular economy isn't just the right thing to do, it's profitable too. Here is some data to consider as you build your business case.

- The World Economic Forum estimates that improving global energy efficiency could save economies more than US $2 trillion a year.
- Shifting towards a circular business model cuts material costs and often helps organizations overcome supply chain uncertainties. 40% of Scandinavian companies are already seeing the financial benefits of moving to a circular economy.
- The International Labour Organization also predicts that moving to a circular economy will create 24 million more jobs by 2030 – roles that weren't part of the old linear ways of working.
- Research from PWC showed that customers are willing to pay on average 9.7% more on sustainably sourced products.

Our brand mark is recognised by over half of all consumers worldwide, making it the best-known mark in sustainable forest management. And consumers who see the FSC Recycled mark on your products or packaging understand that your organization has chosen genuinely reclaimed or recycled wood or paper.

We're here to make 2026 sustainable, measureable and profitable for all. If you'd like to learn more about how we can help you reach your sustainability goals, email: ecosystemservices@fsc.org

And if you're interested in hearing more about out work in the circular economy, and how we're helping businesses become more sustainable, take a look our latest webinar.