



WWF is working with Sweden to support the inclusive delivery of the Global Biodiversity Framework in the Mekong region



FACTSHEET

REGIONAL ALIGNMENT OF ASEAN NBSAPS AND NATIONAL TARGETS:

INSIGHTS FROM THE MEKONG

BACKGROUND

ASEAN is one of the world's most biodiverse regions. According to the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity the region represents just 3% of the world's land area, yet is home to 18% of known plant and animal species.¹ This biodiversity underpins food security, health and livelihoods for over 600 million people, yet faces mounting pressures from logging, pollution, agriculture, invasive species, hunting and climate change. In 2022, research found that Asia was the continent lagging furthest behind in meeting biodiversity targets for Protected Areas.²

Countries such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam have exceptionally rich ecosystems and high endemism, making the region critical for contributing to the achievement of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) are key national roadmaps for protecting and restoring nature, mobilising finance and aligning national efforts with the GBF. Through the **Mekong in BALANCE** (MiB) project, WWF Asia-Pacific and partners support countries to strengthen NBSAP ambition, technical capacity and inclusive engagement of local communities.

KEY FINDINGS

Analysis using the [WWF NBSAP Tracker](#) shows variation in the quality of NBSAPs and National Targets across ASEAN but overall demonstrates strong performance.³ The tracker reviews NBSAPs and national targets revised since the adoption of the GBF in 2022, assessing them against 19 criteria clustered into five areas (see [The NBSAPs we need](#)). This analysis is on the NBSAPs and national targets, as submitted to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and does not reflect the situation on the ground or the current state of conservation or implementation.

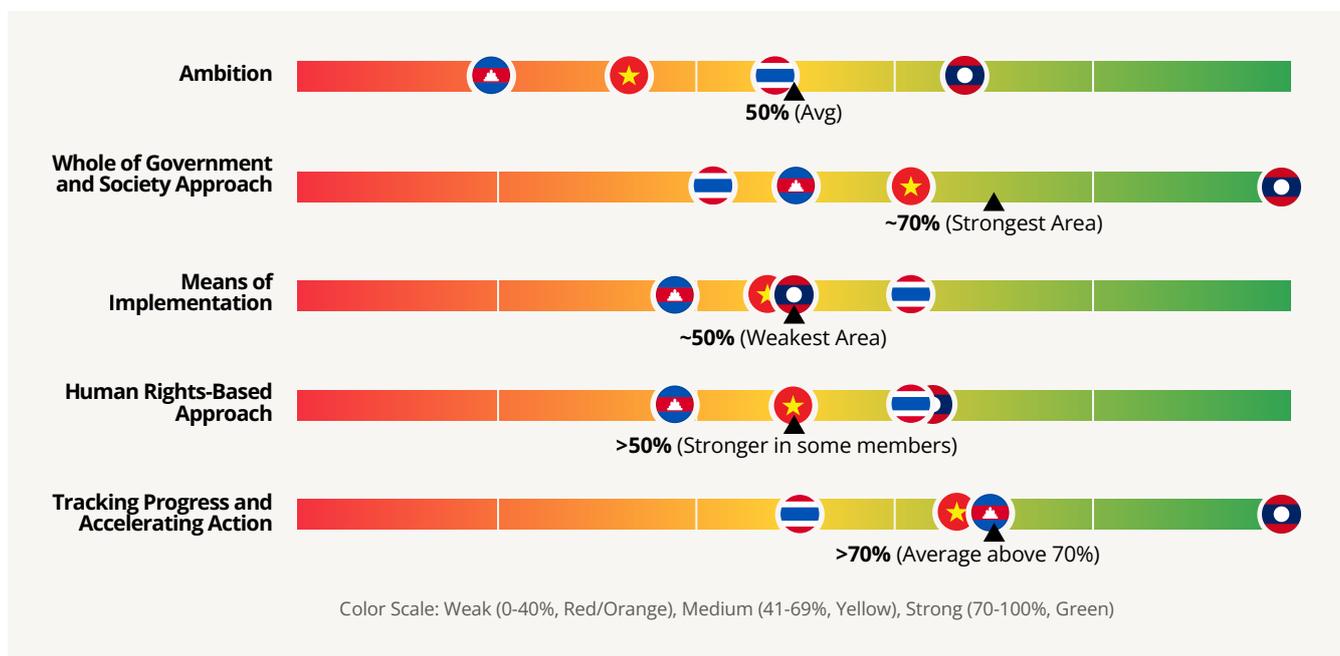
The findings indicate the overall scores of six countries is above 50% (Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam), with the Philippines (88%) and Laos (78%) leading the region.

At a regional level, ASEAN countries demonstrated strengths (average scores ~70%) in coordination across government, integration into national policy frameworks, stakeholder participation, alignment with the GBF headline indicators, and national monitoring and reporting systems.

Human rights-based approaches are emerging, with six countries scoring above 50%. Thailand, Laos and the Philippines lead (75%), particularly on participation of local communities, women and youth.

The main area for improvement across the ASEAN region is implementation (average scores ~50%), including clearer resource allocation and highlighting of financial gaps; stronger alignment with other conventions (i.e. Sustainable Development Goals), defining capacity-building needs as well as action plans to address identified gaps.

As part of the MiB project, a heatmap was developed as a data visualisation tool to represent the magnitude of individual values within the dataset using colour intensity. The heatmap illustrates both regional trends across ASEAN and country-level performance for individual MiB countries, mapped against WWF's *NBSAPs We Need* criteria.



PROGRESS ON 30X30: UNEVEN BUT ADVANCING

ASEAN countries are making steady progress toward the 30x30 targets, but progress is uneven. Notably, Thailand aims to protect 30% of land and sea and restore 30% of degraded areas by 2030. Laos targets 30% effective conservation of terrestrial and inland waters and restoration of 20% of degraded ecosystems by 2030.

Other countries in the region could increase protected areas, strengthen restoration targets and actions while mobilising additional finance to accelerate progress.

NATURE-CLIMATE SYNERGIES: OPPORTUNITIES REMAIN UNDERUTILISED

Most NBSAPs and National Targets recognise links between biodiversity and climate change, particularly ecosystem resilience and carbon storage. While most reference nature-based solutions, integrating a rights-based approach into proposed nature-based solutions is uneven.

Laos and Viet Nam show the strongest leadership in mainstreaming climate mitigation and adaptation in their biodiversity strategies and action plans and applying nature-based solutions. In Laos, nature-based solutions were incorporated across relevant public sectors. Viet Nam's NBSAP is particularly strong in linking nature-based solutions (and a rights-based approach) to development, disaster risk reduction, and ecosystem-based management of vulnerable areas.





Cambodia and Thailand address these links more selectively, while Viet Nam and the Philippines lead on rights-based approaches that integrate traditional knowledge. Across the region, there is scope to better embed gender equality, local participation and traditional knowledge in climate-related biodiversity actions.

FOOD SYSTEMS: A MAJOR GAP IN NBSAPS

Food systems remain weakly addressed in most ASEAN NBSAPs and National Targets. Laos and Malaysia stand out for explicitly linking biodiversity, sustainable production and food security.

In most other countries, food systems are largely seen from a supply-side perspective focusing mainly on sustainable agriculture and fisheries, with limited demand-side measures.

Findings from [WWF's Food Forward NDCs 3.0](#) assessment echo these regional gaps. While most ASEAN countries now reference agriculture and food systems in their climate commitments, fewer include concrete measures on agroecology, circular food systems, food loss and waste reduction, or shifts toward healthy and sustainable diets.

Ambition varies—from 3% organic land in Viet Nam to 10% sustainable practices in Thailand and full adoption in Brunei (all by 2030)—but targets often lack clear action plans. Cambodia includes restoration and fisheries targets without implementation detail, while Laos more clearly links sustainable production to food security and wellbeing. However, across countries, these targets are often not accompanied by clear action plans, timelines, financing or implementation pathways, making their feasibility difficult to assess.

Nature positive production practices are more commonly cited, but transformative food system approaches that integrate biodiversity protection, climate mitigation and adaptation, and social equity across the full food system remain limited. Strengthening coherence between NBSAPs and Nationally Determined Contributions—particularly by advancing agroecological practices, addressing food loss and waste, and embedding equity and community-led governance—offers a major opportunity for ASEAN countries to accelerate progress toward GBF Targets [10](#) and [16](#)⁴ while delivering food security and climate co-benefits.

CONCLUSION

ASEAN countries show strong commitment to biodiversity, but stronger and clearer implementation pathways are needed to deliver results at scale particularly to ensure progress toward halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. In particular, closing the ambition-implementation gap through clearer resource mobilisation strategies is critical to enabling inclusive delivery and ensuring that commitments translate into measurable outcomes for both nature and people. ASEAN countries can learn from each other and accelerate progress by sharing good practices on ambition, implementation and inclusivity.

1. GIZ, 2018, 'Protecting biodiversity in the ASEAN region', <https://www.giz.de/en/projects/institutional-strengthening-biodiversity-sector-asean>

2. University of Oxford, 2022, webpage, accessed November 2025, 'Study finds most Asian countries are far behind biodiversity targets for protected areas', <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2022-11-29-study-finds-most-asian-countries-are-far-behind-biodiversity-targets-protected-areas>

3. Scores are averages based on a range of criteria under each key area, and each criterion is scored based on whether they are ranked as 'Yes' (100%), 'Soft Yes' (50%) or 'No' (0%) For countries with only National Targets some criteria are not scored, whereas for NBSAPs all criteria are scored. For National Targets the average provided is only for those criteria that have been scored.

4. Target 10 - <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/10>, Target 16 - <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/16>