

News announcement

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Exploring the potential of regenerative Marula agroforestry

Nature For Justice (N4J) and Biotrade Ventures are exploring the potential of a landscape-scale community-led agroforestry and woodland regeneration initiative in South Africa, with a focus on Marula.

The project could unlock new opportunities at the intersection of climate finance, biodiversity restoration, biotrade sector development and rural livelihood enhancement.

A feasibility study conducted via a strategic partnership by both organizations in Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces assessed the carbon sequestration potential of introducing 10,000 hectares of mixed-species agroforestry on community-owned land.

The project would feature the locally indigenous Marula tree combined with high-value commercial species like avocado, mango and litchi, alongside 25,000 hectares of assisted natural regeneration (ANR) to restore indigenous woodlands.

The study indicated that this combined model could remove an estimated four million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent (tCO₂e) over a 40-year project period.

Peak sequestration rates are projected to occur between years 10 and 22 of the implementation timeline. These figures are based on the use of the Gold Standard for the Global Goals methodology, a globally recognised standard for quantifying removals from afforestation, reforestation and revegetation (ARR) projects.

A regenerative finance model under development

This potential project is part of N4J's broader efforts to design and test a new model of regenerative finance that blends multiple streams of regenerative farming revenue to support just transitions to more resilient futures for communities living in vulnerable rural landscapes.

The approach focuses on stacking multiple revenue streams, including future carbon and biodiversity credits and deforestation-free climate-smart products and ingredients from native and other plant resources.

The model responds to systemic barriers that limit access to early-stage funding, technical support and equitable benefit-sharing in smallholder and communal farming landscapes.

Through collaborative design with local partners and producers, the goal is to unlock the value of ecosystem services alongside agricultural enterprise development—delivering a combination of environmental, social and economic returns.

Community-centered and scalable

The Marula agroforestry project being explored by Biotrade Ventures, N4J and local community-based organisations would be structured around community-led governance, participatory benefit-sharing mechanisms and support for long-term land and carbon rights.

N4J and Biotrade Ventures are committed to ensuring that any such project reflects the priorities and aspirations of local communities - particularly women producers and traditional landholders - from the earliest stages.

While still in the exploration phase, the model shows promise as a replicable and scalable pathway for meeting rising global demand for low-carbon, traceable and biodiversity-positive indigenous natural products and ingredients, while contributing to broader goals for forest protection, rural inclusion and climate adaptation.

Nature For Justice is a US-based non-profit focused on delivering climate justice through nature-based solutions (NbS). N4J works with frontline communities, particularly smallholder farmers and Indigenous groups, helping them access and benefit from global carbon markets while building resilience in the face of climate change.

Biotrade Ventures, a nonprofit company rooted in South Africa's indigenous natural product sector, supports emerging and existing enterprises across southern Africa. Building on the legacy of PhytoTrade Africa, BioTrade Ventures connects conservation goals with commercial opportunities in the growing markets for natural foods, cosmetics and plant-based products.

By combining ecological restoration with sustainable agriculture and community-driven development, the Marula agroforestry programme presents a scalable model for carbon sequestration, biodiversity regeneration and rural economic empowerment.

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