

WWF Certification Assessment Tool (CAT)



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Numerous certification schemes with different intentions, credibility and focus areas, create confusion and make it difficult to assess which scheme to choose to achieve a specific goal. At WWF, we measure certification schemes by their ability to accomplish positive social and environmental impact measurably on the ground and with surrounding communities. For WWF, “impact” means impact at scale: create change at a level ambitious enough to make a real and lasting difference for the better, achievable by most of the industry. Niche certification schemes that recognise the very best practices are important, but cannot provide a pathway for the bulk of production to set a new “normal” - a widely adopted, less destructive and less wasteful way of growing and harvesting commodities.

WWF has developed the Certification Assessment Tool (CAT) to assess, which certification schemes are best equipped to achieve conservation goals and objectives: i.e. which certification schemes are likely to deliver the best social and environmental impact at scale.

Summary and overview

The CAT is a formalized methodology to evaluate and compare standards and certification schemes. It assesses standard requirements and a scheme’s governance, rules and procedures. The outcome is a better understanding of a certification scheme’s strengths and weaknesses. WWF uses CAT assessments to help identify areas for improvement so these can be addressed as part of a scheme’s efforts to further refine and strengthen their systems. CAT assessments can be applied to all sectors. So far, WWF has developed the CAT for terrestrial commodities (agriculture and forestry). Of 160 questions in total, 150 apply to all sectors, while the remaining 10 questions address sector specific issues for forestry or agriculture.

What does the CAT evaluate?

The CAT **evaluates the requirements of a certification scheme's standard**. For example, is the maintenance of riparian zones a necessary requirement, and if so, do these requirements go beyond legal regulations and how robust are specific requirements?

The CAT also **evaluates the rules and procedures that regulate how the standard is implemented, assessed and governed**. This is called “system strength”. It includes standard development, certification, accreditation, verification and grievance procedures, chain of custody and labelling issues, together with a transparent governance system that includes balanced multi-stakeholder participation.

The strength of a standard's overall system is crucial for the implementation of its requirements. Therefore, the CAT gives equal weight to the standard requirements and the system strength of a scheme.

This can best be illustrated with a hypothetical case: imagine a scheme where comprehensive standard requirements exist, but no measures are in place to implement these or to verify their implementation. Such a scheme would not be credible and would likely be perceived as “greenwashing”.

The CAT is solely based on the study of documents, thus it cannot directly assess implementation of better production practices and resulting reduction of negative social and environmental impacts in practice. However, the indicators to assess a standard's system strength can be seen as proxies for likelihood of field level implementation of a scheme's requirements.

Through its Impact Programme, WWF is partnering with research institutions to better understand the impact certification schemes have in practice.

To be credible, schemes should have strong verification systems. A scheme largely based on legal rules, procedures and enforcement, may be valid in countries with strong and functioning law enforcement, but could potentially be damaging in countries where this is not the case.

Interpretation of results

While a CAT assessment gives a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of a standard scheme, it has to be carefully interpreted as different commodities and geographies require different areas of attention. It is for these reasons that WWF evaluates CAT assessments together with technical experts.

How was the CAT developed?

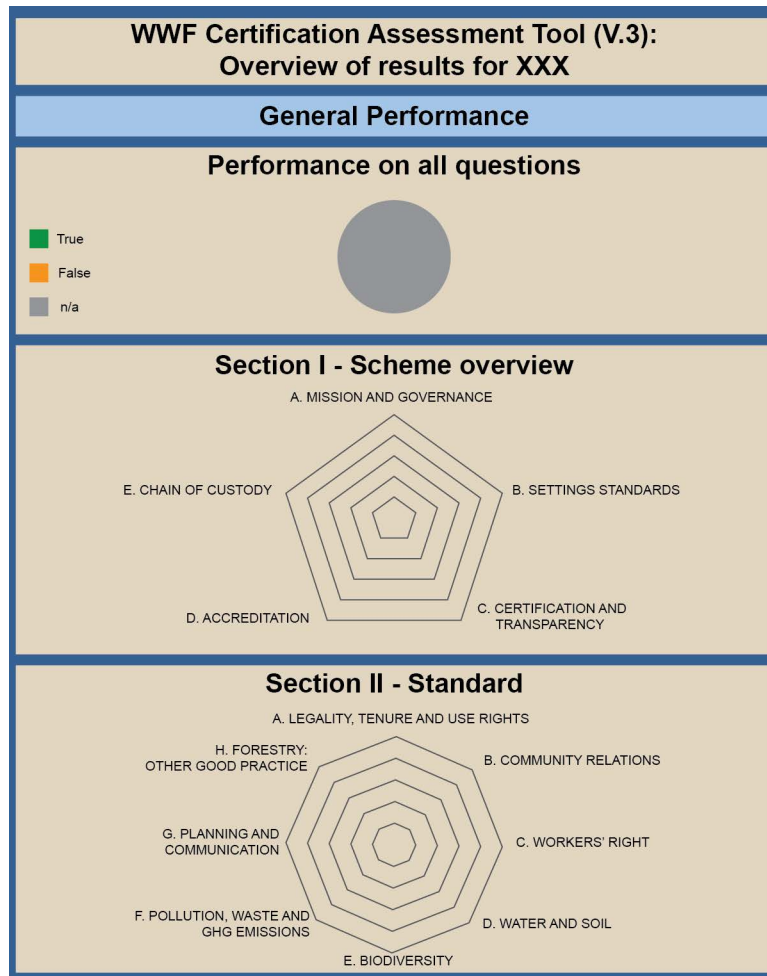
The CAT has been developed by a working group of WWF experts from a variety of fields, including agriculture, forestry and standards and certification. This process was further supported by external experts.

The criteria are derived from the WWF mission and objectives and reference the following documents and organisations:

- WWF principles to actively endorse and recognize effective and credible standards and certification schemes;
- Social Accountability Standard (SA 8000);
- International Finance Corporation (IFC);
- WWF/World Bank Forest Certification Assessment Guide (FCAG);
- WWF/World Bank Biofuels Sustainability Environmental Scorecard;
- HCV Resource Network;

CAT: Results and presentation

The result of a CAT evaluation of a forest management certification scheme will highlight the strengths in spider diagrams of Part I and Part II respectively.



CRITERIA

SYSTEM STRENGTHS (Part 1)
(80 questions - 5 sections)

- A. Mission & Governance
- B. Setting standards
- C. Certification and transparency
- D. Accreditation
- E. Chain of custody

STANDARD STRENGTHS (Part 2)
(80 questions - 8 sections)

- A. Legality, tenure, use rights
- B. Community relations
- C. Workers' rights
- D. Water & soil
- E. Biodiversity
- F. Pollution, waste & GHG emissions
- G. Planning and communication
- H. Forestry – Other good practices

On the following pages you will find the 160 criteria of the CAT (forest version) – 160 questions in total; 80 questions for scheme strengths and 80 for standard strengths.

A MISSION AND GOVERNANCE

- 1 The scheme is set up to continuously improve the social, environmental and economic benefits of producing a specific commodity or category of commodities.
- 2 Scheme core normative documents, e.g. statutes, bylaws and principles and criteria, are publicly available on a scheme website.
- 3 The scheme is a (full or associate) member of ISEAL.
- 4 The scheme has a resourced Secretariat with clearly defined staff and functions related to, at a minimum, finance, standard development, communication, membership/participant handling, quality assurance and complaints. An organisational chart and contact details are publicly available online.
- 5 The scheme is open to membership (and/or similar level of participation in governance) for all stakeholders who share the scheme's values and objectives.
- 6 Names and affiliation of members are publicly available on a scheme website.
- 7 Members are required to commit to scheme values and objectives through signing a code of conduct (or similar).
- 8 Members' code of conduct requires legal compliance, adherence to International Labour Organisation core conventions and free prior and informed consent and maintenance of High Conservation Values (HCVs).
- 9 Members are required to develop and adhere to a time-bound plan towards certification and/or procurement of certified products, and report annually on progress.
- 10 Procedures are in place to suspend or terminate membership for gross violations of the code of conduct.
- 11 The scheme's highest decision-making forum is, or is formally mandated by, the membership/scheme participants.
- 12 Highest decision-making forum procedures ensure that no interest group can dominate governance decision-making.
- 13 Highest decision-making forum procedures ensure that non-economic sector constituencies collectively have (at least) the same governance decision-making power as economic sector constituencies.
- 14 Highest decision-making forum procedures ensure that constituencies representing economic, social and environmental interests have equal governance decision-making power.
- 15 Highest governance decision-making forum requires balanced participation of economic, social and environmental representatives.
- 16 Changes to core normative documents, e.g. statutes, bylaws, and principles and criteria, require voting by the scheme members/participants.
- 17 Executive (secretariat) functions are overseen by a board of directors or trustees composed of individuals mandated by voting among scheme members/participants.
- 18 Minutes of board of trustee meetings are publicly available.
- 19 There are time-bound and transparent procedures for handling disputes and complaints by members/participants related to governance and executive functions.
- 20 There are defined procedures for appealing the handling of disputes and complaints related to governance and executive functions open to all members/participants.

B SETTING STANDARDS

- 21 Nationally applicable certification standard(s) constitute, or are adapted from, a set of internationally, regionally or nationally applicable principles and criteria (or equivalent).
- 22 The principles and criteria (or equivalent) address as a minimum: social and environmental impacts, workers' conditions and rights, community relations, environmental services, conservation of biodiversity and good management practices.
- 23 Nationally applicable certification standards are (or were) developed in accordance with formally defined scheme procedures.
- 24 Representatives of major economic, social and environmental interests are actively invited to participate in the development of nationally applicable certification standards.
- 25 Nationally applicable certification standards are developed with a meaningful participation of economic, social and environmental representatives.
- 26 Nationally applicable certification standards are developed by consensus or in processes where no single interest group can dominate decision-making.
- 27 Nationally applicable certification standards are developed by consensus or in processes where a certain minimum, balanced quorum is required for decision-making.
- 28 Nationally applicable certification standards are developed in processes where input is solicited from scientific and technical experts.
- 29 Draft nationally applicable certification standards are subject to public consultation.
- 30 Input received in consultations on draft nationally applicable certification standards is documented and there is report back on how issues raised are addressed.
- 31 Nationally applicable certification standards are formally approved by the scheme.
- 32 Nationally applicable certification standards are publicly available on a website.
- 33 Nationally applicable certification standards have auditable indicator(s) for each criterion.
- 34 Most indicators of nationally applicable certification standards require an absolute level of performance (as opposed to merely relative improvement or the existence of a process).
- 35 Nationally applicable certification standards clearly distinguish mandatory requirements from recommendations and guidance.
- 36 Nationally applicable certification standards have separate requirements for small and/or medium sized management units and/or are formulated so as to take account of the scale and intensity of operations.
- 37 Nationally applicable certification standards are revised at least every five years.
- 38 Nationally applicable certification standards are developed and revised in full compliance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice.
- 39 The scheme either applies the same certification standard in all areas of operation, or has procedures for harmonization of different standards applicable to similar national/regional contexts.
- 40 The scheme either applies the same certification standard in all areas of operation, or has procedures for certification based on scheme principles and criteria (or equivalent) in countries without nationally applicable standards.

C CERTIFICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

- 41 Producers are certified by independent third party certification bodies operating in compliance with ISO requirements.
- 42 Producers applying for certification are required to commit to a time-bound plan for certification of all (eligible) units under their control.
- 43 Searchable databases with names, sizes and locations of all certified units, including expiry dates, are publicly available on a scheme website.
- 44 Certification bodies post information about upcoming scheduled certification and surveillance audits on a common national and/or international scheme-operated website or mailing list.
- 45 Certification bodies are required to conduct annual or more frequent surveillance audits of certificate holders.
- 46 Certification bodies are required to proactively consult with affected stakeholders during both certification and surveillance audits.
- 47 Certification bodies are required take account of stakeholders' comments during certification and surveillance audits.
- 48 Certification bodies are required conduct risk-based auditing and surveillance.
- 49 Certification bodies are required to adjust the intensity of auditing and surveillance to match observations in the field.
- 50 Certification bodies are required to conduct unannounced audits in high-risk contexts.
- 51 Certificate holders are required to rectify non-compliances identified during certification and surveillance audits within a set timeframe that does not exceed one year.
- 52 Less severe (minor) non-compliances that are not rectified in time are escalated to severe (major) non-compliances.
- 53 Severe (major) non-compliances that are not rectified in time lead to suspension or termination of the certificate.
- 54 Summary reports of certification and surveillance audits (including dates, locations and scope of auditing, team composition, main findings and corrective action requests) are publicly available in a UN language on a website.
- 55 Summary reports of certification and surveillance audits (including dates, locations and scope of auditing, team composition, main findings and corrective action requests) are publicly available in a common local language on a website.
- 56 Summary reports of certification and surveillance audits are made publicly available within 90 days after completion of the audit.
- 57 Certificates are valid for no more than five years after which a new full certification audit is required.
- 58 Certification bodies implement formal and transparent, publicly available procedures for handling disputes and complaints related to certification and surveillance.
- 59 Certification and surveillance complaints procedures have clear deadlines.
- 60 Certification and surveillance complaints procedures include appeal mechanisms open to use by any affected party.

D ACCREDITATION

- 61 Certification bodies are accredited by an ISEAL member accreditation organisation.
- 62 The accreditation organization(s) list(s) upcoming regular assessments and surveillance audits of certification bodies publicly on a website.
- 63 The accreditation organization provides mechanisms for stakeholder input during assessment and surveillance audits of certification bodies.
- 64 The accreditation organization verifies that certification bodies have the systems and competences necessary to audit compliance with the standard's social and environmental requirements and to engage effectively with stakeholders during auditing and surveillance.
- 65 The accreditation organization conducts risk based auditing and surveillance of accredited certification bodies.
- 66 Less severe (minor) non-compliances that are not rectified within the time set are escalated to severe (major) non-compliances.
- 67 Severe (major) non-compliances that are not rectified within the time set lead to suspension or termination of the accreditation.
- 68 Summaries of the accreditation assessments of certification bodies are publically available
- 69 Accreditation organizations implement formal and transparent, publicly available procedures for handling disputes and complaints related to approval and accreditation of certification bodies.
- 70 Certification and accreditation complaints procedures include appeal mechanisms open to any involved party.

E CHAIN OF CUSTODY

- 71 There are scheme procedures for monitoring custody and trade of materials from certified producers (regardless of chain of custody model).
- 72 There are scheme procedures for assessing risks related to the origin of materials in labelled products.
- 73 Certificate holders are required to manage critical control points along the supply chain with a scope and rigour that corresponds to the risks.
- 74 Certification bodies survey certificate holders' operation of chain of custody procedures.
- 75 Certification bodies survey certificate holders' use of claims, trademarks and labels, on and off products.
- 76 The scheme either only allows for claims on products consisting of fully segregated materials, or requires that claims associated with products containing a physical mix of certified and non-certified materials are clearly distinguished, e.g. by use of terms such as "mixed" or "proportion".
- 77 The scheme either only allows for claims on products consisting of fully segregated materials, or requires that products of mixed origins do not any contain any (focus commodity) materials defined as "controversial", "unacceptable" or similar.
- 78 The scheme requires that products labelled or otherwise claimed as certified do not contain any (focus commodity) materials that are illegally harvested or traded.
- 79 The scheme requires that products labelled or otherwise claimed as certified do not contain any (focus commodity) materials from areas where traditional or civil rights are violated.
- 80 The scheme requires that products labelled or otherwise claimed as certified do not contain any (focus commodity) materials from areas where HCVs (1-6) are threatened.

A LEGALITY, TENURE & USE RIGHTS

- 1 Producers are required to be legally defined entities.
- 2 Producers are required to have legal land tenure or title and valid rights to use the management unit.
- 3 Producers are required to comply with all applicable national and international laws and regulations.
- 4 Producers are required to identify legal and customary rights of tenure, access and use of other parties that apply on the management unit.
- 5 Producers are required to uphold legal and customary rights of tenure, access and use of other parties, unless these rights are delegated through documented free, prior and informed consent.
- 6 Producers are required to respect the rights, customs and culture of indigenous peoples as defined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and ILO Convention 169 (1989).
- 7 Producers are required to engage with affected stakeholders and document measures taken to resolve disputes related to land tenure, access and use.
- 8 Producers are required to engage with affected stakeholders and document measures taken to resolve disputes related to water access and use.
- 9 Producers are required to take measures against unauthorized or illegal activities and settlement on the management unit.
- 10 Producers are required to commit in writing not to offer or receive bribes or engage in any other form of corruption.

B COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- 11 Producers are required to engage in dialogue with neighbouring communities and individuals.
- 12 Producers are required to identify negative impacts from operations on communities and individuals.
- 13 Producers are required to take measures to minimize and mitigate negative impacts from operations on communities and individuals.
- 14 Producers are required to address grievances and provide fair compensation for negative impacts of operations on local communities and individuals.
- 15 Producers are required to assess potential impacts on communities and individuals, including impacts on food security and water availability, prior to any significant intensification or expansion of cultivation or infrastructure.
- 16 Producers are required to identify and respect sites of cultural and religious significance in the management unit.
- 17 Producers are required to assess and maintain High Conservation Values (HCVs) category 5 (basic necessities for local communities) in the management unit.
- 18 Producers are required to support economic development by providing opportunities for local employment and provision of services.
- 19 Producers are required to actively engage in welfare programmes, where relevant to the social context.
- 20 Producers are required to regularly monitor their impacts on the local economy and to adapt management as necessary for improvement.

C WORKERS' RIGHTS

- 21 Producers are required to respect the core ILO rights of workers as defined in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).
- 22 Producers are required to ensure that children under the age of 15 (or higher if stipulated in national law) do not carry out productive work in the management unit.
- 23 Producers are not allowed to use forced or otherwise involuntary labor.
- 24 Producers are required to ensure that there is no discrimination at work and that workers are not subject to any form of corporal punishment, abuse, harassment or intimidation.
- 25 Producers are required to identify potential health and safety risks at work and take measures to avoid them.
- 26 Producers are required to ensure that workers are adequately equipped, instructed and trained for their tasks, including safe use and handling of chemicals.
- 27 Producers are required to respect workers' freedom of association and right to collective bargaining.
- 28 Producers are required to ensure that wages, working hours and leave comply with, or exceed, applicable legislation and sector minimum standards.
- 29 Producers are required to address grievances related to working conditions and workers' rights and to provide compensation for occupational injuries.
- 30 Producers are required to regularly monitor working conditions and to adapt management as necessary for improvement.

D WATER AND SOIL

- 31 Producers are required to identify water resources potentially affected by operations, in as well as outside the management unit.
- 32 Producers are required to take measures to minimize and mitigate negative impacts from operations on water resources.
- 33 Producers are not allowed to create or aggravate situations of water scarcity.
- 34 Producers are required to maintain or improve the quality of surface and ground water.
- 35 Producers are required to maintain natural wetlands in undrained conditions.
- 36 Producers are required to avoid or minimize run-off and siltation of watercourses.
- 37 Producers are required to take measures to minimize negative impacts from operations on soil resources.
- 38 Producers are required to avoid or minimize soil erosion.
- 39 Producers are required to maintain or improve soil quality.
- 40 Producers are required to regularly monitor their impacts on soil and water and to adapt management as necessary for improvement.

E BIODIVERSITY

- 41 Producers are required to identify biodiversity values, potentially affected by operations, in as well as outside the management unit.
- 42 Producers are required to take measures to minimize and mitigate negative impacts from operations on biodiversity values.
- 43 Producers are required to assess potential impacts on biodiversity values prior to significant intensification or expansion of cultivation or infrastructure.
- 44 Producers are required to protect rare and threatened species and their habitats in the management unit.
- 45 Producers are required to assess and maintain HCVs category 1 (concentrations of rare and threatened species), 2 (large landscapes in a relatively natural state) and 3 (rare and threatened ecosystems) in the management unit.
- 46 Producers are required to maintain representative areas of native ecosystems in the management unit.
- 47 Producers are required to maintain or restore native vegetation along streams and watercourses.
- 48 Producers are required to take measures against any illegal or inappropriate hunting, fishing or collecting in the management unit.
- 49 Producers are not allowed to introduce or use invasive alien species in the management unit.
- 50 Producers are required to regularly monitor their impacts on biodiversity and to adapt management as necessary for improvement.

F POLLUTION, WASTE & GHG EMISSIONS

- 51 Producers are required to implement integrated pest management practices that minimize the use of pesticides.
- 52 Producers are not allowed to use hazardous chemicals (as defined by WHO 1A and B and the Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions).
- 53 Producers are required to document all application, handling, storage and disposal of agrochemicals.
- 54 Producers are required to take measures to avoid or minimize negative impacts of agrochemical use on human health and the environment.
- 55 Producers are required to ensure that transportation, application, handling, storage and disposal of agrochemicals comply with good practice and/or manufacturers' recommendations.
- 56 Producers are required to ensure that any use of biological control agents complies with internationally recognized standards and/or protocols.
- 57 Producers are required to estimate sequestration and emissions of greenhouse gases from the management unit.
- 58 Producers are required to take measures to reduce any net emissions of greenhouse gases from the management unit.
- 59 Producers are not allowed to clear native forest and/or areas of high above-ground carbon stocks to expand cultivation or plantations.
- 60 Producers are not allowed to expand cultivation or plantations on peat soils and/or areas of high below-ground carbon stocks.

G PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION

- 61 Producers are required to continuously improve key practices and operations.
- 62 Producers are required to have management plans appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operation that demonstrate commitment to long-term social, environmental and economic viability.
- 63 Producers are required to regularly revise their management plans to reflect the results of monitoring and evaluation.
- 64 Producers are required to make summaries of their management plans publicly available on their website.
- 65 Producers are required to use independent expertise for assessing social and environmental impacts prior to significant intensification or expansion of cultivation or infrastructure.
- 66 Producers are required to make summaries of social and environmental impact assessments publicly available on their website.
- 67 Producers are required to identify HCVs (all 6 categories) prior to significant expansion of cultivation or plantations.
- 68 Producers are required to use independent expertise for assessing HCVs prior to expansion of cultivation or plantations.
- 69 Producers are required to make summaries of their HCV assessments publicly available on their website.
- 70 Producers are not allowed to expand cultivation or establish plantations at the expense of one or more HCVs.

H FORESTRY: OTHER GOOD PRACTICE

- 71 Producers are required to regularly monitor and evaluate key economic performance indicators like yields, revenues and costs and take measures as necessary for improvement.
- 72 Producers are required to promote use of a diverse range of resources and services from the management unit.
- 73 Producers are required to ensure that products are not harvested at levels above sustainable yields.
- 74 Producers are required to ensure that tree cover is regenerated to pre-harvesting (or more natural) conditions after logging.
- 75 Producers are required to use tree species for regeneration that are well adapted to site conditions.
- 76 Producers are not allowed to use genetically modified trees in the management unit.
- 77 Producers are required to use management practices appropriate for the tree species, site conditions and management objectives.
- 78 Producers are required to use management practices in natural/semi-natural forests that reflect natural disturbance regimes.
- 79 Producers are required to maintain high scenic landscape values.
- 80 Producers are required to take measures to increase resilience and reduce potential negative impacts from natural hazards.

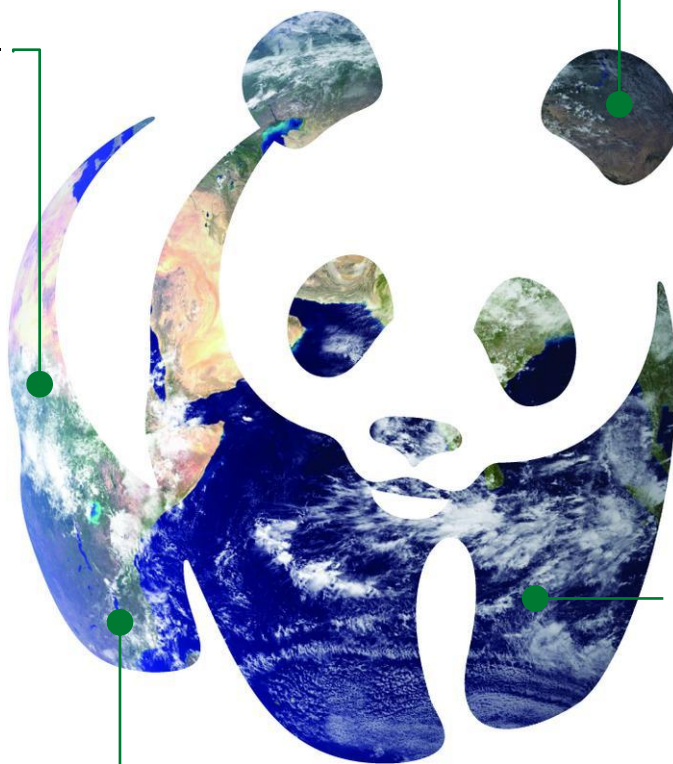
WWF in numbers

1961

WWF was founded in 1961

+100

WWF is in over 100 countries,
on 6 continents



+5,000

WWF has over 5,000 staff
worldwide

+5M

WWF has over 5 million
supporters



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and
to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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