



**Leverhulme Centre**  
for Nature Recovery

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## Strengthening evidence use in Kenya's climate-resilient coffee sector

### Overview

Kenya's coffee sector is navigating declining productivity, governance reforms, and rising compliance demands of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), alongside new regional opportunities under Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This project examined how evidence is produced, shared, and used across the coffee policy ecosystem and its intersection with the Kenyan government interest and policy reforms aimed at tripling coffee production and upscaling the coffee sector and trade foreign exchange and impact.

### Key implication from this analysis

The effectiveness of ongoing reforms will depend on building a coordinated, two-way and interoperable evidence system that connects actors across devolved production systems (county level) and centralised trade and regulatory systems (national level).

This policy brief summarises cross-cutting implications for how evidence must function to support a more equitable and climate-resilient coffee sector across four strategic themes based on documentary analysis and multi-stakeholder workshops across public officials, NGOs, coffee companies, academics, companies, coffee producers and platforms.

## 1. Production



**Key finding:** Coffee production is managed at county level, but evidence systems supporting farmers are fragmented, largely one-directional, and undermined by weakening extension capacity and inconsistent advisory services.

**Implication for evidence use:** Evidence systems need to operate as two-way learning systems at the production level.

- Rebuild extension as a channel for both mobilising and disseminating knowledge (including farmer experience)
- Improve coordination between national and county actors, cooperatives, and research institutions
- Strengthen quality assurance and regulate advisory services to combat the misinformation of coffee farmers

## 2. Governance & institutions

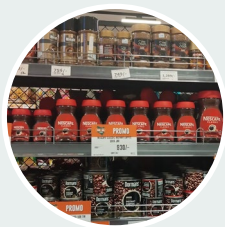


**Key finding:** Institutional roles are evolving, but governance challenges—especially within cooperatives—continue to affect transparency, accountability, and service delivery. Implementation gaps remain despite ongoing reforms.

**Implication for evidence use:** Evidence must support accountability and coordination across institutions.

- Embed evidence in cooperative governance (e.g. transparency in pricing, payments, performance)
- Clarify and align operational mandates across county and national actors
- Ensure evidence flows between levels of government for better policy implementation, not just policy design

## 3. Trade



**Key finding:** Trade is governed nationally and increasingly shaped by compliance regimes (e.g. EUDR), where evidence (traceability, certification) becomes a condition of market access. At the same time, AfCFTA presents underexplored opportunities, particularly for African-led standards setting.

**Implication for evidence use:** Evidence systems must be interoperable across trade, regulatory, and sustainability requirements.

- Develop systems that serve multiple purposes (compliance, certification, trade reporting) to reduce duplication
- Use AfCFTA as a platform to expand and legitimise African-led standards and evidence frameworks, reducing reliance on externally imposed compliance regimes.
- Ensure evidence requirements of regulations like the EUDR do not exclude smallholders from key markets

## 4. Cross-cutting implications for evidence generation and use



**Key finding:** Coffee governance in Kenya is increasingly moving toward an “evidence economy,” where data and documentation underpin governance, compliance, and market participation. However, current systems risk fragmentation, duplication, and high costs—especially for smallholders.

**Core implication from this study:** Build a coordinated, two-way and interoperable evidence system that connects production, governance, and trade.

Such a system should:

- Enable two-way information flows between county (production) and national (trade/regulatory) levels
- Ensure interoperability across policy domains (AfCFTA, EUDR, climate, certification)
- Reduce duplication and transaction costs in evidence generation
- Protect and include smallholders by avoiding excessive compliance burdens
- Connect national research, including those passed in the Coffee Act (2023), to wider regional and continental knowledge systems

### Concluding note

The project findings intersect with and provide options for operationalising many of the Kenyan governments’ policy reforms across the Green Supplement of AfCFTA and the recently passed Coffee Act (2003). It stresses that:

- Across production, governance, and trade, the effectiveness of policy will depend on how well evidence systems connect actors, levels of governance, and policy objectives.
- A farmer-centred, coordinated evidence system is therefore a critical enabler of Kenya’s broader ambitions for a climate-resilient, competitive coffee sector.



A full report on the study is available at: [nature.recovery.ox.ac.uk/outputs/evidence-for-equitable-climate-resilient-coffee-kenya-report/](https://nature.recovery.ox.ac.uk/outputs/evidence-for-equitable-climate-resilient-coffee-kenya-report/)

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## About us

The ongoing loss and degradation of nature is one of the greatest challenges of our time. In response, the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery (LCNR) was created in 2022 as a hub for innovative research on nature recovery. It brings together experts from a broad range of disciplines across the University of Oxford. The team collaborates with partners in communities and organisations around the world.

## What is nature recovery?

We define nature recovery as the activity of helping life on Earth to thrive by repairing human relationships with the rest of the natural world.

## Our aims

- To understand the societal, biophysical, policy and systemic factors that enable or challenge nature recovery
- To collaborate with practitioners, communities, and partners in diverse contexts to test, challenge, and innovate the tools, techniques, and theories that deliver fair and effective nature recovery.
- To establish an inclusive nature recovery community at Oxford, leveraging its intellectual capital and interdisciplinary convening power to address key debates and challenges in the field.



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