



Environment Programme

Programme Strategy

Safeguarding our future by restoring our connection to nature, and changing the ways we feed and fuel our world

Safeguarding our future by restoring our connection to nature, and changing the ways we feed and fuel our world



We have a responsibility to take care of our planet for future generations. We have a lot of work to do: we face a climate emergency, our natural life support systems are collapsing, and inequality is tearing at our social fabric. We have just ten years to reduce climate pollution by half and arrest the damage caused by using fossil fuels indiscriminately, bulldozing our forests, pouring plastics into our oceans, and trading endangered species into extinction.

There is still time to act. The actions we take today can revive the planet’s health for the future. Philanthropy, civil society, business, and political leaders are starting to come together to define a shared vision to repair the damage we have done to our home. We can build from the bottom up to ensure that our solutions are inclusive, fair, and lasting. And,

we can ignite hope and catalyze change that restores our connection to nature and heals our planet’s health.

In response to the lessons learned from the [recent evaluations](#) of our successes and failures, from the wisdom of our partners, and from the teachings of the Covid-19 pandemic, our five-year strategy (2021-2026) focuses on safeguarding our future by restoring our connection to nature, and changing the ways we feed and fuel our world.

Our approach

Our work and our funding will be guided by the following key principles, which are at the heart of our strategy. We will:

- place people and communities at the centre of our work;
- seek opportunities to harness the collective power of people acting together;
- support solutions and people on the frontlines who drive transformations across the fields of climate change, biodiversity, human health, and livelihoods;
- leave behind the old approach of focussing on single-issue silos in favour of funding work with the most potential to have co-benefits and impacts across multiple issue areas;
- be courageous in our grant-making, willing to test ideas that might scale to the enormity of our challenge; and
- refine our monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems, and develop more trust-based accountability measures, to allow us to fail, learn, and course correct fast.

We are also committing to transforming ourselves. We are changing the way we set our goals, measure our progress, adjust our path, address equity and inclusion, and interact with our partners. In addition, we are increasing our ambition and further embracing our role as a collaborative partner in environmental philanthropy.

Three systems

The new strategy has evolved from a sectoral approach, which focused on climate, marine, and wildlife trade and conservation, to a global systems transformation approach. We have chosen to focus on three systems that present the greatest transformative opportunities: **Energy, Food, and Natural Security**. Each of these systems is vital to our future as a human species and the global commons upon which we all depend.

Energy:

Changing how we fuel our world

Our pace in reducing dependence on fossil fuels has been unacceptably slow but the trend toward clean power is accelerating in exciting ways. Recognising the need to cut fossil fuel use in half by 2030 and to zero by 2050, we will support organisations and diverse movements working to accelerate this transition. In doing so, we will engage at the intersection of race, equity, gender rights, and climate justice. We will also support widespread efforts to change the cultural narrative about the acceptability of fossil fuels.

In the energy system, our work will focus on six areas: oil, gas, plastics and petrochemicals, clean power, transport, and sustainable cities. We will fund efforts to catalyse the deployment of clean energy technologies, supporting the transition away from coal, oil, and gas. We will continue to support our partners' work in Europe, India, China, Southeast Asia, and Brazil. We will complement our funding efforts with dedicated campaigns to end offshore oil and gas exploration and rapidly reduce pollution from aviation to systematically reduce our dependency on fossil fuels. And, we will enable efforts to eliminate the mountains of unnecessary single-use plastic products and reduce demand for, and oversupply of, virgin plastic.

We will influence and transform systems of finance as a critical lever to challenge the fossil fuel sector and accelerate the shift to clean, safe, and equitable power. We will use innovative and disruptive finance strategies to stop the flow of financing to gas.

We will support and assist the movements that are critical to creating zero-carbon cities, phasing out diesel and petrol cars to improve air quality. We will also support the deployment of clean commercial fleets and delivery vehicles. We will work alongside local community groups to transform our cities into places where nature thrives, and where it is safe to walk children to school, or cycle to work. We will support the acceleration of clean mobility and embrace the role cities can play in reducing traffic congestion and innovating new and healthier approaches to urban living.

Food: **Changing how we feed our world**

Under our new strategy we will support efforts to ensure that food is harvested, processed, distributed, eaten, and disposed of in a way that promotes health, biodiversity, human rights, and animal welfare, all while staying within the boundaries of our planet's life support systems.

Our strategy involves engaging in four areas to bring about a just, equitable, and sustainable food system: we must rebalance meat consumption, transform the wild food supply chain, and promote a real blue economy in which seafood is allowed to recover and be harvested sustainably, ensuring the food security of coastal and Indigenous communities. We will work toward increasing fisheries transparency and reducing labour rights abuses, particularly in the nations with the biggest fishing fleets and the murkiest practices.

the global level to bring together climate, human rights, and the labour movement, with campaigners focused on the marine environment, including fishers and Indigenous peoples. Much of our focus will be on initiatives to address the negative social and environmental impacts of distant-water fleets and to support the governance of small-scale fisheries, particularly initiatives rooted in social justice.

We will support the protection and stewardship of marine resources to meet the food security needs of coastal communities. We also seek to support a shift in human diet toward a greater reliance on plant-based foods, where a choice is possible, so that by 2030 people in many parts of the world are eating less and better animal sourced food. And, we will build on the lessons of Covid-19 to drive policy and consumption changes that reflect the health and ecosystem risks of intruding on wilderness habitats to harvest and trade wild animals for food.

We will support change in food consumption patterns, and a shift in the norms of acceptable food marketing. We will enable efforts to drive civil society and consumers towards actively reshaping food choices and food availability. We will support campaigns aimed at protecting territorial seas from bottom-trawling in coastal nations in developed and developing nations. We will support efforts that: promote healthy and sustainable food in China through catalysing leadership from e-commerce, retailers, and consumers; commit to drastically reducing plastic use; reduce the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry in Europe; and reduce pesticide use in Europe and Brazil.

Transforming our current food system will set off ripple effects of tidal dimensions. No other sector has a bigger impact on the health of our climate, our oceans, our land, our forests, and our own health and wellbeing.

There is an unprecedented opportunity at

Natural Security: Changing how we live with nature

Wild places, such as savannas and forests, are a form of natural security for both the wildlife and human beings that call them home. Wild places drive the Earth's systems of regeneration. They keep life safer from pandemics and allow for the process of adaptation and evolution of life on Earth to continue. Our work and grant-making will focus on the connectivity between people and their wild places.

We will support the rich biodiversity of "living landscapes" in Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. Living landscapes is the term we use to describe a conservation approach that supports productive, resilient rural networks of people who are able to deter over-exploitation, while safeguarding wildlife and wild places. Our work in living landscapes also considers nature's borders, such as river basins, and supports symbiotic relationships whereby community development, employment, and livelihoods can be provided while biodiversity can also thrive.

We will support local and regional projects that put people at the heart of conservation — especially women, youth, farmers, and herders, and other traditional leadership. We will do so by strengthening rural collectives and improving the distribution of benefits from natural wealth (e.g., nature-based tourism and sustainable harvesting of wild species). We will connect networks that share socioecological and conservation aims, and promote new thinking among funders and decision-makers about conservation projects that do not isolate wildlife and wild places from the people who live in and around them.

We will support individuals and collectives to build effective land and wildlife management programmes. But, more importantly, we aim to create economic opportunities and align economic incentives that neither industrialise or overexploit the landscape nor lead to the

loss of social or natural value (e.g., the loss of Indigenous cultures, traditional knowledge and technologies, species, or rivers due to pollution).

Our work will continue to contribute to the disruption and reduction of illegal wildlife trade by establishing regional response networks with enhanced capabilities and better resilience to disruption.

By supporting and lifting up the voice of communities, democratising access, increasing connectivity, and encouraging systemic thinking among ourselves, youth, Indigenous communities, women, and traditional leadership, we believe we can find harmony in which all life, oceans, and wild places thrive.

Seven campaigns

As a complement to our annual grant-making programme, as highlighted throughout this strategy, we will launch seven new campaigns designed to accelerate the implementation of our new strategy, and improve our ability to nimbly evaluate and adjust investments. The campaigns are:

- end offshore oil and gas;
- rapidly reduce pollution from aviation;
- promote healthy and sustainable food in China through catalysing leadership from e-commerce, retailers, and consumers;
- protect territorial seas from bottom trawling;
- reduce pesticide use in Europe and Brazil;
- reduce antibiotics in industrial-level animal husbandry in Europe; and
- prevent deforestation imports into the EU.

Our roadmap

Together with our partners, other funders, business, and political leaders we can revive the planet's health for the future. We hope that this strategy will offer us a roadmap to support our partners in their efforts to build a thriving and healthy future for all people and wildlife.

For more information, please read our [funding criteria](#) on our website.

General information about Oak Foundation

Oak Foundation reflects the vision and values of its founders. We commit our resources to address issues of global, social, and environmental concern, particularly those that have a major impact on the lives of the disadvantaged.

We have 11 programmes, through which we have made more than 5,000 grants to organisations around the world. Our six main programmes are:

- Environment
- Housing and Homelessness
- International Human Rights
- Issues Affecting Women
- Learning Differences; and
- Prevent Child Sexual Abuse.

In addition, our Trustees support causes that fall outside the remits of the other programmes through the Special Interest Programme.

There are four national programmes: Brazil, Oak Foundation Denmark, India, and Zimbabwe.

With offices in Europe, Africa, India, and North America, we make grants to organisations in approximately 40 countries worldwide.

How to apply for funding

Oak Foundation accepts unsolicited requests for funding through a letter of enquiry. However, please note that the majority of our grant-making is not initiated by our letter of enquiry process. [The submission form can be found on our website.](#)