

Growing from the Grassroots





FASB has invested nearly

€3 million

in 45 locally led projects in
Bahia, Brazil



Cover photo: ©Márcio Bayer

Photo: ©Association of Rural Producers of the Pau-Brasil
Settlement Project

With its collaborative bottom-up approach to forest landscape restoration, FASB offers a different route toward global targets on climate, nature and social development.



Photo: Mãe Terra Institute

Introduction

With the world facing the twin crises of climate change and nature loss, restoring forests and degraded lands is an urgent imperative. Restoration supports climate mitigation and adaptation, and is essential to meeting the Paris Agreement goal of keeping the average global temperature rise below 1.5°C. It can help to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity and the critical services that ecosystems provide. It can improve people's well-being, support socioeconomic development, and help provide food, materials and sustainable livelihoods for a growing global population.

The last few years have brought a procession of ambitious initiatives, targets and pledges to support restoration – including the Bonn Challenge, which aims to catalyse the restoration of 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands worldwide by 2030. Governments, development agencies, philanthropists and the private sector have announced hundreds of millions of dollars of funding for forest restoration and nature-based solutions – although the total still falls far short of what's needed.

While these are welcome developments, not all initiatives are created equal. Top-down targets that don't take account of the realities on the ground are unlikely to be met. Tree-planting programmes with a narrow focus on carbon can bring environmental and social problems. Projects that don't benefit local people or deal with the root causes of deforestation and degradation are unlikely to succeed in the long run.

FASB* offers a different way of doing things that upends traditional funding models. The FASB approach is built from the bottom up, investing in projects developed by and for local people. It goes beyond simply consulting or sharing benefits with communities by empowering communities themselves to take the lead in restoring their land and cultivating a sustainable future.

Over the last three years, FASB has invested nearly €3 million in 45 locally led projects in the south of Bahia, Brazil – a critical biodiversity hotspot. These projects have helped to restore and reconnect areas of Atlantic rainforest, strengthened sustainable forestry and farming practices, and improved the livelihoods and lives of hundreds of families. In the process, they have developed into a self-supporting network, sharing knowledge, ideas and resources and amplifying their impact. FASB's first investment cycle is now complete – and an exciting new phase is beginning, with new partners coming on board. Between 2024 and 2026, FASB will invest a further €8 million to enable the creation of a 500km ecological corridor from Bahia to Espírito Santo, using the same locally led approach.

This report looks back on the first phase of FASB – its unique model, its impacts, and the stories of some of the people and institutions involved. And it offers a clear message for funders and project developers: investing in grassroots projects may not be the quickest approach to hit restoration targets or a cheap way to offset carbon emissions, but it generates lasting benefits for people, nature and the climate.

*Originally the Fundo Ambiental Sul Baiano or South Bahia People and Nature Fund, FASB is now just known by its acronym – pronounced fazz-bee.



The birth of FASB

Launched in 2021, FASB began as a partnership between three organizations: Danish investor KIRKBI, forest restoration specialists iNovaland, and Fórum Florestal da Bahia, a Brazilian multi stakeholder platform.

“Biodiversity loss and climate change are global crises that need to be addressed,” says KIRKBI’s Christina Fevejle Nielsen. “We were curious about nature-based solutions, and were seeking the right project. We knew we wanted to plant trees in an area that had suffered degradation but had high potential for biodiversity. And we knew we wanted to benefit not only nature but also people.”

From its own experiences in the region, iNovaland knew that the south of Bahia in Brazil ticked all the right boxes. And in Fórum Florestal, which had spent many years building trust among the different actors and inhabitants of the region, it had the perfect partner to guide the work on the ground.

Project partners

KIRKBI is the private holding and investment company of the Kirk Kristiansen family, owners of The LEGO Group. One of the drivers of the company’s investment strategy is the family’s commitment to contributing to sustainable development and having a positive impact on the planet.

www.kirkbi.com

iNovaland is a private company with a mission to restore and regenerate degraded forests and landscapes for the benefit of people, nature and the climate. iNovaland channels investment and provides technical support to community-led projects in areas such as sustainable forestry, agroforestry and climate-smart agriculture.

inovaland.earth

Fórum Florestal da Bahia (Bahia Forest Forum) is a multi stakeholder dialogue platform that includes representatives from civil society, forestry companies, public sector agencies, and educational and research institutions. Since 2005, it has worked to build trust and resolve potential conflicts between communities, environmental NGOs and plantation forestry companies and proactively seek effective solutions for the common good.

dialogoflorestal.org.br/foruns-regionais/forum-florestal-da-bahia

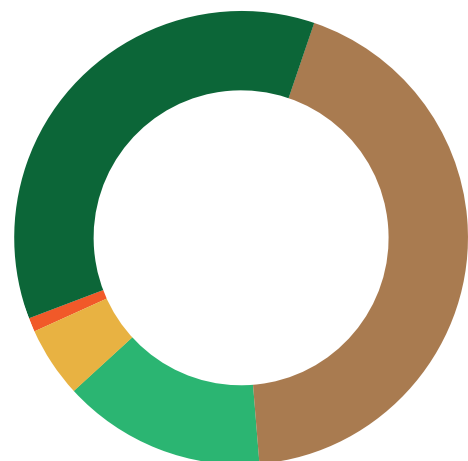
Why Bahia?

The state of Bahia is near the northern end of the Atlantic Forest (Mata Atlântica in Portuguese), which stretches along the east coast of Brazil and into Argentina and Paraguay. Once the second largest rainforest on the planet after the Amazon, more than three-quarters of the original forest has been destroyed. Yet it still harbours incredible levels of biodiversity, including many endemic species. It's home to 7% of all Earth's plant species – a single hectare of forest can contain 450 types of tree, the richest diversity in the world – and 5% of vertebrate species.

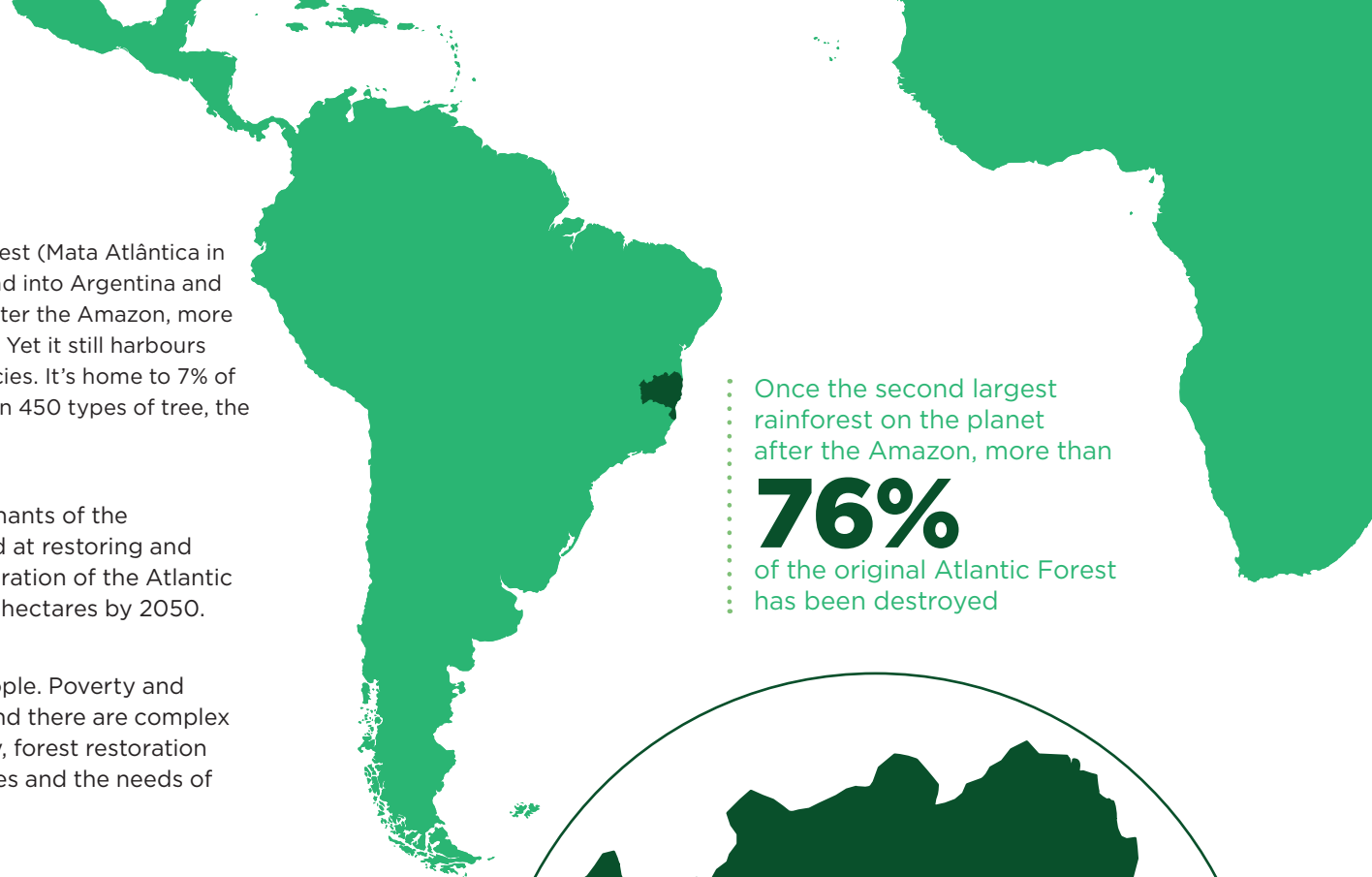
The south of Bahia holds some of the most important remnants of the Atlantic Forest. There are well-established initiatives aimed at restoring and reconnecting larger areas as part of the Pact for the Restoration of the Atlantic Forest, which aims to catalyse the restoration of 15 million hectares by 2050.

But southern Bahia is also home to more than a million people. Poverty and unemployment levels are high, particularly in rural areas, and there are complex social issues, including conflicts over land rights. Ultimately, forest restoration efforts cannot succeed unless they also address these issues and the needs of local people.

Land use in the FASB area



| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Forest | 36% |
| Cattle pasture | 43.5% |
| Eucalyptus plantations | 14.5% |
| Cropland | 5% |
| Other | 1% |



Once the second largest rainforest on the planet after the Amazon, more than **76%** of the original Atlantic Forest has been destroyed





70%

of food consumed in the Bahia region is produced on small family farms



Traditional communities in Bahia

Indigenous people: The far south of Bahia is home to around 50 Indigenous communities. The Pataxó and Tupinambá were the first Indigenous peoples in Brazil to encounter European colonizers in 1500 – and they have been struggling to defend their land and their culture ever since. Although land disputes continue, some Pataxó and Tupinambá communities have managed to reclaim parts of the territory that was taken from them and to revive their traditional practices.

Quilombolas: Quilombolas are descendants of enslaved Africans who escaped from slave plantations and established their own settlements, often deep in the forest. The first quilombola communities date back to the early 1600s, but it's only during the last 30 years that they have been able to claim their land rights. According to the last census, Brazil has over 1.3 million quilombolas, but only around one in eight live in legally recognized quilombola territories and poverty rates are high. Quilombola culture draws on African and Indigenous influences, and is highly dependent on the forest and the sustainable use of natural resources

Settlers: For 40 years, Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST) has fought for land reform and the rights of rural workers by occupying and claiming unproductive land. Nearly half a million families now live on settlements that have gained legal recognition through the MST. Many of these settlements operate as cooperatives, with a strong focus on sustainable agriculture.

Photo: (Top to bottom) Aldeia Alegria Nova
Association of Rural Producers of the Ribeirão Community
Association of Small Producers of the Milton Santos Settlement
Ramon Rafaello

Family farmers: With an advanced agribusiness sector, Brazil is a leading exporter of agricultural commodities like soy, maize, beef, sugarcane and coffee. But around 70% of food consumed in the country is produced on small family farms. In Bahia, poverty rates among family farmers are high, with many farmers struggling to access resources to improve productivity or market their produce. Drought, exacerbated by climate change, is also a major challenge.

“We need to be humble about what we’re doing. Nature was here before us and people are there now. We needed to find ways of working not around them but with them to create the most sustainable solutions.”

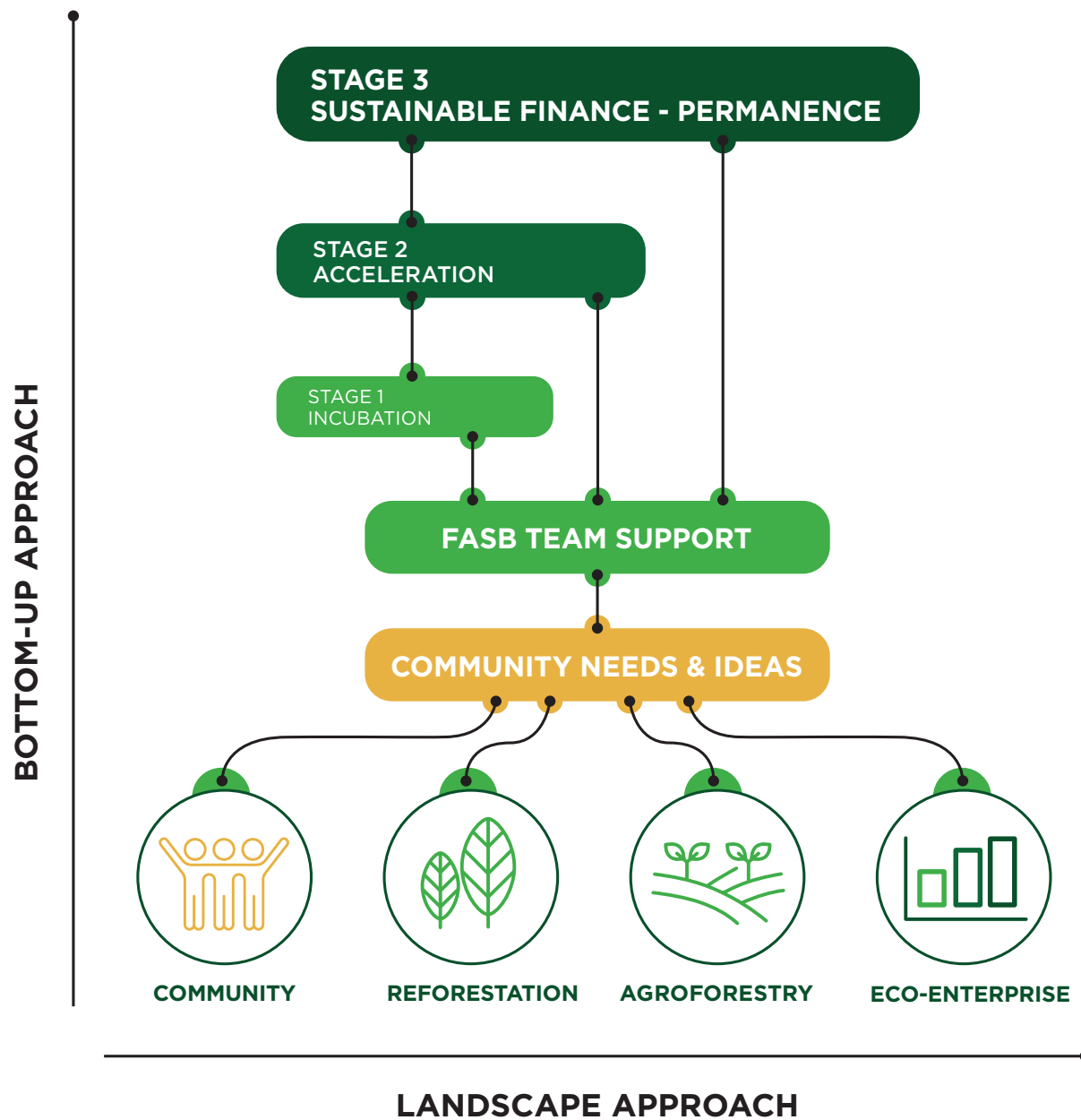
Lars Hyldgaard Olesen, Project Director, KIRKBI



The FASB model

“We understood our impact would be greater if we reached local traditional communities. Instead of spending money on contracts and administration costs, we are building partnerships with local people. Although we are there to support them, they are in charge of managing the project and the finances. That’s very empowering.”

Márcio Braga, FASB Coordinator



“We’ve succeeded in having a good number of projects coming from communities that have never received financial resources or technical support before. For many, it’s the first time they’ve developed a project of their own, which they are responsible for. This is where I see FASB’s added value. The biggest impact may be in giving people ideas of what they can do. It is difficult to anticipate but exciting to imagine how it will develop.”

Luis Neves Silva, CEO, iNovaland

62%

of FASB projects have been developed by community groups



FASB’s goal is to restore and expand the Atlantic Forest in southern Bahia while improving the lives of the people living in the landscape. It does this through supporting projects developed by local organizations, covering activities such as forest restoration, agroforestry and nature-friendly enterprises. In its first three-year phase, FASB has invested almost €3 million in 45 projects.

Most FASB projects are small-scale “stage 1” projects, receiving funding of up to €20,000. Projects receive funding in tranches, based on agreed activities. Six have progressed to “stage 2” projects, where they can receive funding of up to €200,000. A few projects have used the investment from FASB to leverage further funding from other sources, and the ambition is that some will eventually be able to attract commercial investment to grow further.

Between 2021 and 2023, there were five windows where projects could apply for funding. Project proposals were scrutinized by a multi stakeholder panel put together by Forum Florestal, who grade projects against a set of agreed criteria. These results are then discussed with the FASB board, who make the final decision on which projects to fund. In its first year, FASB received 57 project submissions, and selected 18 of these for funding.

In contrast to many funding applications, which have complex tendering requirements, the process was deliberately designed to be accessible to everyone. Nevertheless, in the initial funding windows, most proposals were led by local NGOs and other existing institutions working with communities that had the capacity to design, execute and monitor a project.

But as FASB has become better known and established in the region, proposals have increasingly come directly from the communities themselves – in total, 62% of FASB projects have been developed by community groups.

FASB’s team on the ground has supported this through outreach in communities, providing support in designing projects, preparing proposals and filling out all the necessary paperwork. This has also included helping groups to set up governance systems and open bank accounts so they can receive funds – which has sometimes meant slow progress, but provides an important foundation that will enable them to take advantage of other opportunities in future.



“There is a lot of talk about restoration, but if you don’t achieve social resilience, if you don’t get the communities involved, if it’s not part of their long-term economic model, then there is no true sustainability - degradation will come again.”

Luís Neves Silva, CEO, iNovaland

Photo: ©Association of Small Producers of the Milton Santos

What projects does FASB fund?

Projects fall into four main categories – although some involve more than one of these aspects:

Reforestation: Restoring degraded and deforested areas to re-establish native forest using a variety of techniques – including direct planting of seedlings, enriching and accelerating natural regeneration, and leaving areas to regenerate naturally. Priorities for reforestation include areas that help re-establish connections between existing forest fragments and those that provide important environmental services – like restoring riparian forests to help secure water supplies. Some projects also include planting native and exotic trees to provide a sustainable source of wood, taking pressure off natural forest ecosystems.

Sustainable agriculture: Encouraging sustainable agricultural and livestock production to improve food and livelihood security for vulnerable communities. A particular focus is on agroforestry systems that combine crops and/or grazing with trees – both native species that support ecosystem restoration and income-generating species such as fruit trees.

Social development: Working with large numbers of families to develop sustainable ways to generate income, including supporting training, qualifications, knowledge transfer and business development.

Area surveys: Identifying degraded areas suitable for forest restoration or agroforestry, and engaging with landowners to bring them on board.

What makes the FASB model work?

Local ownership: While all FASB projects align with the overall objectives of supporting restoration and sustainable land use, they are driven by local needs – they're about what local people really want for their communities, not what donors have decided.

Local presence: With a committed team on the ground combining local knowledge with professional experience, FASB is embedded in the landscape. A deep understanding of local needs and opportunities and how to navigate local dynamics means FASB can direct investment with a greater guarantee of socio-environmental return.

Spreading risks and rewards: Supporting a wide range of small, staged projects is a lower-risk model. It's a way to back winners, as projects that prove their worth in stage 1 are also likely to succeed in stage 2, while encouraging innovation and fostering a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Project developers understand that the success or failure of each project contributes to the success and future prospects of FASB as a whole – so they're keen to support each other.

Trust and transparency: The FASB model is built on mutual trust and respect, which fosters a sense of partnership and learning together. Project developers are open about the challenges they face and will work together with the FASB team to overcome them.

Networks: FASB has developed a strong support network between project developers, encouraging the exchange of knowledge, experience, inputs and ideas. As well as strong connections with community groups, FASB has established relationships with private companies, NGOs academia, government and investors in the region, opening up potential partnerships and opportunities.



Phase one in numbers

45
Projects

19
nurseries provide seedlings for FASB projects, supplying around

170
tree species and nearly

50
agricultural crops

2.8 tonnes
of forest seed collected for planting

268,588
seedlings produced

Sustainable agriculture

228

hectares

116,293

seedlings planted in agroforestry system



Reforestation

355

hectares

226,113

native trees planted



Indirect impacts

4236

hectares of sustainable agriculture indirectly supported



288

hectares of forest restoration indirectly supported



FASB's impact extends beyond the areas directly supported – for example, by connecting and preserving existing forest fragments, by supporting sustainable agriculture with seedlings produced in nurseries financed by the project, and by leveraging further investment into forest restoration.

6938

hectares of preservation
areas secured



Community

2085

families directly
involved in projects



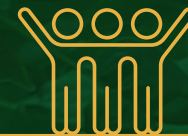
5438

families indirectly
benefitting



180

training sessions with
3004
participants*



202

collective efforts: tree
planting, seed collecting
& building works with
4083 participants



*Some of these participants will have attended more than one training session



FASB's impact – beyond the numbers

Collectively, FASB's impact adds up to more than the sum of its individual projects' outputs. Perhaps its most important achievement so far is in creating a diverse, supportive community all working toward the same goals.

Many project developers face similar challenges – and are keen to share solutions. “When evaluating the development of different projects financed by FASB, we identified that similar problems were easily overcome by some and put projects at risk for others,” says FASB coordinator Márcio Braga.

“To address this, we worked on building bridges between regional leaders through events and social networks. The result was the creation of partnerships, knowledge exchange and trade in inputs – as one project often has a surplus of what another project lacks, including labour and technical knowledge.”

FASB has created a strong network linking its project developers. Activities have included meetings and capacity building sessions focusing on shared needs like monitoring techniques, as well as study tours showcasing different projects to local and international participants. Project developers have an active WhatsApp group to share information and enable easy communication. Projects exchange traditional knowledge and modern techniques, supporting and inspiring each other. Even after their projects have finished, many people continue to participate in meetings and events, remaining part of the FASB community.

A number of projects include educational elements, helping to build capacity, skills and interest in forest restoration, agroforestry and sustainable livelihoods. This has included funding scholarships for local young people to study agroecology, supporting the next generation of leaders. Many also involve members of the community in collective activities such as gathering seeds from the forest and planting trees, creating a sense of ownership and enhancing people's understanding of the value of the work.

“In three years, we haven't planted that many trees or restored that many hectares. But we have created trust and goodwill that will prepare the ground for bigger things in future. One thing we didn't anticipate was how different projects would start working together and supporting each other. Instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, community project developers can ask each other how they are tackling a certain challenge. That sharing of knowledge also helps to build a community of developers, which will improve FASB's overall resilience and success – it generates its own energy.”

Andrew Heald, COO iNovaland

Collaboration & support



The Egídio Brunetto school, managed by the Landless Workers' Movement, provides training in agroforestry and agroecology techniques. This has helped build the capacity of other FASB project as well as local farmers.

“FASB’s support made it possible to restore natural ecosystems while at the same time setting up production systems where families could produce food without the use of pesticides and earn an income while preserving the environment.”

Felipe Otávio Campelo da Silva, Egídio Brunetto Popular School of Agroecology and Agroforestry



The Primaflora Nursery is using a FASB grant to create a seedbank of native species and provide training and support to other tree nurseries funded by FASB. This in turn supports other FASB-funded forest restoration projects. So far, Primaflora has collected over 200kg of native seeds, and has planted various endangered tree species to provide a future seed source.

“Seeds are usually a bottleneck when starting native nurseries. We believed we could help strengthen the restoration chain and also generate income for the families benefiting from the establishment of nurseries by FASB.”

Mário Sérgio Santana Cruz, Primaflora Nursery



The Quilombola community of Ribeirão and the Association of Indigenous Women of Boca da Mata both produce essential oils from native plants – and the two projects have teamed up to share traditional knowledge and scientific research, as well as advice on marketing and meeting national regulatory standards.

“This exchange enriches our proposal, our daily lives and knowledge, as we have many things in common.”

Osmar Bernardo dos Santos, President of the Association of Rural Producers of the Community of Ribeirão, on their partnership with the Association of Indigenous Women of Boca da Mata



“FASB is to be congratulated for making it possible to plant trees in our community. Without this support, everything would be more difficult.”

Jorge Gomes Miranda
President of the Association of Small Rural Producers of the Nova Vida Community of Cana Brava

“Planting native trees improves everything”

“We have two hectares of land ready and the native seedlings have already been bought. Now we’re just waiting for St Peter to collaborate and open the taps in the sky,” says Jorge Gomes Miranda, president of the Association of Small Rural Producers of the Nova Vida Community of Cana Brava.

The association currently has 111 members, who farm 125 hectares in the municipality of Alcobaça. Around 10 years ago, the association set up a small (0.8 hectare) agroforestry plot, and began restoring a permanent preservation area (APP) of 38 hectares around a dam and spring.

Now, with support from FASB, the Association is planning to expand its agroforestry area by a further three hectares, producing a variety of certified organic food crops to improve food security and incomes for family farmers. Alongside this, the project will restore two hectares of native forest to create an ecological corridor connecting with the APP, and enrich its botanical diversity by planting 1,000 seedlings from the Atlantic Forest biome. “We are contributing to Mother Nature and giving life to tree species that were almost extinct,” says Jorge.

As well as this, the project is constructing 10 storage systems for manipuera, the nutrient-rich liquid waste left over after making traditional cassava flour. This will enable the manipuera to be turned into an organic fertilizer, instead of being washed into the river.

“Planting native trees improves everyone’s quality of life,” says Jorge. “It improves everything. Even the air we breathe is fresher, and we also hope for better working conditions under the shade of the trees we plant. FASB is to be congratulated for making it possible to plant trees in our community. Without this support, everything would be more difficult.”

The community’s existing agroforestry area already serves as a “classroom” for educating family farmers, students and technicians, and the project will help to expand this role. Jorge says this is an important part of FASB: “The exchange of experience promoted by FASB’s developer meetings promotes contact with other communities that have the same desire and will as us. The sharing of knowledge and expertise is very rich.”



“Family farmers who are being trained to produce native forest seedlings, with the aim of meeting the growing demand in the forest restoration chain, generating employment and income for these families.”

Sueli Abad
President, MDPS (Movement for the Defence of Preservation and Sustainability)

“With FASB, we saw an opportunity to strengthen our own actions”

“‘Conserve to survive’ is our motto,” says Sueli Abad of MDPS (Movement for the Defence of Preservation and Sustainability). “Without forests there is no life. The balance of ecosystems is fundamental to the quality of life on Earth.”

“With the emergence of FASB in the territory, we saw an opportunity to strengthen the actions of our institution, which is a small NGO but has a long history of working on various socio-environmental fronts,” says Sueli. “Since 2022, we have carried out three projects with FASB.”

The work has focused on working with local farmers and communities to revitalize important water sources. The first project, now complete, restored 100 hectares of riparian forests, while the current Porto das Águas project, now in its second phase, aims to regenerate 100 hectares in the municipality of Porto Seguro. This consists of 78 hectares of forest restoration, including through assisted natural regeneration, enrichment and planting, and 22 hectares of agroforestry systems and productive gardens. By supporting individual farmers to make better use of their own properties, the project aims to have a larger collective impact across the river basin.

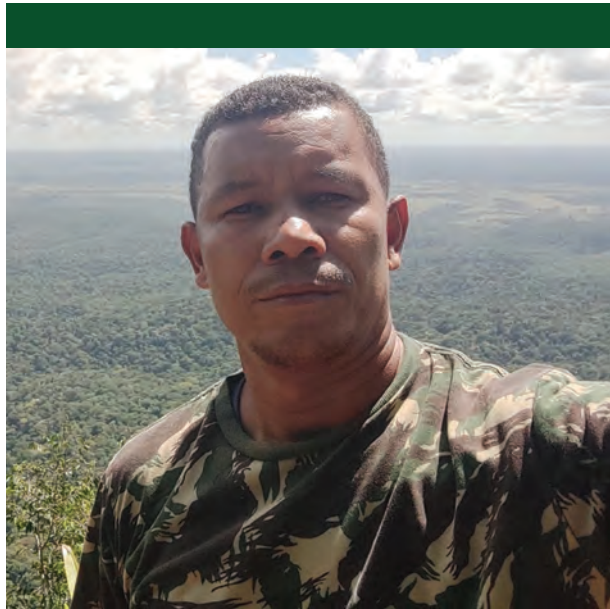
Support from FASB has enabled the construction of a nursery with the capacity to produce 70,000 seedlings.

“The team is made up of family farmers who are being trained to produce native forest seedlings, with the aim of meeting the growing demand in the forest restoration chain, generating employment and income for these families,” says Sueli. Seedlings from the nursery will be used in the Porto das Águas plantations. So far, 15 properties in the settlement of Imbiruçu de Dentro have benefited, with six hectares planted with 21 native species and a further three species of fruit trees (cupuaçu, graviola and avocado) to generate an income for farmers.

The project also supports environmental education, with local people and students from the Federal University of Southern Bahia (UFSB) taking part in planting activities.

“FASB’s work has strengthened our network of partnerships through the exchange of experiences with other institutions and project development communities,” says Sueli. “The synergies between the other projects add up to a vision shared by MDPS, which is to connect forested areas and strengthen communities and institutions for the socio-environmental development of our territory.

Photo: ©MDPS



“FASB makes it easy for us to get together with all those who are part of it.”

Matias Santana da Conceição,
President of Cooplanjé nursery cooperative



“We’re one big family in search of something better for our planet”

“We know that with more trees we’ll have a better quality of life,” says Matias Santana da Conceição. “More drinking water, free and clean air, all kinds of animal species. Reforestation is also very important so that we can protect our soil and support the traditional communities that survive on our standing forests.”

Matias is part of the Cooplanjé nursery cooperative in the Pataxó village of Boca da Mata, close to Monte Pascoal National Park. Cooplanjé is seeking to reforest 10 hectares using seedlings produced in the community’s own nursery from seeds collected by local people. Approximately 120 native species from the region will be planted, with a total of 11,111 seedlings per hectare.

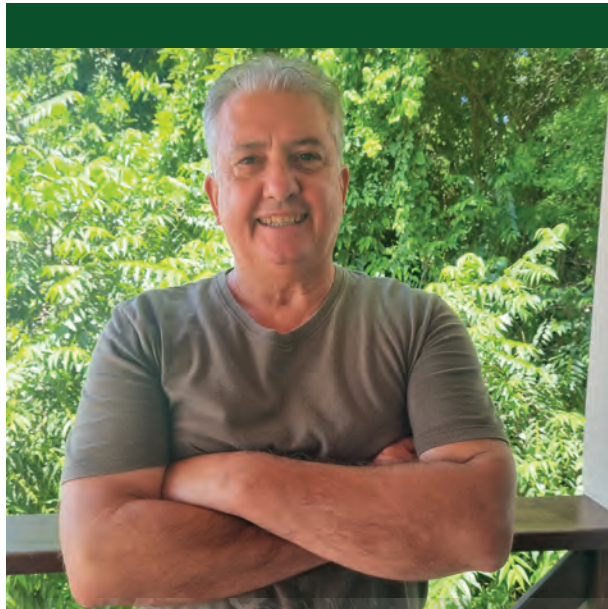
Reforestation will help to take pressure off the national park, which has suffered from degradation, including because of demand for wood for traditional handicrafts. “We used to have several species that were used in handicrafts,” says Matias. “Today they no longer exist and we can’t use them. I think that by supporting our seed collection network we will recover these species.”

With the nursery and seed collection network already up and running, FASB’s investment will be going directly into the community, enabling the cooperative to pay daily wages to those involved in planting and maintaining the trees over the next two years. Being part of FASB has also helped

Cooplanjé connect with other nurseries and reforestation projects. “FASB makes it easy for us to get together with all those who are part of it, so we become one big family in search of something better for our planet,” says Matias.

Matias is particularly grateful for the training and ongoing support the community receives from FASB. “This part of the project is very important, because we’ve worked on other projects, but this had never happened before FASB. For example, we had to train a young person to be able to have direct contact with the bank, to learn how to convert foreign currencies and exchange rates. For us, it was a beautiful learning experience that will only strengthen our community. What we’ve learnt we’ll never forget. I’m very grateful that FASB is in our region to give this total support to our community.”

Photo: ©Matias S. da Conceição



“Through our partnership with FASB, we’ve managed to reduce the cost of legally harvested wood for local craftspeople.”

Oscar Artaza
Coordinator, Ciclos Institute

“Craftspeople can continue this important activity without damaging the forest”

“Most of the handicrafts made in the far south of Bahia are based on illegally harvested wood from national parks and other large forest fragments,” says Oscar Artaza. “Through our partnership with FASB, we’ve managed to reduce the cost of legally harvested wood so that craftspeople can continue this important activity without damaging the forest.”

Oscar is the coordinator of the Ciclos Institute, a local environmental NGO. Ciclos has worked with several Pataxó communities to develop the Formas da Natureza (Shapes of Nature) initiative. Since 2009, Formas da Natureza has been supporting local artisans to produce sustainable wooden handicrafts that don’t contribute to deforestation or illegal harvesting. Around 270 Indigenous and non-Indigenous artisans benefit from the initiative.

The project has helped restore 15 hectares of degraded forest on Indigenous lands with a range of native tree seedlings. In the long term, this will provide local artisans with their own sustainable supply of wood, as well as providing environmental benefits.

But in the meantime, finding a supply of low-cost, legal wood has been a challenge. FASB’s support has enabled Ciclos to develop a partnership

with pulp producer Suzano, which has extensive eucalyptus and acacia plantations in the region. This has provided access to surplus wood from Suzano’s plantations at less than half the price per cubic metre on average compared to the cost of illegally harvested timber.

The project is also helping to develop the Formas da Natureza brand and link artisans with regional, national and international markets.

Oscar says the partnership with FASB has been beneficial in many ways. “Personally, it has allowed me to continue disseminating techniques, new designs and new materials among the artisans of the far south that facilitate the transition to sustainable handicrafts. For the production groups involved, the project has facilitated access to new materials and encouraged them to change. For the landscape, the project has had a direct influence by reducing deforestation in the Atlantic Rainforest.”

Photo: ©Ciclos Institute



“Income generation combined with standing forests through well-planned reforestation is a path of no return! This means more food on our tables, dignity and a better quality of life for our people.”

Marilza Machado
Coordinator, Cheiros e Saberes da
Mata Atlântica

“FASB brought hope to our community”

“For us, the Quilombola community of Ribeirão, being part of the FASB project is a dream come true,” says Marilza Machado. “With the support and funds offered, we are restoring native forests that produce essential and vegetable oils, honouring our heritage and valuing our ancestral species.”

Marilza is a coordinator of Cheiros e Saberes da Mata Atlântica (Fragrances and Flavours of the Atlantic Forest), a project run by the Quilombola community of Ribeirão. The project focuses on forest restoration and agroforestry using native species that are rich in oils – many of which have become rare – alongside cocoa trees. So far, nearly 35,000 trees have been planted, and the community nursery has collected more than 1.8 tonnes of seeds from 114 species.

Having successfully completed stage 1, the project is now progressing to stage 2. Working with the community and family farmers, the goal is to restore 10 hectares of natural forest and 60 hectares of land under sustainable agroforestry. Thirty families are involved in the project, with another hundred benefiting indirectly.

FASB’s investment will also support the community to develop its brand and market a range of essential oils, soaps and other products, bringing income into the community.

“Income generation combined with standing forests through well-planned reforestation is a path of no return!” says Marilza. “This means more food on our tables, dignity and a better quality of life for our people.”

“FASB brought hope to our community, uniting five Quilombola communities to restore our forests,” says Osmar Bernardo dos Santos, President of the Association of Rural Producers of the Community of Ribeirão. “Now that our project has progressed to the large-scale stage, our ambitions are higher, with the prospect of strengthening family income through forest-based businesses.

“FASB’s support is a catalyst for improving the environment and generating sustainable income. Expansion and scalability are crucial because the environment needs more people to carry out restoration work and respecting nature. We are grateful and thankful for FASB’s presence in our region, helping us build and fulfil our dreams.”



Communications

Communications play a critical role in FASB's success. Over the last three years, FASB has become a well-known and respected presence within the region. Developing the FASB brand has been an important part of this: creating a strong identity has helped spread the word about FASB's purpose, raise the profile of the projects under development and gain trust.

Initially, FASB's presence and purpose was explained through face-to-face meetings with the Bahia Forest Forum and its participants, including NGOs, government institutions, private companies and academia. Now, FASB talks proactively to diverse audiences, including family farmers, cooperatives, associations and organizations from Indigenous and other local communities, private companies in the forestry and agriculture sectors, and local and regional media. Information, reports and regularly updated data on FASB projects and their impact are also shared with local, national and international audiences via the FASB website, in Portuguese and English.

fasb.inovaland.earth

FASB has also developed an active social media presence on Instagram, which is both a way of making its work visible to the wider public and communicating directly with local people and organizations. Content including reels, video and stories is originated by the FASB team and the projects themselves, and the strategic use of hashtags has helped posts reach new audiences.

[instagram.com/fasb.official](https://www.instagram.com/fasb.official)

As well as working through social networks, FASB has developed a strong internal communications network, sharing information and news through a dedicated WhatsApp group. The FASB communications team supports projects to produce and share their own quality images, videos and other communications and ensures these align with the FASB brand. This network also provides an opportunity for developers to get to know each other and connect to exchange knowledge, materials, field techniques – and friendship.



Looking to the future

In many ways, the first phase of FASB has been about preparing the ground and sowing the seeds.

Area surveys have identified many opportunities for restoration and to link existing forest fragments, and different approaches have been tested, refined and shared. Tree nurseries are increasing the supply of native seedlings, overcoming one of the main bottlenecks to restoration. Hundreds of people have received training in areas like agroforestry and sustainable agriculture. Community organizations have strengthened their business skills and organizational capacity. Partnerships and market connections have been formed.

Now, it's time for the seeds to grow. With new partners involved, the size of the fund over the next three years has more than doubled, offering opportunities for more new projects to be launched, for existing projects to grow in scale and for FASB to expand into new areas.

FASB will invest €8 million during the second phase of the programme, from 2024 to 2026. Along with increased funding from KIRKBI, additional investment is being provided by Brazilian pulp and paper company Suzano, BNDES (the Brazilian National Bank for Economic and Social Development) and the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund (FUNBIO). This will contribute to two larger programmes in the Hileia Baiana - the name given to the hugely biodiverse stretch of Atlantic Forest in the tablelands of southern Bahia and the north of Espírito Santo.

Suzano, the world's largest pulp producer, has extensive eucalyptus plantations in the region, while also conserving and working to restore large areas of native forest. Its partnership with FASB is part of a larger project that aims to stitch together around 170,000 hectares of forest fragments to create a 500km ecological corridor from Linhares in Espírito Santo to Porto Seguro in Bahia. The Forest Corridor project will connect two nature reserves, two private reserves managed by Suzano and the Monte Pascoal National Park - and is open to any communities and landowners within this area.

Meanwhile, the "Living Forest Connecting Landscapes" project - supported by BNDES and FUNBIO - seeks to support ecological restoration and strengthen the restoration production chain to form ecological corridors in Bahia.

While FASB will continue to follow its community-led, bottom-up approach, the new funding will also enable new collaborations to create a greater impact at the landscape scale.

Photo: ©Cadu Souza



“We’ve been fortunate to participate in two study tours. From attending online meetings and reading reports, we have been updated on the numbers of trees planted and the number of people involved. But understanding how hard people are working on their projects and how dedicated they are to do reforestation on their land – that’s something you can only experience in person, and it has been very inspiring to witness.”

Christina Fevejle Nielsen, Manager - Grants & Administration, KIRKBI



“Working in a public prosecutor’s office that defends the environment, I can say that FASB has added to our efforts, especially in actions to restore environmentally protected areas. What sets it apart is that it has taken an important look at communities that don’t have the opportunity to access resources for their projects. The sense of belonging of the members of these communities, after the start of FASB’s work, is the reason for several successful actions to recover native vegetation.”

Fábio Fernandes Corrêa, Prosecutor, Bahia State Public Prosecutor’s Office



“Our partnership with FASB focuses on valuing the floristic diversity of the Hileia Baiana, integrating conservation, restoration and production in the landscape, with the involvement of Indigenous communities and large rural producers. It has brought advances such as the registration of 100 mother trees of rare and threatened species, the restoration of 30 hectares of permanent preservation areas and the implementation of 15 hectares of agroforestry systems in villages, directly benefiting around 30 families. In addition, the planting of 720 trees combined with cocoa and coconut on 30 hectares contributes to the long-term sustainable production of seeds and wood.”

Viviane Maria Barazetti, Forest Engineer, Arboretum Programme/José Silveira Foundation



“Working to protect and restore forests, especially the Atlantic Rainforest, where I grew up, gives me a great sense of purpose and appreciation for my work. Being able to go to bed at night proud of what you do and wake up for work the next day with the satisfaction of working on something you enjoy and that can add environmental and social value to the region where I live is very gratifying.”

Mário Sérgio Santana Cruz, Member, Primaflora Nursery

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