CONSERVATION STRATEGY FUND

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

FINANCING THE INVISIBLE

A replicable model for funding pollinator conservation in Costa Rica.

Based on research by Conservation Strategy Fund in 2026

Pollinators are Economically Critical

Pollinators are the quiet engines keeping ecosystems, food security and rural economies running. In Costa Rica, as in many other countries across the tropics, insect pollinators sustain the crops, biodiversity, and livelihoods built around them. Given that pollinators have maintained these necessary services for thousands of years, it is startling how little financing goes towards pollinator protection: these invaluable services remain invisible on the balance sheet.

Very few financial mechanisms are designed specifically for pollination, and the instruments that do exist only support it indirectly. Costa Rica's flagship Payment for Environmental Services (PES) program, for instance, pays landowners for carbon, water, biodiversity, and scenic beauty – all outcomes partially reliant on pollination – but not for the pollination itself. Recognizing the importance of pollinators, the 2021 Pollinator Protection Law (Ley 9929) set up a broader legal framework for their support, yet the financing has not yet followed suit.

To close this financing gap with sustainable funding for pollinators in Costa Rica, Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF) economists have been working with GIZ and the regional PoliLAC project on a roadmap for financing pollinator conservation in CR.

Understanding Conservation Finance for Pollinators with CSF and GIZ

CSF began this roadmap by creating an inventory of 34 conservation finance mechanisms documented internationally as relevant to pollination. The list was then narrowed down to 11 of the most effective instruments using three explicit criteria: the financial objective each mechanism pursues, its potential to be implemented jointly across the Costa Rican conservation and productive sectors, and its applicability at the national and local levels. These 11 instruments and mechanisms were then ranked through a participatory process involving three workshops convening the conservation, agricultural, financial, cooperative, and civil-society sectors; community organizations and producers; and local governments, local communities and agricultural agencies in the territory.

Finally, CSF economists filtered the instruments for ecological relevance, economic and financial viability, administrative, legal, political and social feasibility, and the explicit inclusion of women. Three complementary instruments emerged as best suited to Costa Rica's institutions, ecology, and rural realities based on these calculations.

The Three Strongest Financial Instruments for Pollinator Conservation

CSF's analysis made it clear that no single instrument could meet all of the needs identified for long-term pollinator financing; each mechanism addresses a different function, scale, or segment of the financing challenge, and none are sufficient on their own. Therefore, CSF designed a blended finance model with three financing mechanisms:

1. **Environmental Funds**
   Captures public, private, and international resources and channeling them toward medium- and long-term conservation and habitat restoration.

2. **Green Finance**
   Makes more accessible, tailors finance available to small producers, rural enterprises, and women and community-led ventures adopting pollinator-friendly practices.

3. **Environmental Subsidies**
   Lowers the barrier to entry for the most vulnerable groups and catalyzes the early adoption of good practices.

Each instrument selected in this study is grounded in successful examples from around the world: - environmental funds such as Mexico's Mesoamerican Reef Fund; environmental subsidies like Brazil's Bolsa Verde; and green microfinance such as the Fundación Microfinanzas BBVA program in the Dominican Republic, which finances family apiculture with technical assistance and a gender focus. CSF's strategy built the architecture around approaches that have already been proven effective in practice rather than theory.

Designed in isolation, these instruments might underperform. To keep them robust and effective, CSF proposed structuring them into a single, articulated blended-finance architecture, coordinated through a national platform that is anchored by established institutions such as FUNBAM and FONAFIFO. This blended-finance instrument would pool concessional, public, and private capital, de-risking private investment; and channel capital to where it most benefits pollinators in Costa Rica: habitat restoration and connectivity, pollinator-friendly farming, and the rural producers (including women-led apiculture) who depend on them.

From Design to Implementation

Download the Roadmap here

CSF's implementation roadmap translated this blended-finance design into a sequenced, phased plan from preparation to piloting, scaling, and consolidation. SMART indicators were tied to ecosystem-service outcomes, an inclusion framework for women, and Indigenous and local communities, and a risk-mitigation matrix.

The roadmap anticipated the coordination needed for successful implementation. It involved establishing the national coordination platform and its governance, securing the initial concessional capital needed to anchor the blended-finance structure, finalizing the regulatory adjustments that would let existing institutions recognize and channel funds toward pollination, and launching a territorial pilot—in a priority landscape such as the Chorotega region—to test the model in practice before scaling.

Collaborate with Conservation Strategy Fund

This brief illustrates how CSF works: combining economic analysis, financial design, and participatory processes to make a case for investment in conservation as a strong economic strategy. CSF welcomes conversations with donors, partners, and institutions interested in pollinator finance, in blended-finance design for conservation, or in adapting similar approaches to other ecosystems and environmental challenges.

About CSF

CSF empowers people to build nature-positive economies. In collaboration with local communities and global partners, CSF designs the economic strategies required to restore biodiversity, build climate resilience, and turn environmental protection into a primary driver of sustainable economic growth.

Contact & Questions

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