

COSTA RICA'S ROADMAP TO INCLUSIVE CLIMATE RESILIENCE



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ABOUT VOICES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Voices of Sustainability is a thought leadership platform launched by the Zayed Sustainability Prize to explore the challenges and opportunities of the global transition to an inclusive and

prosperous future. Each month, the series hosts the world's leading experts to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.



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INTRODUCTION

On 27 June, the Zayed Sustainability Prize aired the 37th episode of its 'Voices of Sustainability' virtual fireside chat series, featuring Costa Rica's Minister of Environment and Energy, Franz Tattenbach. In celebration of June's World Environment Day, we explore Franz Tattenbach's

leadership in shaping Costa Rica's environmental and renewable energy policies. The episode reveals the nation's visionary strategies for advancing sustainability and championing global environmental change.



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SUMMARY

In the 37th instalment of 'Voices of Sustainability', we featured another engaging one-on-one interview in the episode titled 'Costa Rica's Roadmap to Inclusive Climate Resilience'. We delved into Tattenbach's leadership of Costa Rica's environmental policies, revealing his innovative strategies for propelling sustainability initiatives and driving global environmental change through pioneering green technologies.

Franz Tattenbach began by emphasising the urgency of climate action. He stated that Costa Rica has been a pioneer in protecting its environment, becoming the first tropical country to halt deforestation. This success was achieved through two key policies: the creation of national parks and the Payment for Environmental Services (PPSA) programme. The PPSA compensates private landowners for not deforesting their land, recognising the broader benefits to society such as climate change mitigation, water protection and biodiversity preservation. This policy, initiated almost 30 years ago, is now being expanded to include indigenous populations and those who have been sustainably managing land without formal titles.

Costa Rica's commitment to sustainability extends to its energy sector. The country boasts one of the most sustainable energy matrices globally, with much of its electricity generated from renewable sources. Tattenbach highlighted ongoing efforts to diversify energy sources beyond hydroelectric power to include solar energy, ensuring a more resilient and sustainable energy supply.



By protecting our forests, we protect global treasures and reduce the impact of disasters on our population. Forests enhance our resilience to climate change, making us better equipped to withstand severe weather events like hurricanes and tropical storms.

Franz Tattenbach
Minister of Environment
and Energy of Costa Rica



Discussing Costa Rica's ambitious goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, Tattenbach noted two major achievements: decoupling agricultural production from greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation and separating electricity production from fossil fuel consumption. Despite having a highly productive agricultural sector, Costa Rica has managed to grow its agriculture without deforestation, a significant message to the world that economic productivity and environmental conservation can coexist. The next challenge is to decarbonise the transportation sector and certain industrial processes, which Costa Rica aims to achieve through electrification supported by recent international loans.



Tattenbach introduced the concept of ‘Sustainable Landscapes’, which aims to harmonise productive agriculture with vibrant, interconnected protected areas to safeguard biodiversity. This approach extends to marine ecosystems, where Costa Rica has achieved 30% protected areas. A new emphasis on biodiversity protection is being incorporated into the PPSA, recognising lands with high biodiversity value and encouraging bioprospecting.

Costa Rica also focuses on climate justice, ensuring that its adaptation measures benefit vulnerable communities. This includes adapting agricultural practices to cope with climate change, improving water efficiency, and diversifying energy sources to mitigate the impacts of climate variability.

Tattenbach discussed the importance of Costa Rica’s Circular Economy strategy, which aims to transform waste management and reduce emissions from landfills. By reusing materials, Costa Rica not only reduces its own emissions but also contributes to global environmental benefits by decreasing the need for resource extraction elsewhere.

On the international stage, Costa Rica is active in climate diplomacy, working with other Central American and South American countries to advance environmental initiatives. Tattenbach emphasised

Costa Rica’s role in showcasing how productive agriculture can coexist with forest conservation, a model that other countries can emulate.

He highlighted Costa Rica’s active climate diplomacy, particularly its participation in the Inter-American Leadership Network (ILAN) group and contributions at COP28. Tattenbach emphasised Costa Rica’s role in integrating biodiversity protection with climate action, a focus that was strongly reinforced during COP28. The conference underscored the urgency of achieving the 1.5 degrees Celsius target, phasing out fossil fuels in electricity, and tripling global renewable energy production—all goals aligned with Costa Rica’s climate agenda.

The episode concluded with Tattenbach underscoring the significance of global awards like the Zayed Sustainability Prize in promoting practical and effective sustainability solutions. Such prizes not only highlight successful initiatives but also inspire people to adopt similar practices, amplifying the global impact of these solutions.

Overall, Tattenbach’s insights provide a comprehensive overview of Costa Rica’s multifaceted approach to sustainability, balancing environmental protection with economic development, and serving as a model for other nations in the fight against climate change.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Franz Tattenbach

Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica

Franz Tattenbach is nationally and internationally recognised for his contributions to public environmental policy and economic development. He is a Costa Rican economist and social entrepreneur. He has served as Costa Rica’s Climate Change Ambassador to the United Nations under three administrations. He has degrees in Agricultural Economics (B.S.), Regional Development (M.A.), and Economic Development (Ph.D. candidate) from Cornell University, New York, USA. He has served as CEO of prestigious national and international organisations such as FUNDECOR in Costa Rica and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) based in Canada. He is widely regarded as one of the authors of the Payment for Environmental Services programme, which has significantly contributed to the recovery of the country’s forest cover. Additionally, he played a key role in developing market mechanisms for the reduction of gas emissions (“carbon markets”) under the United Nations Climate Change Convention and in establishing service concessions in national parks, among other initiatives.



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OUTCOMES



Costa Rica became the first tropical country to halt deforestation through the creation of national parks and the Payment for Environmental Services (PPSA) programme



PPSA is expanding to include indigenous populations and those sustainably managing land without formal titles



Costa Rica generates most of its electricity from renewable sources and is diversifying beyond hydroelectric power to include solar energy



The country has decoupled agricultural production from greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation, demonstrating that economic productivity and environmental conservation can coexist



At COP28, Costa Rica's efforts were recognised and reinforced, particularly in integrating biodiversity protection with climate action, phasing out fossil fuels in electricity, and expanding global renewable energy production threefold



Global awards like the Zayed Sustainability Prize highlight successful sustainability initiatives, inspiring people to adopt similar practices

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