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Valuing Natural Capital

Dorothy Maxwell

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Companies that will succeed in the long-term are integrating natural and social capital into their business model now. Natural capital, the resources and critical support services nature provides, underpins our entire global economy. Yet despite its vast social and economic value, the many benefits of natural capital are often assumed to be 'free'. The future shock for business is the potential for profit to be wiped out as natural capital is internalized through regulation and markets. Freshwater, forests and biodiversity are being consumed at an alarming rate, and critical support systems such as the ability to regulate climate are failing. As these and other sustainability challenges develop, businesses and their investors need to understand their role in maintaining natural capital and their natural capital risks and opportunities. The language of finance provides a useful approach for communicating trade-offs and prioritizing sustainability at CFO, CEO and board level: companies who 'future-proof' now will position themselves to thrive in a resource-constrained world. They will mitigate risk, secure their resource supplies, create long-term value and enhance their resilience, reputation and competitive advantage. This book provides a succinct introduction to natural capital: - what natural capital is and how it links to other capitals - the business case for using it in decision-making - where natural capital accounting and valuation fit in the sustainability and financial toolbox - and what real life early adopters of natural capital in business are doing. Views from natural capital leaders across business, finance, accounting, government, research and NGO communities illustrate the theory with practice. Included: Quotes and case examples from CFOs, CEOs and Heads of Sustainability in early adopter businesses (Kingfisher Group, Dow Chemical Company, The Crown Estate, Patagonia®, United Utilities and Marks & Spencer) and financial institutions (Inter-American Development Bank, Citi Group and Credit Suisse).

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