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BIODIVERSITY, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: VITAL PARTNERS FOR PEOPLE, PLANET, AND PROSPERITY

Joint report of the co-chairs of the Global Dialogue on the Role of Food and Agriculture in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework







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Joint report of the co-chairs of the Global Dialogue on the Role of Food and Agriculture in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

H.E. Nosipho Nausca Jean Ngcaba, *Ambassador and Permanent Representative of South Africa to FAO*
 H.E. Marie-Therese Sarch, *Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to FAO*

H.E. Thanawat Tiensin, *Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to FAO*

H.E. Miguel Jorge García Winder, *Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico to FAO*

The Global Dialogue on the Role of Food and Agriculture in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework was convened virtually by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on 6 and 7 July 2021. This Joint Report presents the co-chairs' summary of the Global Dialogue.

The global dialogue was a follow-up to the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors, with the purpose of discussing the role of the food and agriculture sectors¹ as part of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The meeting report and this joint report of the co-chairs will be brought to the attention of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in advance of the 15th Conference of the Parties in Kunming, China, and other relevant meetings and processes.

The global dialogue was opened, and closed, by interventions from FAO's Director-General, Mr. QU Dongyu, and the Executive Secretary of the CBD, Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema. The dialogue featured 36 speakers, including leaders and champions of biodiversity and of the food and agriculture sectors in policy, science and practice, representing a wide range of stakeholder groups and world regions, and working across the crop, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture sectors. More than 950 participants contributed to the dialogue, including by submitting questions for panellists and speakers, through discussion in the webinar chat, and by

responding to online polls. The global dialogue concluded with a High-level Segment on initiatives and approaches to mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the food and agricultural sectors, featuring the participation of ministers and representatives of regional organizations and international development institutions.

The first session of the global dialogue focused on meeting people's needs through the sustainable use of biodiversity, highlighting the indivisible links between people and nature, and the contributions of Indigenous Peoples, family farmers and other actors of the agricultural sectors, to the sustainable management of ecosystems and biodiversity.

The second session was devoted to the discussion of how the sustainable management of biodiversity across ecosystems, landscapes and seascapes, and its restoration, contribute to achieving better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life.

On day 2, we had the opportunity to address developments in and progress of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and learn from different initiatives and approaches that are being implemented around the globe to support biodiversity for food and agriculture.

The dialogue provided a rich and vast number of ideas, experiences and examples, all of which coincided in recognizing the important role that biodiversity has for

¹ The term "agriculture" and its derivatives include crop and livestock production, fisheries and aquaculture, marine products, forestry, and primary forestry products.

the future of humankind and the negative impacts that many of the current production systems have on biodiversity; concluding with the urgent need to transform food systems, institutions and policies if we are to reverse current trends.

To help organize these learnings and ideas, we identified four clusters that encompass the discussions. In the following sections we present a brief summary of each of these clusters and end our report with a series of conclusions to help to transform this dialogue into action for the sustainable use, protection and preservation of biodiversity.

Cluster 1: Current state of affairs and the loss of biodiversity:

- a. It is evident that we are facing a process of accelerated biodiversity loss and that the sustainability of our future will depend a great deal on our ability to reverse this trend.
- b. Beyond its intrinsic value, biodiversity is essential for meeting people's sustainable development needs and improving planetary health. The sustainable use, conservation, and restoration of biodiversity provide critical contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and FAO's new strategic framework.
- c. Biodiversity, including the diversity of genetic resources, species, and ecosystems, delivers services that underpin the production of food, fibre, feed, and fuel, making an essential contribution to food security, nutrition, and livelihoods.
- d. The conservation and restoration of ecosystems contribute significantly to climate mitigation and provide a protective effect against emerging infectious diseases. Conversely, habitat destruction could increase the risk of future pandemics.
- e. Biodiversity and ecosystem services contribute significantly to economic prosperity and wellbeing. Through environmental degradation and climate change, we risk the collapse of ecosystem services, which would imply a significant loss in quality of life and GDP.



- f. The hidden costs of biodiversity loss and degradation are not yet accounted for in economic transactions throughout agri-food systems. Improved metrics are urgently needed to support policy, investment and business decision making, and to monitor progress.

Cluster 2: The Role of Human Rights:

- a. Human rights and the health of the biosphere are deeply intertwined, and they depend on each other. Therefore, without securing basic human rights, especially for those living in rural areas, Indigenous Peoples, women and the elderly, the biosphere's health will continue to be in danger.
- b. Human rights to life, health, food, a healthy environment, water, an adequate standard of living, and culture are threatened by biodiversity loss and conversely, inadequate provision of these rights forces millions of people to look for sustenance increasing their impact on biodiversity and natural resources.
- c. Biodiversity is the basis of many livelihoods. Small-scale producers, family farmers, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples primarily rely on biodiversity and natural resources. Many of these groups maintain a strong connection to the natural environment through hunting, herding, fishing and gathering. Indigenous Peoples, local communities, pastoralists, small-scale producers and family farmers – often the guardians of local biodiversity – are disproportionately impacted by climate change and the loss of biodiversity.

Cluster 3: Impacts of current agricultural, livestock, fisheries and forestry practices and consumption patterns:

- a. It was clear from all the discussions that one of the major and most important threats to biodiversity comes from current agricultural, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture production systems.
- b. Direct causes include overexploitation of wild species, agricultural pollution from pesticides and fertilizers, and deforestation associated with agricultural expansion, especially monocultural production to supply global commodities.
- c. These threats are exacerbated by public support to agriculture, including agricultural subsidies coupled to production outputs and inputs, such as fossil fuels, pesticides, and fertilizers. It is estimated that of USD 720 billion provided annually in public support to agriculture, only 17 percent is delivered in ways that promote sustainable production and resilience. Only 5 percent of public support is provided as green subsidies.
- d. Food loss and waste creates an enormous strain on natural resources. An estimated 14 percent of all food is lost, and 17 percent is wasted, representing additional pressure on biodiversity.
- e. Climate change is also a direct driver of biodiversity loss and exacerbates other pressures. We know that the agricultural sectors are both vulnerable to climate change and generate one-fifth of greenhouse gas emissions. The climate and biodiversity crises need to be addressed in tandem, and the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems is a critical part of the solution to address these simultaneously.
- f. Current agri-food systems and diets are a significant driver of non-communicable disease, including malnutrition in all its forms. The simplification of production and consumption that focuses on a small number of commodities threatens food diversity and nutrition and undermines the resilience and adaptation of agri-food systems to climate change.
- g. Concerns were expressed about the impact of unsustainable forms of livestock production and wild meat consumption on biodiversity, climate, and the emergence of zoonoses. However, it was also highlighted that customary wildlife harvesting, small-scale livestock production, and pastoralism make critical contributions to the nutrition, resilience, and livelihoods of many communities in the Global South.
- h. A shift towards diets that are healthier, diversified, more sustainable, and less wasteful is essential. It was emphasised that solutions need to be tailored to regional, national, and local contexts.

As an example, in situations where there is an overconsumption of livestock products, restoring the balance between plant- and animal-based protein can provide win-wins by increasing planetary and human health. Alternative insect and sustainable ocean products can also contribute, alongside a reduction in food loss and waste. A call to act collectively to find a balance was stressed by many of the participants (CBD COP 15, UNFCCC COP 26, the UN Food Systems Summit, and the Nutrition for Growth Summit can all help).

Cluster 4: Moving forward:

- a. Inequities in agri-food systems prevent the realisation of human rights and hurt sustainability. When the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, small-scale producers, and family farmers are recognised and protected, and when they have access to tenure and economic opportunities, they can make enormous contributions as custodians of biodiversity. Not only is their empowerment and increased agency critical, but also the full recognition of their human rights.
- b. The best way to move forward is to look for sustainable and context-specific solutions that support biodiversity, avoiding “one-size-fits-all” solutions, using experiences that have demonstrated their transformative potential across regions and sectors.
- c. It is imperative to work towards the revival and promotion of traditional and underutilised food sources in terrestrial and aquatic systems. Many of these species and varieties have the potential to strengthen food security and nutrition while providing environmental benefits and enhancing resilience.
- d. Work towards the transformation of current production system with the use of agroecological and other innovative practices based on scientific and indigenous knowledge. These include diversified and integrated/circular production systems such as agroforestry, crop–livestock and integrated aquaculture systems. Diversified, innovative and agroecological production systems are knowledge intensive. Scaling up these systems requires a wider range of approaches to research and extension that are more participatory, working across disciplines, and integrating traditional and local knowledge to co-create innovations.
- e. Transform fisheries management towards more sustainable production and the implementation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries.
- f. Increase resource-use efficiency and make judicious use of production inputs and land, including through sustainable nutrient management.
- g. Better use of genetically diversified varieties and populations is a way to reduce risk and increase overall production stability while protecting biodiversity.
- h. Since in many situations, institutional barriers act to lock in unsustainable practices, it is imperative to continue to work towards the implementation of transformative changes to enable and accelerate the scaling up of sustainable and biodiverse production and consumption.
- i. Implement measurement and data collection process that provide clear estimates of the economic costs of biodiversity losses. Mainstream natural capital accounting to ensure that investment decisions integrate these hidden costs and consider the risks of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.
- j. Policy interventions that “push and pull” provide a key opportunity for governments to encourage a shift from production practices that harm biodiversity to more sustainable alternatives. In different contexts these may include regulations, incentives, taxes, payments for ecosystem services, or public procurement schemes.
- k. Value chain initiatives and markets that reward producers for sustainable management of biodiversity have a powerful scaling potential. Examples include voluntary initiatives and new regulatory requirements to remove deforestation from international value chains.
- l. Integrating sustainability considerations into nutritional guidelines can provide a tool to support transitions, based on the national context.

- m. Collective action to address biodiversity loss and support the provisioning of ecosystems services requires deeper levels of cross-sectoral and multi-actor collaboration. Landscape partnerships and other territorial approaches have proven successful in bringing together multiple actors to facilitate joint planning, investment and implementation of sustainability initiatives that integrate biodiversity and production objectives.
- n. There is a need to increase and sustain investments in the sustainable use, conservation, and restoration of biodiversity in productive landscapes and seascapes, including directing greater support to small-scale producers and their food systems. Options for financing investments include re-directing existing subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity, and carbon financing schemes, including emerging blue carbon initiatives to restore and protect coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves, with production, resilience, and climate mitigation benefits.

Conclusions

- a. At the global level, we need to combine our efforts and focus on multilateral cooperation. There is a need to better align ambition and action for food security and biodiversity, and to promote a coordinated approach to address biodiversity loss, climate change, and land and ecosystem degradation.
- b. The UN common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development is a welcome development to strengthen policy and programme planning and delivery between the Rome-based agencies, and as One UN.
- c. Acting as a neutral platform for the agricultural sectors, and through its existing sectoral and intergovernmental bodies, FAO should stand ready to support the implementation of the post-2020 framework, including through the development of normative instruments related to biodiversity in the agricultural sectors.



- d. COP 15 in Kunming, China, is a vital opportunity and we must reach a consensus that delivers an ambitious and robust post-2020 framework that is also balanced and pragmatic. Specific recommendations for the design and implementation of the framework that were discussed during the global dialogue included:
- Integrating human rights and landscape and ecosystem approaches as guiding principles;
 - Addressing both sustainable production and consumption, recognising the need for a shift towards more sustainable and healthy diets;
 - Recognising the importance of genetic resources diversity for the sustainable transformation of food and agriculture; and
 - Ensuring adequate resource mobilization and financing, with options including repurposing harmful agricultural subsidies and the possibility of a specific biodiversity financing mechanism for low-income countries based on the model of the Paris Agreement.
- e. The implementation of the post-2020 framework will depend on full participation across the agricultural sectors – but they also need to be supported by the wider public as consumers and citizens. We all have a responsibility to contribute.
- f. The post-2020 framework should seek to apply existing instruments, tools and guidance developed by FAO and other specialized institutions, specifically targeting the agricultural sectors.
- g. Monitoring and reporting on the post-2020 framework should build synergies with the SDGs, including their indicators and targets. FAO is the custodian agency of 21 SDG indicators, including indicators related to sustainable agriculture and biodiversity in agri-food systems.





CONTACT
US

Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment
Biodiversity@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy