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Forests and Wildlife: Africa's diversity for shared prosperity and security

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OUTCOMES OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE ON BIODIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING ACROSS AGRICULTURAL SECTORS

I. Executive Summary

1. The FAO Regional Office of Africa (RAF) and the FAO Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform, with the support of the Government of Rwanda and in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), organized the African Regional Dialogue on Biodiversity Mainstreaming Across Agricultural Sectors, on 4-5 November 2019 in Kigali, Rwanda. Over 80 participants representing 27 African countries participated, including the Ministers of Agriculture from Rwanda and South Sudan. Also, representatives from the African Union Commission (AUC), UN agencies and other international and regional organizations, research institutes and Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) institutions, farmers associations, youth groups and civil society organizations were present.

2. The main objectives of the Africa Regional Dialogue, which are in line with regional objectives and priorities (including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want) aimed at the following: (i) Raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors, including the newly approved FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors¹, and to exchange knowledge, experiences and lessons learned on biodiversity mainstreaming in countries within the region, fostering mutual learning among different stakeholders; (ii) Identify the roles of different stakeholders, including youth and women, in mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural

¹ CL 163/11, at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nb349en/nb349en.pdf>

sectors; and identify gaps, needs and priorities, creating synergies in the region towards biodiversity sustainable use and conservation, and reaching consensus on actions to be taken at regional and country levels.

3. This paper summarizes the main recommendations and identified next steps for follow-up by FAO and member countries.

II. Background

4. Biodiversity is critical for safeguarding global food security, underpinning healthy and nutritious diets, improving rural livelihoods, and enhancing the resilience of people and communities. Africa hosts 25 percent of the global biodiversity, but its biodiversity is alarmingly under pressure. Also, Africa depends on the extraordinarily rich biodiversity at all levels (genetic, species and ecosystems). Biodiversity, coupled with a wealth of traditional knowledge of the continent, play a key role in promoting resilience in production systems, improving livelihoods and supporting food security and nutrition.

5. Recent findings on the threats of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)'s State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture and the global assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services have put agriculture at the crosshairs of an intense debate about sustaining the future of the people and the planet.

6. Despite several positive developments that support biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Africa, great challenges are still faced because the true value of biodiversity contributions to human well-being is still underappreciated, particularly in decision-making processes and investments. Biodiversity is still and often taken for granted. The fast-paced economic development, rapid urbanization, and population growth are major threats to the extraordinary rich biodiversity of Africa, which continues to be depleted at an alarming scale. The current economic growth model can no longer be sustained since the earth's carrying capacity can no longer meet the demands of the growing population and urbanization in the region.

7. As the same case in other regions, the true value of nature's contributions to human well-being are under-valued in decision-making processes. Africa's current population of 1.25 billion is likely to double by 2050 and will put severe pressure on the continent's biodiversity. Unless appropriate policies, investments and strategies are adopted and effectively implemented, especially in this region which is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the ability of nature to satisfactorily contribute to people's survival will greatly diminish.

8. With the critical need to address this issue immediately, the FAO Conference in 2017 welcomed FAO's initiative to be the nexus across agricultural sectors as the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform² (the Platform). The Conference recommended FAO to facilitate, in collaboration with its partners such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other UN organizations, the integration and coherence of actions on the conservation, sustainable use, management and restoration of biological diversity across agricultural sectors at national, regional and international levels.

9. In 2018, the FAO Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform co-organized the first global multistakeholder dialogue on biodiversity mainstreaming in Rome, which was followed by a series of regional dialogues co-organized with FAO Regional Offices. The African Regional Dialogue was held on 4-5 November 2019, in Kigali, Rwanda. In line with the regional objectives and priorities, including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the African

² The FAO's Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform Brochure is available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2403EN/ca2403en.pdf>.

Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the African Regional Dialogue had the following objectives:

- Raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors, including the newly approved FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors³, and to exchange knowledge, experiences and lessons learned on biodiversity mainstreaming in countries within the region, fostering mutual learning among different stakeholders;
- Identify the roles of different stakeholders, including youth and women, in mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors, and to identify gaps, needs and priorities, creating synergies in the region towards biodiversity sustainable use and conservation, and reaching consensus on actions to be taken at regional and country levels;
- Roll out a consultation on the draft FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors and to propose actions that can be taken at regional and country level; and
- Contribute to the discussion of the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

III. Outcomes and Recommendations

10. During the two-day event, highly participatory and vibrant dialogues highlighted the main biodiversity challenges in Africa. These challenges include land conversion, deforestation, encroachment, unsustainable land and agriculture practices, climate change, drought and water scarcity, conflicts, land tenure insecurity, inadequate investments for biodiversity-friendly practices, lack of integrated planning for local level implementation, lack of access to markets, and weak enabling environment for cross-sectoral collaboration among different ministries.

11. Conference participants discussed at length new opportunities to bring biodiversity actions at the fore of the global, regional, national and local level awareness. At the global level, the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) co-led by FAO and UNEP, the UN Decade on Family Farming (2018-2029) co-led by FAO and IFAD, and FAO's Biodiversity Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across agriculture sectors are highly relevant opportunities and spaces for agriculture sectors to be engaged and ensure that biodiversity is mainstreamed across agricultural, environment, finance, education, culture and other sectors.

12. Additionally, FAO global biodiversity-related instruments such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resource⁴ and the Global Plans of Action of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture⁵ provide tools and entry points for regional and national actions. The FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG), Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and the Committee on Forestry (COFO) have also integrated Biodiversity Mainstreaming in their standing agenda.

13. At the regional level, the following initiatives and/or platforms can be built upon:

- The Africa's Great Green Wall under the leadership of the African Union Commission and member countries;
- The African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) under the coordination of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) engaging 29 countries committed to restore over 100 million hectares by 2030;
- The Pan-African Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience as part of Africa's contribution to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030);

³ CL 163/11, at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nb349en/nb349en.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/en/>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/cgrfa/en/>

- The Sustainable Forest Management Framework for Africa (2020-2030) endorsed at technical and Ministerial levels by the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment, held on 21-23 October 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
- The AU strategy on combatting illicit exploitation of fauna and flora, the Africa Youth Ambassadors, AU Eco-Agriculture Initiative; and
- The FAO regional statutory and governance bodies such as the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission and the African Regional Conference.

14. In some countries, national and local level participatory platforms or mechanisms have been put in place. Biodiversity-friendly agriculture practices, which are very familiar to most Africans, should not be difficult for scaling up and adoption. There are interesting innovations with youth playing significant roles in many global, regional and national projects and programmes that make them the ‘agents of change’ in an interconnected world through the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and technologies in agriculture. There are on-going inclusive national training initiatives for agri-business and entrepreneurs, targeting the 60 percent of the population of women and youth in many African countries, which are boosting job creations and vibrant opportunities.

15. Participants of the African Regional Dialogue agreed to put forward the following recommendations to the global and regional inter-governmental institutions, financial partners and national governments, and to FAO specifically:

a) **Awareness Raising and Identifying “Country Champions”** on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agriculture sectors. Participants called for a “paradigm shift” of agriculture and food systems, taking into account the urgent need for all stakeholders to ensure that biodiversity is mainstreamed in agriculture sectors. The call for a “paradigm shift” of the agriculture and food systems would require:

- Connecting biodiversity conservation and sustainable use with food security and nutrition, neglected crops species, human health, climate resilience, among others;
- Recognizing and fostering the conservation of neglected and traditional crops and breeds, and practices, which increase the provisions of ecosystem services such as pollination, among others;
- Enabling biodiversity-friendly and conscious decision-making along biodiversity-based products and ecosystem services value chains;
- Considering the true value of biodiversity contributions to human well-being and ecosystems services and in return investing proactively in its conservation and sustainable use by decision-makers, governments and investors;
- Identifying the champion countries that will promote the institutionalization of biodiversity-friendly interventions, policies and investments and serve as examples for others.

b) **Research, Documentation and Development of New Tools** for Biodiversity-Friendly Agriculture Business Case Models. The lack of evidence-based information should be given a priority. Traditional practices are often not acknowledged and there is a need to bring together science and traditional knowledge. Several African countries started to capture the value of biodiversity-friendly practices through natural capital accounting, paving the way for new policies and incentive schemes. Participants recommended:

- Building the business case for agriculture sectors that are biodiversity-friendly and viable.
- Committing to a stocktaking exercise of documenting and exchanging (accessible and cost-effective) good practices to provide good insights for

replication and scaling up, and more importantly as support to policy instruments on biodiversity mainstreaming in agriculture sectors.

c) **Knowledge and Information Sharing** to create Synergies toward the Re-design of a New Agriculture and Food Systems. Knowledge should be coordinated coherently across Africa, shared at the national level and trickled down to community levels. Participants recommended to FAO to develop:

- A searchable, web-based database of policies, tools, guidance and business cases for sustainable use, conservation and valuation of biodiversity;
- A participatory regional web-based discussion forum and information-sharing mechanism (new tools, success stories and failures, events, funding opportunities).

d) **Multi-stakeholder National Platforms** for Networking, Alliances and Partnerships on biodiversity sustainable use and conservation should be strengthened and institutionalized. Participants recommended:

- Upon request by governments, FAO country offices would act as facilitators for national biodiversity dialogues across sectors of agriculture including crops and livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, environment, planning, finance, education, culture, among others. These dialogues should include representatives from national and local levels and build and strengthen alliances among women, youth, farmers, pastoralists, forest users and producers, traditional leaders, private sector, academia, research, etc.

e) **Capacity Development** Including Training, Especially Targeting **Youth and Women** that constitute 60 per cent of the population, enabling them to work with their communities with technical and financial tools. Participants recommended:

- Harnessing fresh graduates who would like to give back to their communities by giving them start-up kits and training for biodiversity social entrepreneurship in agriculture sectors;
- Supporting producers, especially youth and women, with new models of vocational training (away from traditional classroom models);
- Developing education programmes on biodiversity values, conservation and sustainable use, across different learning curriculum, formal and informal education.

f) **Strengthened Integrated Ecosystem Approaches** for Uptake by Governments. Participants recommended:

- Scaling up existing successful projects and experiences into larger programmes, such as national initiatives on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, sustainable forest management, landscape restoration, conservation agriculture, agroecology, agroforestry, in-situ and ex-situ conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture, pollinators, preservation of heritage and traditional agricultural practices and sites like Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS).

g) **Strengthened Enabling Laws, Regulations and Policy Frameworks.** The national implementation of already ratified biodiversity-related global treaties and protocols remains a challenge. Few countries exemplified their enactment of laws and policies that are directly related to biodiversity. Insecure land tenure remains a major challenge in Africa. Since youth are “agents of change” in agriculture sectors, it is essential to make agriculture sectors

attractive for youth through creating attractive livelihoods in rural areas and reducing the drudgery of work. Participants recommended:

- Giving women and youth the opportunity to become leaders and to express their voices in policy fora;
- Investing in rural development and diverse markets, and work-saving technologies such as ICT, mechanized agriculture and other innovations.

h) **Involving of the Private Sector in Biodiversity Financing.** Participants recommended:

- Considering and developing innovative funding models for biodiversity friendly investment, such as blended financing, public-private partnerships and private sector initiatives.

i) **Reviewing and revising value chains** to allow for the development of markets for biodiversity-friendly products.

IV. Way Forward

16. FAO, based on the recommendations, will continue through the Platform to prepare regional priority actions for the development of the Action Plan for the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity.

17. FAO will develop a monitoring plan to follow-up the implementation of recommendations directed at FAO and subsequent country as well as regional requests to FAO that are within the outcomes of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity.