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# COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

## Twenty-seventh Session

Rome, 22–26 July 2024

### The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 and mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry

#### Executive summary

FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are co-leading the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 (“the UN Decade”). FAO leads the support to Members globally in enhancing their ecosystem restoration efforts on the ground, sharing information and knowledge on successful restoration initiatives, and monitoring progress. Through the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism, FAO supports countries by providing policy advice and technical assistance. FAO is custodian of Indicator 2.2<sup>1</sup> (“Area under restoration”) of Target 2 (“Restore 30 percent of all degraded ecosystems”) of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). Moreover, the Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme supports countries in developing their capacity to adopt policies and legal frameworks to achieve KMGBF Target 5 (“Ensure sustainable, safe and legal harvesting and trade of wild species”) and Target 9 (“Manage wild species sustainably to benefit people”).

Despite its global importance for the well-being of people and the planet, forest biodiversity continues to decline at an alarming rate. FAO supports biodiversity mainstreaming in forestry and integrated land management approaches, in line with the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors.

This document presents FAO’s recent work related to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 and mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry.

#### Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- welcome FAO’s achievements in supporting the UN Decade as its co-lead, and encourage Members to continue their support to the implementation of the UN Decade and enhancing ecosystem restoration implementation and monitoring efforts, including by using the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM) platform;<sup>2</sup>
- welcome the progress made in the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors (“the Strategy”) through the completed 2021–2023

<sup>1</sup> <https://gbf-indicators.org/metadata/headline/2-2>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ferm.fao.org/>

Action Plan and current 2024–2027 Action Plan, and take note of the alignment of the 2024–2027 Action Plan with the KMGBF;

- c. stress the role of the Strategy as a coordination mechanism for activities through which FAO supports countries' efforts to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity, including in the forest sector;
- d. recommend that FAO continue to collaborate with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in advancing the mainstreaming of biodiversity in forestry, including on data and monitoring, and in the context of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; and
- e. invite FAO to collect and disseminate evidence-based management practices to effectively address human–wildlife conflict; and recommend that FAO continue to collaborate with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management, to strengthen country capacity for adopting policies and legal frameworks, including by implementing Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme tools and good practices to achieve sustainable wildlife management in alignment with the KMGBF.

*Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:*

Tiina Vahanen  
Deputy Director  
Forestry Division  
Tel. +39 06 57055652  
[Tiina.Vahanen@fao.org](mailto:Tiina.Vahanen@fao.org)  
Please copy: [COFO@fao.org](mailto:COFO@fao.org)

## I. United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030

1. FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are co-leading the implementation of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 (“the UN Decade”). In this context, FAO is supporting Members in enhancing their ecosystem restoration efforts, in particular in forest landscapes, and in sharing information and knowledge on successful restoration initiatives. FAO is also supporting Members with tools, methodologies and capacity-development initiatives to scale up their forest ecosystem restoration efforts, share good practices and monitor progress, and facilitate access to finance for forest ecosystem restoration.

2. In January 2022, the UN Decade launched the first call for countries to nominate their World Restoration Flagship initiatives. Seventeen World Restoration Flagship initiatives have been recognized to date and a new call for nominations was open recently until 31 May 2024. Ten of these recognized World Restoration Flagships initiatives are related to forest ecosystems.

3. The FAO-led Task Force on Best Practices is focused on shaping the knowledge component of the UN Decade,<sup>3</sup> including through the formulation and implementation of a Capacity, Knowledge and Learning Action Plan,<sup>4</sup> the development of Standards of Practices to Guide Ecosystem Restoration (the “Standards of Practice”),<sup>5</sup> together with the capitalization, sharing and dissemination of good practices for restoration in all ecosystems through the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM) platform,<sup>6</sup> which is operational since June 2023. A search engine tool is available to facilitate access to more than 1 500 good restoration practices.<sup>7</sup> The Standards of Practice were officially launched in September 2023, and a decision-making tool and an e-learning course are currently in preparation to facilitate their use.

4. The FAO-led Task Force on Monitoring is supporting the development of the FERM<sup>8</sup> for transparent monitoring and reporting on restoration progress throughout the UN Decade, by providing monitoring tools and geospatial information related to ecosystems. As of April 2024, the FERM included 250 restoration initiatives from 94 countries. FAO, as the custodian for Indicator 2.2 (Area under restoration) of Target 2 (“Restore 30 percent of all degraded ecosystems”) of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) jointly organized a workshop, together with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat in November 2023, to develop a roadmap<sup>9</sup> for Target 2, which is currently being implemented. The FERM streamlines monitoring and reporting for the UN Decade and Target 2 of the KMGBF. A resource manual and e-learning course is under preparation for Target 2 implementation.

5. Through the Trust Fund Programme “Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM)”<sup>10</sup> and other programmes and projects, FAO is supporting existing efforts on forest and landscape restoration by providing technical assistance for country-level implementation, knowledge sharing and resource mobilization. Online courses were developed in partnership with the FAO eLearning Academy.<sup>11</sup> In this context, FAO recently started the implementation of a new global project to increase access to funding and technical assistance for forest and smallholder farm producers and enterprises, with a view to accelerating restoration-based value-added innovation to support the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100).<sup>12</sup> Several new restoration projects are currently starting in the context of the GEF-7 Integrated Program “Food System, Land

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/our-work/gl/tfbp/en/>

<sup>4</sup> FAO. 2023. *Capacity, Knowledge and Learning Action Plan for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc6592en>

<sup>5</sup> Nelson, C.R., Hallett, J.G., Romero Montoya, A.E., Andrade, A., Besacier, C., Boerger, V., Bouazza, K. *et al.* 2024. *Standards of practice to guide ecosystem restoration*. Rome, FAO, Washington, DC, SER & Gland, Switzerland, IUCN CEM. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9106en>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ferm.fao.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://ferm.fao.org/search/good-practices>

<sup>8</sup> [www.fao.org/national-forest-monitoring/ferm](http://www.fao.org/national-forest-monitoring/ferm)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fao.org/national-forest-monitoring/areas-of-work/restoration-monitoring/target-2-roadmap/en/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/en/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://elearning.fao.org/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.fao.org/wood-energy/search/detail/en/c/1370746/> and [www.afr100.org](http://www.afr100.org)

Use and Restoration” (FOLUR) funded by GEF in Guinea, Kenya and Madagascar. Another restoration project is being prepared in Fiji for submission to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

6. Furthermore, to scale-up the successful restoration results of the Action Against Desertification Programme in support of the Great Green Wall,<sup>13</sup> A multicountry GCF programme “Scaling-Up Resilience in Africa’s Great Green Wall” (SURAGGWA) was prepared and submitted to GCF for approval.

## II. Mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry

7. Despite its global importance, forest biodiversity continues to decline at an alarming rate across large areas, mainly due to deforestation, forest degradation, and unsustainable forest and land-use practices.<sup>14</sup> For example, 32 percent of all tree species are threatened with extinction globally.<sup>15</sup> Biodiversity loss compromises the ecological functioning and stability of forests, thereby undermining the provision of ecosystem services, exacerbating negative impacts, including the spread of invasive species.

8. The KMGBF, adopted by the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the CBD in December 2022 provides further impetus for FAO’s work on biodiversity. It is structured into four overarching goals and 23 targets for 2030, and it acknowledges the strategic relevance of mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry. Forestry, even though not always explicitly mentioned, plays an essential role for several KMGBF targets, including but not limited to Target 2 on ecosystem restoration (“Restore 30 percent of all degraded ecosystems”), Target 3 on protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (“Conserve 30 percent of land, waters and seas”), Target 8 on the impacts of climate change on biodiversity (“Minimize the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and build resilience”), Target 10 on sustainable forest management (“Enhance biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry”) and Target 12 on benefits from green spaces by mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (“Enhance green spaces and urban planning for human well-being and biodiversity”).

### A. *FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors*

9. In the framework of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and its Action Plans, FAO is in the process of developing a comprehensive Global Programme on Biodiversity Mainstreaming in Forestry, with a planned duration of five years (2024-2028). Its purpose is to enhance the role of sustainably managed forests and of trees outside forests in biodiversity conservation, management and sustainable use. This programme builds on the recommendations of the FAO and CIFOR global review of biodiversity mainstreaming in forestry.<sup>16</sup>

10. The programme will have global and national components. Its modular structure allows resource partners to join the programme based on their specific thematic or geographic interests. The programme focuses on four overarching components: policy, institutions, and governance; practical approaches, tools, and instruments; landscape approaches and implementation; and knowledge management and innovation. The programme is well aligned with the FAO Forestry Roadmap (see document COFO/2024/5.1),<sup>17</sup> which identifies sustainable forest management geared to increasing forest biodiversity, and integration of forest biodiversity into policies, planning and development processes as priority actions. It also contributes directly to the implementation of the “Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for food and agriculture” Priority Programme Area (BE3) of FAO’s Strategic Framework 2022-31.

<sup>13</sup> [www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification](http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification)

<sup>14</sup> Harrison, R.D., Shono, K., Gitz, V., Meybeck, A., Hofer, T. & Wertz-Kanounnikoff, S. 2022. *Mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry*. Rome and Bogor, Indonesia, FAO and CIFOR. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc2229en>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bgci.org/our-work/networks/gta/>

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 14.

<sup>17</sup> COFO/2024/5.1

## B. *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources*

11. FAO continues to support countries in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (GPA-FGR),<sup>18</sup> adopted by the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Conference in 2013. The GPA-FGR was developed by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) and its Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources, in response to the findings of the first report on *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*.<sup>19</sup> In line with the Multi-year Programme of Work<sup>20</sup> of the CGRFA, FAO presented the draft *Second Report on The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*<sup>21</sup> to the 19th Regular Session of the CGRFA in 2023.

12. FAO also presented the second report on the implementation of the GPA-FGR<sup>22</sup> to the 19th Regular Session of the CGRFA. The report concludes that, as a response to the GPA-FGR, several countries have developed various mechanisms, programmes and strategies to enhance the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources. Of the 73 reporting countries, 85 percent and 77 percent reported to have *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation systems in place, respectively, and 75 percent reported having tree breeding programmes. However, only 55 percent of the reporting countries have developed a national strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources to structure relevant activities in a more coordinated manner. Moreover, active forest genetic resources management focuses on selected trees and woody plant species that are important for forestry and agroforestry. A common challenge reported by both developed and developing countries, is the lack or limited availability of species-specific data.

13. Considerable progress has been made since the last session of the Committee on Forestry in 2022 (COFO-26) with regard to the preparation of the *Second Report on The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* and a new global information system on forest genetic resources. As a result, both products will be launched together by the end of 2024.

## C. *Human–wildlife conflicts and co-existence*

14. As part of its work on wildlife, FAO, in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Human–Wildlife Conflict and Co-existence Specialist Group, completed a series of case studies (8 in 2022 and 15 in 2023) on managing human–wildlife conflicts with local communities. Through field projects, FAO has also continued to improve understanding of the changing dynamics of such conflicts and to test integrated and adaptive approaches that combine suitable wildlife management, land-use planning and agricultural practices. A global programme to monitor and pilot human–wildlife conflicts and co-existence management practices across a wider range of landscapes is being prepared. This will support the development of evidence-based national policies and legal frameworks and other strategies for scaling up good practices and meeting KMGBF Target 4 (“Halt species extinction, protect genetic diversity, and manage human–wildlife conflicts”). The importance of addressing human–wildlife conflicts has also been recognized in Thematic Objective 3 of the FAO-serviced Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) workplan,<sup>23</sup> in which FAO contributes to the development of an indicator to monitor progress towards the human–wildlife conflicts part of KMGBF Target 4.

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<sup>18</sup> FAO. 2014. *Global plan of action for the conservation, sustainable use and development of forest genetic resources*. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/7dd342ac-4438-4b4a-b9a4-a97f5e11afa8/content>

<sup>19</sup> FAO. 2014b. *The state of the world's forest genetic resources*. Rome.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/1ca65f2b-dfae-44e0-9919-a8428d7ee7b7/content>  
<https://www.fao.org/cgrfa/overview/strategic-plan-and-multi-year-programme-of-work/en>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.fao.org/cgrfa/overview/strategic-plan-and-multi-year-programme-of-work/en>

<sup>21</sup> [CGRFA-19/23/8.2/Inf.1 Rev.1](https://www.fao.org/cgrfa/overview/strategic-plan-and-multi-year-programme-of-work/en)

<sup>22</sup> [CGRFA-19/23/8.3/Inf.1](https://www.fao.org/cgrfa/overview/strategic-plan-and-multi-year-programme-of-work/en)

<sup>23</sup> FAO. 2023. Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management Strategic Roadmap.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/639fdff9-19b4-4027-93c4-92d11c8968ee/content>

15. Since 2017, under the Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme,<sup>24</sup> FAO is leading a consortium of partners, including the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), the Centre for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), to specifically address the threats and opportunities associated with the use of wildlife for food and livelihoods and for biodiversity conservation in forests, savannahs and wetlands.

16. The SWM Programme is active in 14 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries,<sup>25</sup> and uses a multisectoral and rights-based approach to support stakeholders in developing and testing wildlife-use management systems and tools. As of March 2024, legal analyses of relevant sectors in 13 countries have been completed, validated by the respective governments and made available online on the SWM Programme legal hub.<sup>26</sup> These analyses, together with other multidisciplinary research findings, are being used to initiate and inform participatory and evidence-based processes for developing and implementing policy and legal frameworks that can secure and enhance wildlife-based benefits for local communities and Indigenous Peoples, prevent or reduce wildlife overexploitation and human–wildlife conflict, and avoid the offtake of endangered species.

17. Building on the tools, good practices and lessons learned generated by the SWM Programme, FAO is strengthening its collaboration with the CBD, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS, otherwise known as the Bonn Convention), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Wetlands, otherwise known as the Ramsar Convention and other key partners, to support more countries in developing their capacity to adopt policies and legal frameworks to achieve KMGBF Target 5 (“Ensure sustainable, safe and legal harvesting and trade of wild species”) and Target 9 (“Manage wild species sustainably to benefit people”).

18. Regarding future orientations, based on the additional EUR 2 million received from the European Union in 2022, the SWM Programme is working to improve knowledge of zoonotic risks with epidemic potential and to develop, through a One Health approach, participatory and risk-based biosecurity and food safety frameworks adapted to wild meat value chains that can effectively prevent and mitigate these risks from “forest to fork”. In July 2023, FAO welcomed an additional EUR 25 million in funding from the European Union to extend the SWM Programme and scale up its results. This second phase started in July 2023 and will run until June 2029.

#### *D. Regional-level initiatives and activities*

19. In the Asia and the Pacific region, FAO is continuing with the implementation of the GEF 8 Indo-Malaya Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program, including by promoting cross-sectoral linkages and policy coherence in support of mainstreaming primary forest considerations into relevant agricultural sector policies and practices, by facilitating sharing of experience and lessons learned with other countries with similar conditions, and through other relevant initiatives. FAO prepared an information brief on the wildlife–livelihoods–health nexus in the region, which was published in March 2024.<sup>27</sup>

20. In Africa, a high-level event at the Summit of three basins was organized in Brazzaville, Congo (the), in 2023, which highlighted the importance of tropical forests, mangroves and peatlands, climate change, biodiversity and related finance. Also, FAO continues to support forest and landscape restoration initiatives in the region including through, among others, the Action Against Desertification Programme in support of the Great Green Wall and AFR100 initiative to strengthen implementation, monitoring and financing. In Europe, FAO is implementing a number of field projects to protect and enhance biodiversity through improved forest management, forest restoration,

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<sup>24</sup> [www.swm-programme.info/](http://www.swm-programme.info/)

<sup>25</sup> Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guyana, Mauritania, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>26</sup> [SWM Programme Legal Hub](#)

<sup>27</sup> FAO. 2024. *Information brief: The wildlife–livelihoods–health nexus: Challenges and priorities in Asia and the Pacific*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9861en>

provision of guidance for establishing effective forest biodiversity monitoring systems, improved protected area management and integration of pollinator biodiversity in forest management.

21. At its 26th Session in September 2023, the Near East Forestry and Range Commission invited FAO to support countries in contributing to conserving and restoring biodiversity while improving nutrition, food security and livelihoods by identifying opportunities, challenges and specific technical support requirements for the sustainable use of non-wood forest products (NWFPs) and pastoral value chains.

22. At its 33rd Session in June 2023, the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission requested that FAO promote the sustainable use and consumption of forest-based foods to contribute to safeguarding biodiversity, and recommended that FAO promote the eradication of perverse incentives affecting forests and biodiversity by way of appropriate policies and coordination between the agricultural, forestry and environmental sectors.

23. Through the SWM Programme, ten Member Nations in Africa are supported in implementing the KMGBF in relation to Targets 5 and 9. In addition, FAO supported the African Union Commission (AUC) in developing the Africa Action Plan to implement the KMGBF as well as the as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in developing the SADC Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/1680522/>