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# COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

## Item 8.4 of the Provisional Agenda

### Twentieth Regular Session

Rome, 24–28 March 2025

## PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF POLLINATORS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators (International Pollinators Initiative) was established in 2000 by the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to promote coordinated action worldwide to: (a) monitor pollinator decline, its causes and its impact on pollination services; (b) address the lack of taxonomic information on pollinators; (c) assess the economic value of pollination and the economic impact of the decline of pollination services; and (d) promote the conservation and the restoration and sustainable use of pollinator diversity in agriculture and related ecosystems. FAO was invited to facilitate and coordinate the Initiative in close cooperation with other relevant organizations.<sup>1</sup>

2. In 2002, the sixth meeting of the COP to the CBD established a plan of action for the International Pollinators Initiative.<sup>2</sup> Following the publication of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Assessment on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production, the fourteenth meeting of the COP to the CBD adopted the updated Plan of Action 2018–2030 for the International Pollinators Initiative.<sup>3</sup> FAO was invited to facilitate implementation of the two action plans.

3. FAO facilitates the implementation of the International Pollinators Initiative by providing guidance and technical advice to countries and supporting decision-making processes. Owing to the cross-cutting nature of pollinators and pollination, the work of several different units in FAO contributes to the implementation of the International Pollinators Initiative.

4. This information document provides an update on the main activities undertaken by FAO to facilitate the implementation of the Plan of Action 2018–2030 for the International Pollinators Initiative since the last session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission).

## II. ENABLING POLICIES

5. At its Nineteenth Regular Session, held in July 2023, the Commission considered the need for and possible modalities of a global pollinator platform. It recommended that FAO further explore the possible modalities of a global pollinator platform that could respond to the priorities and needs identified.<sup>4</sup>

6. In addition, the Commission also recommended that FAO continue to develop tools and technical and guidance documents, including standardized monitoring protocols for pollinators, and environmental risk assessments for biological control agents, as appropriate.<sup>5</sup> The Commission invited countries to implement the International Pollinators Initiative, establish or strengthen national monitoring programmes for invertebrate pollinators, promote research on drivers of change in pollinator populations and the impacts of managed bees on wild plants and wild invertebrate pollinators, and insert data on managed honey bees into the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS).<sup>6</sup>

7. The FAO Council, at its 174th Session, endorsed the Commission's conclusions and recommendations.<sup>7</sup>

8. In response to the Commission's recommendations concerning a potential global pollinator platform, the document *Possible modalities of a global pollinator platform*<sup>8</sup> was prepared for the consideration of the First Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Microorganism and Invertebrate Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

9. At its Twentieth Regular Session, the Commission is expected to consider the recommendations of the Working Group, including with regard to the establishment of a global pollinator platform.

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<sup>1</sup> CBD/COP/DEC/V/5.

<sup>2</sup> CBD/COP/DEC/VI/5.

<sup>3</sup> CBD/COP/DEC/14/6.

<sup>4</sup> CGRFA-19/23/Report, paragraph 86.

<sup>5</sup> CGRFA-19/23/Report, paragraph 87.

<sup>6</sup> CGRFA-19/23/Report, paragraph 88.

<sup>7</sup> CL 174/REP, paragraph 33.

<sup>8</sup> CGRFA/WG-MIGR-1/24/7.

10. The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade is shared by FAO and the UN Environment Programme. FAO provides technical assistance in response to specific requests from Parties, encourages them to undertake concerted actions on pesticide risk reduction, including through the use of safer alternatives to pesticides and chemicals listed or considered for listing under the Rotterdam Convention, and facilitates information exchange among Parties.

11. The Rotterdam Convention promotes sustainable approaches to the management of pests and diseases, such as integrated pest management, conservation agriculture, organic agriculture, agroecology and the use of biopesticides and biological pest control. Between mid-2021 and mid-2024, more than 118 Parties to the Rotterdam Convention received technical assistance from FAO in the form of workshops, projects and webinars. More than 350 notifications of final regulatory actions banning or restricting the use of hazardous chemicals and pesticides at national level were received from Parties. At the eleventh meeting of the COP to the Rotterdam Convention (COP11), held in May 2023, the pesticide terbufos was added to the Convention's Annex III, making it subject to a structured information exchange (prior informed consent procedure) through which Parties can take informed decisions on future imports of the pesticide and facilitate its environmentally sound use if absolutely necessary. Terbufos is an insecticide with high acute toxicity and for which there is evidence of high risk to non-target organisms.

12. The same meeting also discussed the pesticides acetochlor, carbosulfan, fenthion formulations, iprodione and paraquat formulations. Draft Decision Guidance Documents on these pesticides (available on the Rotterdam Convention website) have been elaborated and contain a wealth of information about the pesticides, including their effects on pollinators as appropriate, and can be consulted to facilitate national risk evaluations.

13. The FAO pest and pesticide management team continues to develop guidelines and best practices with respect to the use of chemicals in agriculture and the promotion of biodiverse and ecosystem-based farming systems. In December 2022, the UN Environment Programme published, in close collaboration with FAO and the World Health Organization, the *Synthesis report on environmental and health impacts of pesticides and fertilizers and ways to minimize them*,<sup>9</sup> which also addresses impacts on bees and other pollinators and possible reduction of crop pollination.

14. Training on the use of FAO Pesticide Registration Toolkit – a decision-support system for pesticide registrars responsible for reviewing and registering pesticide products – continued to be provided. So far, 80 countries and 710 registration staff have been provided with training on the use of the toolkit.

15. FAO's work on pesticides in support of the International Pollinators Initiative has also continued through larger projects, such as phase three of the programme Capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP MEAs 3).<sup>10</sup> Although progress has been made, legal mechanisms to protect pollinators from the adverse impact of pesticides remain inadequate in many countries, and when legislation is available, it is often limited to pesticides and/or focused on beekeeping. Environmental or biodiversity legislation tends to be applied less frequently for this purpose. To address this gap, FAO is currently working on a guidance document for legislators and regulators seeking to protect pollinators from pesticides. It will provide guidance on options that countries may wish to consider including in their pesticide legislation, their beekeeping legislation and their broader environmental and biodiversity legislation and animal production and animal health legislation. The document is expected to be available in early 2025.

### III. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

16. FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health, Apimondia (the International Federation of Beekeepers' Associations) and Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale del Lazio e della Toscana "M. Aleandri" (IZSLT) organized the Third International Symposium on Biosecurity in Beekeeping, which

<sup>9</sup> UNEP. 2022. *Synthesis report on the environmental and health impacts of pesticides and fertilizers and ways to minimize them*. Geneva, Switzerland. <https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/38409/pesticides.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/building-capacity-environmental-agreements/en/>

took place in May 2024.<sup>11</sup> FAO had previously collaborated with IZSLT, Apimondia and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), with which FAO has developed various guidelines and manuals related to beekeeping.<sup>12,13,14</sup>

17. Several projects at global, regional and country levels are currently active. The Forest and Farm Facility Phase II (Climate Resilient Landscapes and Improved Livelihoods) works at the local, national, regional and global scales, with on-the-ground operations in ten core countries – the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal, Togo, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zambia – and other network countries – primarily Liberia and the Gambia. It directly impacts forest-and-farm producer organizations by providing funding, information and advice and by enabling diverse exchanges among these organizations and between them and policymakers. In most countries, the Forest and Farm Facility supports forest-and-farm producer organizations with activities related to sustainable beekeeping and pollinator-friendly agriculture practices. For instance, in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Association of Beekeepers of the Department of Santa Cruz established an average conservation area of 200 ha of forest for every 25 established apiaries and proposed a “Certification of beekeeping and forest use” for approximately 200 community and family apiaries, strengthening forest conservation across 10 000 ha. In Ecuador, Tsatsayaku – a forest-and-farm producer organization that collaborates with Amazonian farms – has diversified its members’ farms with native bees and vanilla. Its actions are opening the potential to generate new value chains that potentially reach international markets. Tsatsayaku farmers are producing honey, increasing food security, supporting key ecosystem services, including pollination, and developing alternative livelihoods in the form of agrotourism. All these activities are conducted by women, which is improving their economic autonomy and decision-making power within their households.

18. In Zambia, the Mboole Rural Development Initiative is engaged in citrus production. The organization envisions converting degraded areas into citrus agroforest plantations, implementing improved management practices, and incorporating beekeeping and vegetable intercropping. Its goal in the short term is to produce vegetables and honey; a long-term project is aiming to produce citrus for local consumption and trade. The Zambia National Forest Commodities Association has established a beekeeping policy discussion platform to push forward support for local honey producers.

19. At the local level in the United Republic of Tanzania, the Community Forest Conservation Network of Tanzania successfully advocated for action on policy challenges related to beekeeping and forest business enterprises with the Kilosa District Executive Director and District Commissioner. Also in the United Republic of Tanzania, at the request of the Ministry of Environment and Union Affairs, the organizations MVIWAMA and MVIWAARUSHA, through the national farmer platform SHIWAKUTA, contributed to the review of the Environmental Management Act of 2004. A video, *Restoring land and livelihoods with beekeeping in Tanzania*,<sup>15</sup> was also produced.

20. Further activities are taking place in the Africa region. As part of the GEF Dryland Sustainable Landscapes Impact Programme, the Tanzanian Forest Services Agency aims to restore 34 885 hectares of Miombo woodland, focusing on forest-and-farm producer organizations’ sustainable and profitable beekeeping value chains. In Rwanda, the project Capacity Building to Increase the Quality and Quantity of Bees Products in Rwanda Furthering Income Generation and Job Creation<sup>16</sup> – which concluded in May 2024 – built the capacity of 9 100 beekeepers (30 percent women and youth), among others. The project Restoring Honey Value Chain in Conflict Affected Communities in Kilbati Zone of Afar Region, Ethiopia<sup>17</sup> is dedicated to sustainable beekeeping to improve livelihoods.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.apimondia.org/biosecurity.html>

<sup>12</sup> FAO. 2020. *Good beekeeping practices: Practical manual on how to identify and control the main diseases of the honeybee (Apis mellifera)*. Rome. <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9182en>

<sup>13</sup> FAO, Apimondia, IZSLT. 2021. *Visual manual on good beekeeping practices for small-scale beekeepers in Africa*. TECA – Technologies and practices for small agricultural producers, 2. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4576en>

<sup>14</sup> FAO and IZSLT. 2021. *Responsible use of antimicrobials in beekeeping*. FAO Animal Production and Health Guidelines No. 26. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb6918en>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79Pk0tcGavM>

<sup>16</sup> TCP/RWA/3802.

<sup>17</sup> TCP/ETH/4001.

21. In Latin America and the Caribbean, FAO implemented the project Poli-LAC Preparation Phase: Regional Actions for the Protection of Pollinators and Their Services,<sup>18</sup> funded by the German Ministry of the Environment, between 2022 and 2023. The overarching objectives were to support the conservation of pollinators through: the development of a knowledge management platform; provision of support for public policies and instruments; and implementation of pollinator-friendly practices across agricultural landscapes. Furthermore, the project Knowledge Management on Conservancy and Sustainable Management of Pollinators in Latin America,<sup>19</sup> which is being implemented in Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Peru (2023–2025), supports the reduction of knowledge gaps on pollinator protection practices in target countries within the region and facilitates knowledge exchange through a regional cross-sectoral working platform and through capacity building. Two online training courses on stingless beekeeping in Latin America and basic bee taxonomy have been organized: *Stingless Bees: an Introduction to Meliponiculture*<sup>20</sup> and *Bees of Latin America: an Introduction to their Taxonomic Identification*.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the project will be undertaking a stingless bee training course specifically for women in local communities in Brazil, in early 2025.

22. In the Europe and Central Asia region, the project Integrating Pollinators into Sustainable Forest Management Plans in Azerbaijan,<sup>22</sup> which concluded in 2023, strengthened national capacity and knowledge relevant to the inclusion of pollinator biodiversity in sustainable forest management plans. A new project was approved in 2024, Sustainable Beekeeping and Exchange of Cooperation between Türkiye and Ukraine.<sup>23</sup>

23. In the Near East and North Africa region, several ongoing projects have activities dedicated to sustainable beekeeping or pollinator protection: Strengthening MoEWA's Capacity to Implement its Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development Programme in Saudi Arabia,<sup>24</sup> Revitalising Oasis Agroecosystems through a Sustainable, Integrated and Landscape Approach in the Drâa-Tafilalet Region,<sup>25</sup> Strengthening SME's Capacities for Sustainable and Economic Apiculture in the Sultanate of Oman,<sup>26</sup> Préservation et développement de l'apiculture dans les pays du Maghreb<sup>27</sup> and Strengthening the Capacity of Beekeepers, Women and Youth, on Business Management and Post-harvest Marketing<sup>28</sup> in Iraq.

24. Lastly, as part of the One Country One Priority Product<sup>29</sup> initiative – launched by FAO in September 2021 to promote inclusive, profitable and environmentally friendly agrifood systems through sustainable development of Special Agricultural Products – Viet Nam, Benin, Rwanda and Chile have focused efforts on supporting beekeepers and honey producers. Several activities, including training activities, have taken place at country level, and a webinar was organized on 27 May 2024 to share knowledge, experiences and lessons learned on the sustainable production, processing and marketing of honey in these countries.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> GCP/RLA/226/GER(GIZ).

<sup>19</sup> TCP/RLA/3912/C2.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.fao.org/in-action/fao-campus/actividades-de-capacitaci%C3%B3n/cursos-de-autoaprendizaje/abejas-sin-aguij%C3%B3n--una-introducci%C3%B3n-a-la-meliponicultura/es>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.fao.org/in-action/fao-campus/actividades-de-capacitaci%C3%B3n/cursos-de-autoaprendizaje/abejas-de-am%C3%A9rica-latina--una-introducci%C3%B3n-a-su-identificaci%C3%B3n-taxon%C3%B3mica/es>

<sup>22</sup> TCP/AZE/3802/C1.

<sup>23</sup> GCP/SEC/026/TUR.

<sup>24</sup> UTF/SAU/051/SAU.

<sup>25</sup> GCP/MOR/046/GFF.

<sup>26</sup> UTF/OMA/027/OMA.

<sup>27</sup> TCP/SNE/3902.

<sup>28</sup> TCP/IRQ/3902/C1.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.fao.org/one-country-one-priority-product/en>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.fao.org/one-country-one-priority-product/news-and-events/events/events-detail/ocop-webinar-honey/>

#### IV. ENGAGEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

##### *World Bee Day celebrations*

25. The UN General Assembly unanimously proclaimed 20 May as World Bee Day in 2017.<sup>31</sup> Every year since, FAO has co-organized – with various partners – the celebration of World Bee Day.
26. Under the theme “Bee engaged in pollinator-friendly agricultural production”, World Bee Day 2023 called for global action to support pollinator-friendly agricultural production and highlighted the importance of protecting bees and other pollinators, particularly through evidence-based agricultural production practices. The celebration of World Bee Day 2023 mobilized a global campaign that included an engaging hybrid event calling for global cooperation and solidarity to focus attention on the importance of pollinator-friendly agricultural practices for sustainable, resilient and productive agrifood systems. The event had a global audience: live webcasts and webinars in the six official languages of the UN brought together over 2 200 participants online and in-person. It was held in conjunction with World Tea Day, which stressed the importance of protecting and celebrating tea.
27. Under the theme “Bee engaged with youth”, World Bee Day 2024 aimed to raise awareness among youth and other stakeholders about the pivotal role of bees and other pollinators in agriculture, ecological balance and biodiversity preservation. The theme highlighted the importance of youth involvement, recognizing them as the future stewards of our environment. Celebrations of World Bee Day 2024 included a global outreach campaign and an in-person event held in a natural protected area in Rome, Italy, where an educational centre is dedicated to the study of bees. FAO worked jointly with the staff of the Tenuta to develop information panels that explain the important role of sustainable beekeeping practices and underline the vital role of bees and other pollinators in maintaining biodiversity, providing precious ecosystem services, ensuring the survival of many plants, regenerating forests, supporting climate change adaptation and improving the quantity and quality of the output of agricultural production systems.
28. On World Bee Day 2024, FAO Director-General QU Dongyu formally signed a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Apimondia – an organization that promotes scientific, technical, ecological, social and economic apicultural development worldwide as well as cooperation among beekeepers’ associations, scientific bodies and individuals involved in apiculture.<sup>32</sup> The MOU formalizes the renewed cooperation between the two organizations and addresses issues such as the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture, antimicrobial resistance and antimicrobial use, broadening pollinator biodiversity, improvement of pesticide regulation and utilization, promotion of sustainable beekeeping practices, including bee health, and monitoring of managed bee genetic resources.
29. On 22 and 23 May 2024, as a complementary initiative to World Bee Day 2024 and to revitalize global action on bees and other pollinators, FAO and Slovenia jointly organized an International Forum for Action on Sustainable Beekeeping and Pollination, in Ljubljana.<sup>33</sup> The event brought together representatives from international organizations, governments, academia, civil society and the private sector. It provided an opportunity for in-depth dialogue and reflection, and allowed participants to share experiences, define needs and coordinate future action. It included a Policy Panel on Bees for People, Planet and Peace,<sup>34</sup> a technical session on Beekeeping for Food Security and Poverty Reduction – Lessons Learnt and four breakout sessions addressing the following themes: Partnerships and Funding; Youth and Gender; Technologies and Innovations; and Ecosystem Services.
30. World Bee Day 2025 will be organized as part of the Second International Forum for Action on Sustainable Beekeeping and Pollination, which will take place in Ethiopia from 20 to 22 May 2025 under the theme “Bee inspired by nature to nourish us all”. The celebration of World Bee Day and the Forum will contribute to knowledge creation and dissemination, capacity building, networking and advocacy for sustainable management of pollinators and beekeeping. The event is expected to support the creation of a global partnership by establishing the group of friends of bees and pollinators to

<sup>31</sup> A/RES/72/211.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.apimondia.org/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/international-forum-for-action-on-sustainable-beekeeping-and-pollination-2024/en>

<sup>34</sup> Webcast video: <https://www.fao.org/webcast/home/en/item/6576/icode/>

facilitate the coordination of existing activities and initiatives at national, regional and global levels, fully in line with and building upon the International Pollinator Initiative.

### ***Indigenous Peoples' initiatives***

31. During the Second Session of the UN Global Indigenous Youth Forum, which took place in conjunction with the 2023 World Food Forum flagship event, FAO organized a “No-Honey bar”, where a laboratory on beekeeping was conducted every day. The bar offered a space where traditional beehives could be displayed and visitors could be sensitized about bees and the importance of beekeeping. It gave Indigenous Youth from the seven socio-cultural regions an opportunity to learn more about the wild honey products of other socio-cultural regions, share their knowledge and know-how and discuss the challenges they are facing. Participants of the 2023 World Food Day Ceremony, the 51st Session of the Committee on World Food Security and the World Food Forum were able to discover and taste a variety of honey products that are currently forbidden on international food markets and whose source species represent an enormous contribution from Indigenous Peoples to the maintenance of biodiversity. The No-Honey bar highlighted the qualities of these products in terms of nutrition, biodiversity, sustainability of preparation and harvesting, cultural practices and even health care.

32. FAO will organize a High-Level Expert Seminar on the vital role of bees beyond *Apis mellifera* for Indigenous Peoples to highlight the role of pollinators in biodiversity conservation. It is expected to take place in 2025.

## **V. KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

33. In June 2024, FAO launched its newly redesigned platform Global Action on Pollination Services for Sustainable Agriculture.<sup>35</sup> This knowledge hub aims to provide professionals and enthusiasts with extensive resources and assessments, up-to-date news and much more. It features an updated pollination glossary that explains scientific terms and processes related to pollination, making it an invaluable tool for educators, researchers, beekeepers, policymakers and any pollinator enthusiast.

34. In close collaboration with National Coordinators for the Management of Animal Genetic Resources (NCs-AnGR), a specific task force of the European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources and Apimondia, FAO developed and agreed upon data fields for monitoring the diversity of managed honey bees of relevance for food and agriculture. A module for entering bee data was made available to all NCs-AnGR under the password protected section of DAD-IS. Tools that allow these data to be visualized in various ways have also been developed. As of January 2025, data have been reported by 38 countries on 91 managed bee populations, representing 36 different species or subspecies, including stingless bees. Twenty-one countries were able to provide estimates of the number of colonies for 18 different species and subspecies, thus providing a basis for monitoring the genetic diversity of bees.

35. Agrobiodiversity and pollinators feature prominently in the FAO Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) framework.<sup>36</sup> Since its launch in 2019, the tool has been used in 58 countries, with over 12 000 farms/households assessed. TAPE was developed by FAO and partners to provide a framework of indicators and a database for assessing the performance of agroecological systems. The presence of pollinators and other beneficial animals within the agroecosystems is part of one of ten key criteria used to assess agroecological performance.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.fao.org/pollination/en/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.fao.org/agroecology/tools-tape/en/>