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Food and Agriculture
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Продовольственная и
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Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

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

Skukuza - Mpumalanga, South Africa, 9 - 13 March 2020

FAO'S WORK ON BIODIVERSITY

I. Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development puts biodiversity at the centre of many economic activities, particularly those related to the agricultural sectors. It calls for the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and the promotion of fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed.
2. FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is the only intergovernmental body, which specifically addresses all components of biodiversity of relevance to food and agriculture. With 178 countries and the European Union as its members, the Commission's main objective is to ensure the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from its use, for present and future generations.
3. The 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference, held in Cancun, Mexico, called for the mainstreaming of biodiversity across all agricultural sectors as well as the tourism sector.¹ It invited FAO and its Governing and Statutory Bodies to consider and support the development and implementation of relevant measures, guidance and tools in this regard, and welcomed FAO's initiative to act as Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform.^{2,3}

¹ CBD/COP/13/24.

² CBD/COP/DEC/XIII/3

³ COFO/2018/5.3

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4. This document reports on the forest-relevant outcomes of the 17th Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (18-22 February 2019) and on progress made in the development of an FAO strategy on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors as requested by FAO's Technical Committees including the Committee on Forestry⁴.

II. Background

5. Biodiversity forms the basis of all agricultural sectors and is key to food security and nutrition. In many places, indigenous and local communities and small holder farmers are key guardians of biological diversity. Biodiversity is needed to sustainably produce enough nutritious food in the face of challenges, such as climate change and growing populations with changing diets. A large number of the world's poor rely directly on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and their livelihoods are affected by biodiversity loss. However, in some cases, gains in economic development have been achieved at the expense of biodiversity, putting at risk prospects for food security and nutrition, and resilient livelihoods in the long-term.

6. The agricultural sectors have the potential to contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. However, the growing demand for food and agricultural commodities will increase the pressures on biodiversity unless those pressures are appropriately addressed, as also confirmed recently by the Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)⁵. When managed sustainably, agricultural sectors support provisioning of ecosystem services. As demand for agricultural products continues to grow worldwide, the role of the agricultural sectors in biodiversity conservation becomes even more significant.

7. Biodiversity is already a well-recognized element of forestry. The concept of sustainable forest management (SFM), which has evolved over time, now guides the development and implementation of policies and practices to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of forests. The role of forests in maintaining biodiversity is also explicitly recognized by the *UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030*⁶.

8. "Mainstreaming" of biodiversity has been interpreted and defined in various ways. One useful definition is that by the Global Environmental Facility's (GEF) Scientific and Advisory Panel (STAP)⁷, which describes it as: "*the process of embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices of key public and private actors that impact or rely on biodiversity, so that it is conserved and sustainably and equitably used both locally and globally*". FAO considers that mainstreaming biodiversity across the agricultural sectors contributes to "a world where agriculture and food systems reduce their negative impacts, and make the best use of the potential of biological diversity and ecosystems, and contribute to the conservation, sustainable use, management and restoration of biodiversity ensuring food security and nutrition for present and future generations and supporting livelihoods".⁸

III. Forest-relevant outcomes from the 17th Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

9. The 17th Regular Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Commission) took place in Rome on 18-22 February 2019.⁹ It considered a number of both cross-

⁴ COFO/2018/5.3

⁵ <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment-report-biodiversity-ecosystem-services>

⁶ A/RES/71/285

⁷ https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Mainstreaming-Biodiversity-LowRes_1.pdf

⁸ CL 163/11 Rev.1

⁹ CGRFA-17/19/Report

cutting and sector-specific issues based on recommendations by its Intergovernmental Technical Working Groups and other expert groups, including guidance provided by the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (8-10 May 2018).¹⁰

10. The Commission welcomed *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* (SoW-BFA)¹¹ as an important milestone for the UN Decade on Biodiversity and as a valuable contribution to the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. It also considered a document on draft needs and possible actions in response to SoW-BFA and requested the Secretary to convene, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary resources, an open-ended meeting of the Group of National Focal Points for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture to revise the document, for consideration by the Commission at its Eighteenth Session in 2021, with the motivation to have it adopted as a Global Plan of Action on biodiversity for food and agriculture by the FAO Conference at its Forty-second Session. Additionally, FAO launched the Africa Regional Synthesis for the SoW-BFA report in May 2019.

11. The Commission also welcomed FAO's activities on raising awareness of the contributions of genetic resources for food and agriculture to food security and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, and requested FAO to continue conducting such activities. Concerning access and benefit sharing (ABS), the Commission welcomed explanatory notes describing the distinctive features of different sub-sectors of genetic resources, including forest genetic resources, and encouraged countries to consider and make use of them when implementing their ABS measures. It also agreed that there is a need for further review of "digital sequence information" on genetic resources for food and agriculture, and for continued coordination with the ongoing process on this topic under the CBD and its Nagoya Protocol. Additionally, the Commission requested FAO to prepare a scoping study on the role of genetic resources in adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and its Working Groups to review this study.

12. The Commission took note of the *First Report on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources*¹². It invited countries to continue implementing this action plan and encouraged them to address the findings of the report. The Commission further adopted a funding strategy for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (Global Plan of Action)¹³, and endorsed voluntary guidelines for preparing a national strategy for forest genetic resources¹⁴.

13. The funding strategy has three objectives. Firstly, it aims to mobilize financial resources from existing multilateral financing mechanisms to the implementation of the Global Plan of Action by mainstreaming actions on the conservation, use and development of forest genetic resources into larger and holistic country-led actions that are designed to enhance the implementation of sustainable forest management and forest-based adaptation and mitigation measures for climate change. Secondly, the funding strategy aims to further mobilize financial resources from all possible sources for strategic and specific actions on forest genetic resources at national, regional and international levels. Thirdly, it promotes cooperation with ongoing forest financing initiatives, in particular the *Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network* (GFFFN) established by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), to make available information on, and facilitate access to, existing and emerging funding sources.

¹⁰ CGRFA-17/19/10.1

¹¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/CA3129EN/CA3129EN.pdf>

¹² CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.1

¹³ CGRFA-17/19/Report, Appendix D.

¹⁴ CGRFA-17/19/10.2/Inf.3

14. The Commission requested FAO to continue coordinating and supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, in collaboration with regional networks on forest genetic resources and relevant international organizations.

15. Concerning the preparation of *The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources* (to be released in 2023), the Commission adopted the outline of the Second Report and its preparatory process¹⁵, as well as guidelines for preparing country reports¹⁶. It encouraged countries to initiate the collection of information and data for the preparation of these reports and called upon them to submit the reports by 30 June 2020. The Commission also requested FAO to initiate the development of a new global information system on forest genetic resources, subject to the availability of extra budgetary resources, to make the collected data easily accessible and useable.

16. As a follow-up to the requests by the Commission, FAO organized, in collaboration with the Sub-Saharan Forest Genetic Resources Programme (SAFORGEN), Bioersivity International and the Forest Research Institute of Ghana, a regional workshop on the conservation and use of forest genetic resources in Kumasi, Ghana on 9-11 April 2019. The purpose of the workshop was to review the progress made by SAFORGEN in carrying out its activities, including the network's 2016 regional strategy for implementing the Global Plan of Action, and to explore opportunities for developing new regional projects in this area. Furthermore, the SAFORGEN National Coordinators and other experts were briefed by FAO on the findings of the First Report on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and the preparation of The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources.

17. In June 2019, through a Circular State Letter¹⁷, FAO invited countries to update by 31 August 2019, as necessary, the nominations for National Focal Points on forest genetic resources and to submit the country reports by 30 June 2020. The list of the nominated National Focal Points is available on the new FAO website on forest genetic resources¹⁸ that was launched in December 2019. Subject to the availability of extra-budgetary resources, FAO will organize, in early 2020, regional training workshops for the National Focal Points to support the preparation of the country reports. Furthermore, FAO is currently preparing a project for the development of the new global information system on forest genetic resources.

IV. FAO strategy on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors

18. The Conference, at its 40th session, welcomed FAO's initiative to act as Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform; and requested FAO to facilitate, in collaboration with its partners, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other UN organizations, the integration in a structured and coherent manner of actions for the conservation, sustainable use, management and restoration of biological diversity across agricultural sectors at national, regional and international levels.

19. The Committee on Forestry, at its 24th session (July, 2018), supported FAO's initiative to serve as a Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform covering agriculture sectors including forestry, livestock and crop production systems, fisheries and aquaculture, in an integrated manner, and recognized that the implementation of sustainable forest management is important for mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry. It further invited member countries to engage in the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform to exchange on opportunities and constraints for biodiversity mainstreaming

¹⁵ CGRFA-17/19/10.3

¹⁶ CGRFA-17/19/10.3/Inf.1

¹⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5229en/ca5229en.pdf>; <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5229fr/ca5229fr.pdf>;
<http://www.fao.org/3/ca5229es/ca5229es.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.fao.org/forest-genetic-resources/background/national-focal-points/en/>

in forestry. It finally requested FAO to develop a biodiversity strategy, which includes a plan to mainstream biodiversity in the forest sector, and bring it to COFO for its consideration.¹⁹

20. The Council, at its 160th session, endorsed upon consultation of its Technical Committees, the “*development by FAO of a strategy on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors, for consideration by the Programme Committee and Council, to be presented at the FAO Conference in 2019, in view of the preparation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).*”²⁰

21. The Council, at its 163rd Session, as mandated by the 41st Session of the FAO Conference²¹, adopted the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors and commended the inclusive consultation process conducted.²² The Council further approved additional resources for biodiversity mainstreaming in the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2020-21 as well as the establishment of a Biodiversity Cluster, provided that its staffing would have no impact on the capacity of technical units.²³

22. Substance-wise, the FAO Strategy on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors²⁴, proposes four overarching goals, namely a) promote sustainable use of biodiversity with special focus on landscapes and ecosystem approaches in agricultural sectors, b) conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services, c) promote sustainable agriculture and food systems that integrate the conservation, recognition and promotion of biodiversity throughout value chains, and d) safeguard the livelihoods of small-scale producers and indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity, and emphasize the role of all relevant stakeholders as custodians of biodiversity.

23. The Strategy further proposes four outcomes, i.e. (i) Support provided to Members, at their request, to enhance their capacity to mainstream biodiversity, (ii) Biodiversity mainstreamed across FAO's policies, programmes and activities (iii) Role of biodiversity and its ecosystem services for food security and nutrition globally recognized, and (iv) Coordination and delivery of FAO's work on biodiversity strengthened.

24. To operationalize the aforementioned goals and outcomes, FAO will develop and implement an Action Plan on mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors in participation with all relevant departments, taking into account ongoing work by FAO and its partners with a view to increase synergies and avoid duplication of work. In the development and implementation of the action plan, FAO will further ensure complementarity with other strategies and policies, including the FAO Strategy on Climate Change, the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition, the FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the FAO Policy on Gender Equality.

25. One ongoing activity of FAO's initiative to act as Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform is the convening of multi-stakeholder dialogues. Following the *Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors in Rome (29-31 May 2018)*, the *High-Level Regional Dialogue on the Integration of Biodiversity in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DRANIBA)* took place in Mexico (29-30 October 2018). The Regional Consultative Meeting on Biodiversity Mainstreaming Across Agricultural Sectors in Asia was held in Bangkok (17-19 July 2019) and the Regional Consultative Meeting on Biodiversity Mainstreaming Across Agricultural Sectors in the Near East and North Africa was held in Amman (3-5 November 2019).

¹⁹ COFO/2018/REP.

²⁰ CL 160/REP, paragraph 6(o), 8(m) and 9(d)

²¹ C 2019/REP, paragraph 48

²² CL 163/REP, paragraph 10(g)

²³ CL 163/REP, paragraph 7(e),(i)

²⁴ CL 163/11 Rev.1

26. Furthermore, the African Regional Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors took place in Kigali (4-5 November 2019). The summary outcomes and recommendations of this Dialogue addressed to global and regional inter-governmental institutions, financial partners and national governments, and to FAO, included 1) awareness raising and identifying "country champions" on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors, 2) Research, documentation and development of new tools for Biodiversity-Friendly Agriculture Business Case Models, 3) Knowledge and information sharing, 4) Multi-stakeholder national platforms for networking, alliances and partnerships, 5) Capacity development including training, especially targeting youth and women, 6) Strengthened integrated ecosystem approaches, 7) Strengthen enabling laws, regulations and policy frameworks, 8) The involvement of the private sector in biodiversity financing and 9) Reviewing and revising value chains to allow for the development of markets for biodiversity friendly products.

V. Points for consideration

27. The Committee may wish to:

a) invite member countries to:

- mainstream biodiversity across agricultural sectors;
- implement international agreements relevant to biodiversity and forests, as well as the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources;
- finalize the preparation of their country reports for The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources, and to submit them to FAO by 30 June 2020.

b) request FAO to:

- initiate appropriate forestry-related follow-up actions in relation to the development and implementation of the Action Plan on mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors, and report on progress made at the next appropriate session;
- continue to report on forest-relevant work of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources and the preparation of The Second Report on the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources, to the Regional Forestry Commissions.