



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Science, practice, and policy expert dialogue on food systems and resilience

**Key priorities for aligning global ecosystem
restoration, biodiversity, climate resilience and
sustainable food policies with local level action**



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The Decision Hub

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**Key priorities for aligning global ecosystem
restoration, biodiversity, climate resilience and
sustainable food policies with local level action**

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Abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| AUDA-NEPAD | Africa Union Development Agency - New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| CIFOR-ICRAF | Centre for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry |
| COP26 | 26th Conference of Parties |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FFS | farmer field school |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| GHG | greenhouse gas |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| LTS | Long-term Strategy |
| MSP | multistakeholder platform |
| NDC | Nationally Determined Contribution |
| RFS | Resilient Food Systems |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SHARED | Stakeholder Approach to Risk Informed and Evidence-based Decision-making |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCBD | United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |

1 Background

The Resilient Food Systems (RFS) Programme, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has been in place for four years and is committed to fostering sustainability and resilience for food security in sub-Saharan Africa which emphasizes the importance of natural capital and ecosystem services to enhance agricultural productivity. The programme involves the collaboration of 12 sub-Saharan African countries — all facing the detrimental impacts of environmental degradation caused by unsustainable agricultural practices. Each project is designed to reflect the country's unique context, while aligning with the broader aims and approaches of the RFS programme.

The programme has a unique structure to promote integration in the 12 country projects through the Regional Hub project, a cross-cutting unit whose core focus is to:

- A** provide technical support across country projects;
- B** ensure cross-project learning and collaboration; and
- C** monitor and assess programmatic progress.

Within the Regional Hub there is a component on Institutional Frameworks, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), whose objective is to create and strengthen integrated institutional frameworks and mechanisms for scaling up proven approaches. A key aspect of this pillar is to work across the science, practice and policy interface. In collaboration with the FAO, the Stakeholder Approach to Risk Informed and Evidence-based Decision-making (SHARED) Decision Hub, whose expertise is in facilitating stakeholder engagement for inclusive evidence-based decision-making, has designed and carried out learning events for the RFS Programme.

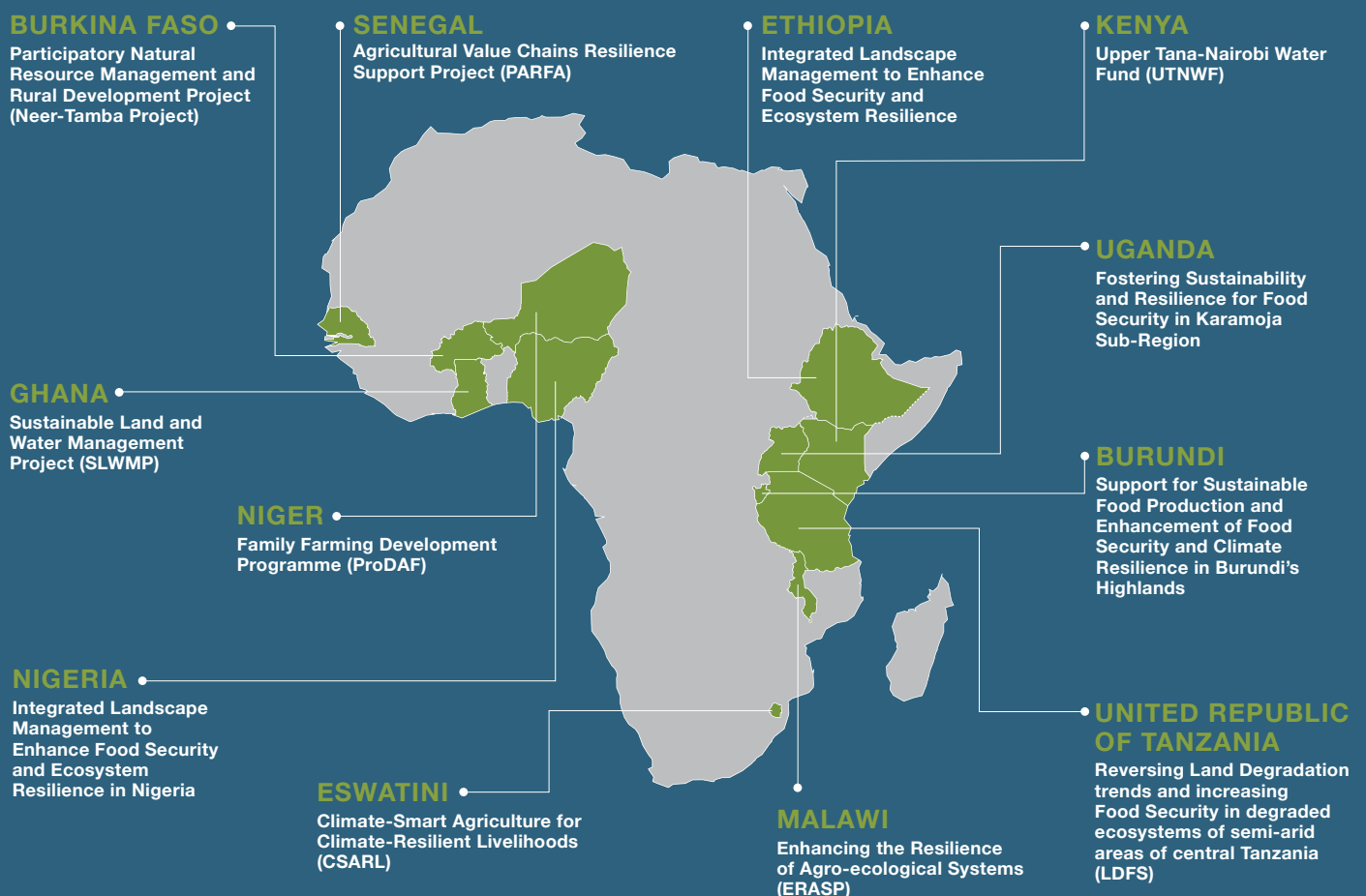


Figure 1: The project focal areas of the 12 RFS countries

(Source: FAO, 2020, in conformity with the Map No. 4170 Rev. 19 UNITED NATIONS, October 2020)

In 2021, there was a unique constellation of inter-connected global events that emphasized:

- A** restoring landscapes, seascapes and biodiversity in the launch of the United Nations (UN) Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;
- B** advancing food systems thinking and action through the UN Food Systems Summit; and

- C** updating evidence and deepening commitments through the IPCC 6th Assessment and the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The key implementation actions, aspirations, goals, commitments coming out of these meetings at the global level need to be interrogated and translated at the local level (Figure 2).

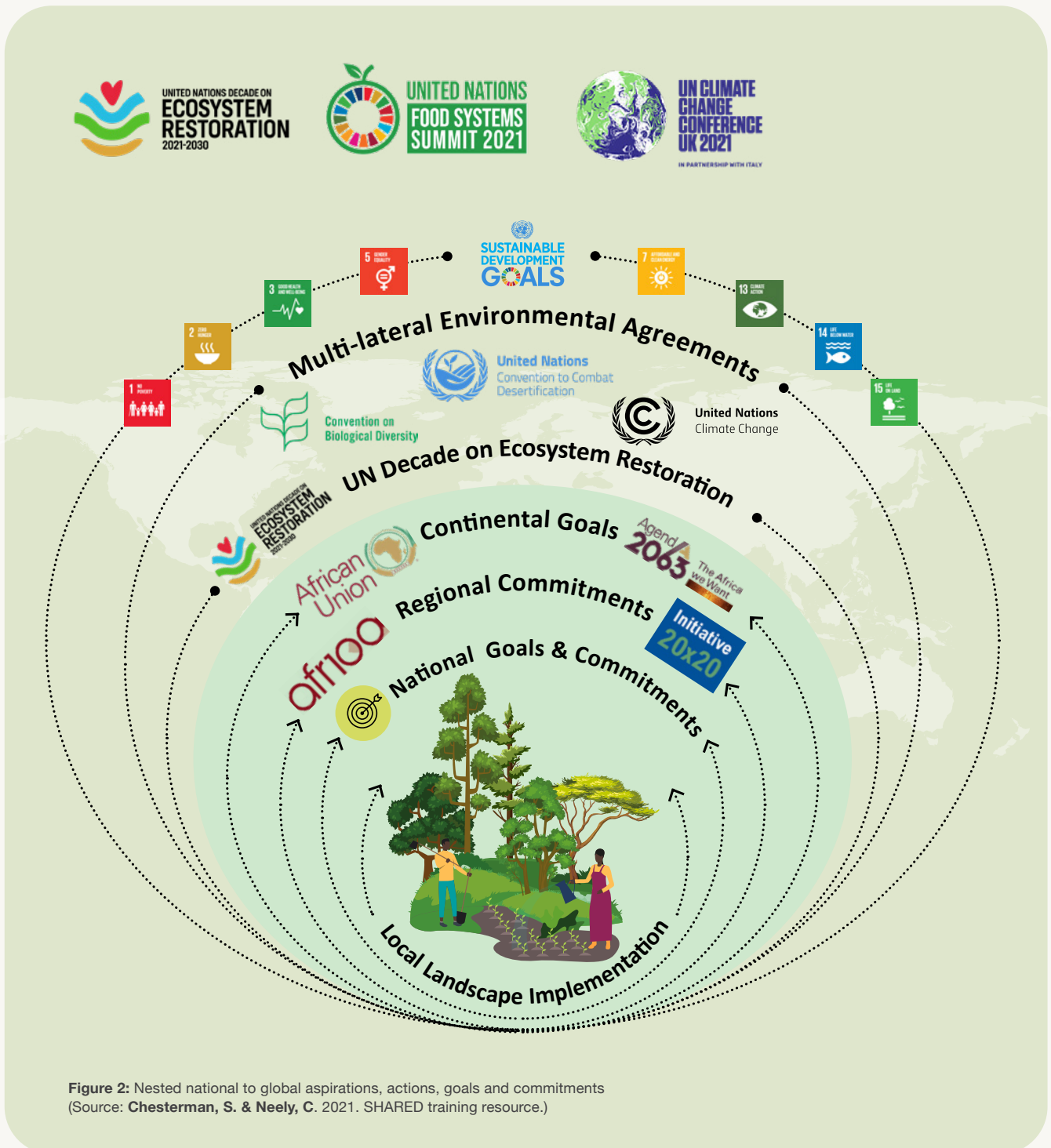


Figure 2: Nested national to global aspirations, actions, goals and commitments (Source: Chesterman, S. & Neely, C. 2021. SHARED training resource.)

This brief builds on, and expands upon, a Science, Practice and Policy Expert Dialogue co-hosted by FAO, World Agroforestry and the SHARED Decision Hub with the objectives of a) reflecting upon the outcomes and commitments made at certain key high-level events in 2021, and b) delivering practical messages for Africa at continental, country and project implementation scales to achieve resilience and transform food systems in an integrated way.

Two panels were convened during this event around these cross-scalar and interlinked commitments to:

- 1 set the stage with key messages emerging from the international agenda; and
- 2 highlight opportunities to translate these international agendas in an integrated way for programmes such as the GEF RFS that have science, practice and policy dimensions.



Event Panelists and Facilitators

The two panels were facilitated by the SHARED Decision Hub Team: Dr Constance L. Neely with Ms Sabrina Chesterman and Dr Emilie Smith Dumont.

Panel 1. Key messages coming out of the UNFCCC COP26, the UN Food Systems Summit, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration



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Panel 2. Opportunities to translate these international agendas in an integrated way for programmes such as the GEF RFS that have science, practice and policy dimensions



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2 Introduction

The year 2021 offered a unique opportunity for advancing sustainable development and climate-resilient thinking through numerous high-level meetings and policy discussions. Among others, this included the **United Nations' Food Systems Summit (UNFSS)**; the **26th Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC**; as well as opportunities to intensify efforts on biodiversity preservation and restoring land health, included through the preparation for the **post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework** and the implementation of goals for the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**. These global policy meetings address the multiple, escalating and interrelated crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and unsustainable food systems. In addition, these policy forums support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as regional frameworks such as the African Union's Agenda 2063.

The commitments and frameworks attached to these global policy dialogues frame collective efforts towards achieving a comprehensive and integrated agenda for sustainable, climate-resilient development. Their associated action areas, goals and aspirations provide an important basis on which to **coordinate action across global systems to ensure that ambition at the international level is sufficiently high to yield meaningful change**. These frameworks also set out targets, timeframes, guidelines and principles that provide a directive for broader stakeholder engagement to accelerate progress.

However, if the commitments emerging from the 2021 policy summits are to be meaningful and practicable, significant efforts will need to be channelled into translating these **global commitments into national and local-level action**. This relates both to how local and regional governments and actors can support the achievement of these frameworks through action from the bottom up, and to how these international regional agendas can provide a framework for enhanced policy engagement and implementation at the local level. The local-level implementation of these international agendas will improve the achievement of **transformative development outcomes** for all types of projects, programmes and initiatives across all policy domains in Africa.

This brief focuses on a range of **practical strategies to translate these international agendas into field and policy programmes**. It identifies several entry points and opportunities across science, policy, action and finance to bolster local engagement, cooperation and coherence in addressing these global challenges. Emphasis will be placed on the national and local intervention priorities and actions with a view to strengthening the contribution that farmers, pastoralists and project implementers can make in policy design, development, implementation and monitoring. **Recommendations on a way forward**, for policy makers and local level actors, have been included, to support the achievement of these global agendas. In addition, this brief identifies specific policy engagement platforms where local actors can advocate for their needs and priorities and to further support the interests of their constituencies.

3 2021 at a glance: a consequential year for policy

The culmination of global events in 2021 created an unparalleled opportunity for synergies across various policy domains. It was a critical year for tackling the climate emergency at COP26, as well as a wider sustainability agenda.



CLIMATE CHANGE

COP26 took place in November 2021 under the auspices of the UNFCCC. One of the key goals of COP26 was to ensure that the Paris Agreement's temperature target of 1.5 °C was kept alive. To date, national climate pledges have not been sufficient to limit global warming to what is required by science and insufficient action now places Africa in a precarious position – set to see temperature increases of between 3-5 °C.

The **IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report**, published in August 2021, calls for a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 45 percent by 2030. For this target to be reached, countries must urgently reduce their GHG emissions and proactively pursue low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathways. This will require enhanced ambition from all states – albeit in a self-differentiated way based on a country's unique circumstances and capabilities.

Under the Paris Agreement countries are mandated to develop Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – national climate pledges that demonstrate increasing ambition over 5- and 10-year time increments. In addition, countries are developing Long-Term Low Emissions Strategies or Long-Term Strategies (LTSs) to place them on a transformative pathway towards low emission, climate-resilient development by 2050.

NDCs are intended to be bottom-up processes in which countries contextualize their climate targets and contributions based on their own national situations and priorities.¹ These roadmaps are intended to guide future actions across all sectors and stakeholder groupings, incorporating domestic climate-related risks, challenges, priorities, and opportunities from an economy-wide perspective.

The revision and development of these living climate policy documents provide an opportunity for policy makers and stakeholder communities to support the climate goals of the Paris Agreement by engaging in, and building plans, within country's NDCs and Long-Term Low Emissions Climate Resilient Plans.

Agriculture, land-use sectors and food systems are key sectors that play a critical role in the global response to climate change adaptation and mitigation as a large source of GHG emissions, as a significant carbon sink, as well as the most vulnerable sectors to climate extremes and variability.² If adequately integrated within climate policy architecture and implementation strategies, these sectors can simultaneously deliver climate mitigation and adaptation goals while delivering socioeconomic benefits related to the eradication of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

¹ **Sunga, I. & Chevallier, R.** 2021. *Strengthening the NDCs of Southern Africa to be more representative of farmer interests*. https://sacau.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Enhancing-NDCs-to-reflect-farmer-interests_Technical-Briefing.pdf

² **IPCC.** 2019. *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems* [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]. In press.



Tangible policy next steps:



NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Support the revision process of national climate policies by ensuring that **agriculture, land-use sectors and food systems** are adequately represented and incorporated within NDCs and LTSs.
- Ensure that the specific actions encapsulated in the NDCs and LTSs include both the new and ongoing measures intended to improve the resilience of agriculture and food systems and to remove GHGs from the atmosphere. NDCs must also reference integrated approaches such as food systems transition and value chain improvements that also enhance food security and dietary diversity.



LOCAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Engage with national policy processes to ensure that the **needs and interests of particular constituencies are sufficiently reflected in the national agenda for climate change**. This includes a call for requisite support to promote the participation of truly representative non-state actors in NDC development and implementation.
- Encourage climate policies that include **landscape, farm and project level actions**. These include best practice activities such as the implementation of agroecological, climate-resilient farming practices and improved forest and grazing management practices, as well as value chain improvements to reduce the economic vulnerability of communities. This also includes practical approaches to address gender-responsive access to productive resources, services, employment and decision-making.
- Encourage and support **local champions** to push for an agriculturally sensitive climate advocacy agenda by including key matters in government agendas and applying pressure.
- Proactively engage with respective **government focal points** to establish the status of policy documents such as NDCs and national food dialogues. This will clarify when the process started or will start, timelines and key milestones. It will also importantly define the process of engaging with stakeholders and highlight the relevant avenues for meaningful dialogue, intervention, entry points and touch processes.





FOOD SYSTEMS

The **UN Food Systems Summit** in September 2021 aimed to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, recognizing that sustainable food systems are key solutions towards achieving Africa's climate mitigation and adaptation pledges, as well as other SDGs such as biodiversity protection, human health and societal well-being. Five priority action tracks were identified for their global transformative potential, including the improvement of aspects of food access and nutrition; enhancing sustainable consumption patterns; boosting nature positive production at scale; advancing equitable livelihoods and value distribution; and building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses.³

In preparation for the global Food Summit, national food dialogues were convened to define country-level food systems pathways to 2030, informed by actions and principles of the global food systems agenda. These national dialogues are ongoing, and their priorities need to be implemented and monitored. AUDA-NEPAD is working with African partners to develop a continental programme to support the implementation of these national plans and policies.



Tangible policy next steps:



NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Encourage the **domestication of Food Summit outcomes** through maintaining national level momentum, continuing broad-based dialogue and mobilizing the necessary resources.
- **Unpack the national and local pathways for transformative action** identified in formal country position statements, specifically encouraging the scaling of nature-based approaches, restoration initiatives and regenerative agricultural systems.
- Develop **system-wide indicators**, and **allocate specific roles, responsibilities and finance to local executing bodies**.



LOCAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Engage and contribute to food system dialogues to ensure that the **interests of women and men smallholder farmers, pastoralists and young people are well represented and supported** at the nexus of food security, climate risk, and resilience.
- Support local food systems transitions at the grassroots level by building and implementing projects that **align with, and build on, the international food systems transformation agenda**. At its core this includes increasing the adoption of resilient productive systems through integrated landscape management and sustainable food value chains.
- Encourage national food dialogues that include **explicit farm and project site level actions** such as targets to upscale sustainable farming practices through agroforestry, restoration and water resource management.



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ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Aware of the critical need to halt, prevent and reverse ecosystem degradation, and to effectively restore degraded terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems across the globe, the UN declared 2021–2030 as the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The Decade highlights the role of healthy ecosystems and nature-based solutions towards achieving the SDGs by 2030, building off the multitude of existing work and partnerships that exist to support this agenda and UNCCD Land Degradation Neutrality Targets, including the **African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative**, the **Great Green Wall**, **SDG 15**, as well as **GEF’s RFS Programme**. These initiatives, and the best practices learned from them, will be integrated into the adoption of a **post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework** that will lay out country pathways, both individually and collectively, to achieve the Convention on Biological Diversity’s overall vision of ‘living in harmony with nature’ by 2050.



Tangible policy next steps:



NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Encourage **national policy processes to align with, and support, the goals of the global Decade of Ecosystem Restoration** through the explicit inclusion of restoration targets within relevant policy frameworks, such as the NDCs, green recovery plans, and within national budgets.
- **Codevelop detailed plans and explicit implementation roadmaps** at the national level that include designated roles for local level actors and finance mechanisms to support local actions.



LOCAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Develop **projects that specifically align with, and contribute towards, the global restoration goals**.
- Build the citizen-science capacity of local communities to monitor the success of projects on the ground and capture relevant data.

4 National and local interventions and actions to support the implementation of global resilience and sustainability frameworks

Achieving the targets of global agreements is only possible through coherent national and local-level action that includes a wide range of stakeholders. Broad-based buy-in, support and ownership from actors on the ground will accelerate transformative development outcomes for all projects, programmes and initiatives across all policy domains.

Following are several possible entry points and actions for policy makers, local community actors, as well as RFS project leaders and participants to enhance engagement and cooperation in addressing these global challenges.



Tangible policy next steps:

STRENGTHEN COHERENCE BETWEEN GLOBAL AGREEMENTS AND NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

At the global level, opportunities for further communication and cooperation lie within the governing bodies (i.e. COPs), their related Presidencies, as well as within the Secretariats of the Conventions. It is also important to constantly address policy gaps and incoherence of agenda items.⁴ For example, while the UNFCCC COP negotiations address agriculture, forestry and land use as major sources of emissions, they do not account for the importance of national food consumption and food waste patterns in driving land-use change and emissions globally. Similarly, discussions under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) focus on agriculture as a driver of land degradation, ecosystem erosion and biodiversity loss, but do not address the importance of demand-side changes in easing the environmental pressure caused by food production systems.

It is important to translate the key messages of these global agreements and action agendas at the national level through the development of national multistakeholder dialogues that mirror international policy processes. An example of this is the Food Systems Dialogues series, established in 2018, that provided an entry point for nationally tailored, multistakeholder discussions around food system reform that are informed by the latest science and policy thinking at an international level. The continuation and rollout of these dialogues across all African countries among a diverse range of stakeholders will be a critical means of bridging the gap between policymaking at the global and national levels and across sectors, with the support of agreed guiding frameworks.

Opening the doors for new actors to engage with processes including the UNFSS, the UNFCCC and the UNCBD summits is essential.⁵ For example, international financing organizations are developing common guidelines for responsible investment, derived from these policy debates, including investment decisions in nature-based solutions.

Furthermore, it is essential that policy makers identify and pursue interventions that can lead to transformative change across multiple objectives. Specific attention needs to be placed on nature-based approaches, restoration initiatives and regenerative agriculture/agroecology as initiatives that can contribute towards meeting multiple development objectives while also helping to meet international commitments. Existing global mechanisms, such as climate finance in the Paris Agreement, should be used to support and upscale these transformative approaches.



NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Support the high-level **integration of global agendas** by encouraging synergies and collaboration among multiple policy objectives and priorities. For example, the RFS approach can be included within the post-2020 global action agenda on biodiversity and LTSs.
- Advocate for global frameworks to include a wide range of drivers behind biodiversity loss and climate change and ensure that **multiple sectors**, beyond the environmental community, are included in the entire policy development process.
- Create **virtuous circles of reinforcement** between global agreements and action at the national level through the development of national multistakeholder dialogues that mirror international policy processes.
- Identify and **pursue interventions that can lead to transformative change** across multiple objectives, including a specific focus on scaling nature-based approaches, restoration initiatives and regenerative agriculture.



LOCAL-LEVEL ACTION

- **Build agency** and clear communication channels and remain informed about the key global policy processes and their outcomes and national commitments so that projects can be aligned accordingly.
- **Advocate for representation of food system actors, local farmers and project implementers on national negotiating teams** to relevant UN meetings, as well as for financial support to participate.

⁴ Picourt, L., Lecerf, M., Goyet, S., Gaill, F., Cuvelier, R. & Parmentier, R. 2021. *Swimming the talk: How to strengthen collaboration and synergies between the Climate and Biodiversity Conventions? Ocean and Climate Platform*. https://ocean-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Policy-brief_CBD_UNFCCC-VF.pdf

⁵ Benton, T.G., Bieg, C., Harwatt, H., Pudasaini, R. & Wellesley, L. 2021. *Food system impacts on biodiversity loss: Three levers for food system transformation in support of nature*. Research Paper. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021-02-03-food-system-biodiversity-loss-benton-et-al_0.pdf



IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND INCLUSIVITY OF NATIONAL-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

While international and regional priorities set a directive for countries, national policies, plans and related budgetary allocations directly influence local project focus and implementation. Ensuring an enabling policy environment through the development of cohesive legislative and policy frameworks to incentivize green growth, sustainable food systems and restoration is key. Maximizing the long-term potential from these activities requires coordinating actions among policy institutions, sectors and stakeholders, as well as providing capacity-development opportunities to empower the people, organizations, institutions and networks involved in these policy domains.

In addition, governments across Africa can encourage policy coherence by ensuring that national strategies and plans have clear objectives, actions and targets. Developing indicators, through robust evidence-based monitoring, evaluation and learning systems, can provide greater transparency and accountability and inform investment plans. Measurable objectives will also allow clear communication of expected results with a variety of stakeholders and set the basis for codevelopment of an implementation plan. Through this process trade-offs among ecological, cultural, and socioeconomic objectives and goals can be adaptatively addressed.

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Tangible policy next steps:



NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

- **Align national policy frameworks across multiple sectors.** For example, NDCs and National Adaptation Programmes must address the priorities of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, as well as priorities set out in national food systems dialogues and rural development policies. It is also essential that the key elements of these policy domains are mainstreamed within countries' development, economic and green growth strategies and plans.
- Conduct ongoing **policy gap analyses** to assess and evaluate the integration of important themes across multiple policy agendas. This may include, for example, an assessment of the degree to which nutrition and dietary considerations are mainstreamed into climate-change planning processes, or an analysis of whether relevant policies sufficiently integrate the risks related to climate change, biodiversity loss and unsustainable agrifood-systems practices and value chains.
- Codesign and build **economic tools and instruments** that encourage all actors across the value chain to adopt more climate-sensitive systems. This includes the development of income mechanisms (such as sustainable production, ecotourism and payment for ecosystem services) that support the integrity and financial viability of adaptation and restoration processes.
- Ensure that **adequate finance, technology, capacity building, reskilling and social protection** are embedded in policy processes to enhance local capacities to adopt a suite of sustainable and transformative approaches and practices.
- Codesign **implementation policy roadmaps** for climate adaptation, restoration and food systems transformation – with opportunities built in for local actors, including farmers and entrepreneurs, as important executing bodies. This includes sectoral budget allocations to support cross-cutting agriculture, land and farmer-related interventions and robust monitoring frameworks that include reference to the role of non-state actors in policy accountability and transparency processes.



LOCAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Strengthen **local-level participation in policy development** through the active engagement in formal, government-led consultations and collaborative multistakeholder processes.
- Strengthen **relationships with key government officials or influential high-level policy stakeholders** who can assist in the construction of durable alliances and supportive networks between government and civil society.
- Engage at the **provincial level and within country parliamentary portfolio** committees to pursue constituency objectives.
- Initiate regular **multistakeholder dialogues** at multiple scales to profile the concerns and interests of local constituencies and to encourage open communication, coordination and systems-based approaches with intergovernmental and intersectoral structures.



INCREASE IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

Finance and responsible investment have been a core theme running through all international forums and conferences in 2021. Africa has been consistent in its call for developed countries to support it in addressing the financing, technology transfer and capacity building needs related to its sustainable development action agenda. Without support from the developed world, vulnerable economies, and those in transition, are unlikely to meet the ambitious policy targets needed to restore ecosystems, close the emissions gap, and transform food systems. In addition, local actors require means of implementation support to assist them with timely and successful project delivery.



Tangible policy next steps:



NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Encourage the climate-biodiversity-food nexus to be **mainstreamed within the financing strategies of donors and investors**. Entities such as the Green Climate Fund and GEF can build bridges between their respective workstreams, for instance mainstreaming climate issues in biodiversity projects or land restoration projects and vice versa.
- **Align post-COVID green recovery efforts** that provide opportunities to better integrate good climate, food and biodiversity policy with global fiscal stimulus.
- Finance local **levers of systemic transformation** to build inclusive, long-term environmental sustainability and societal resilience. This can include, as an example, innovation for context specific adaptation or capacity development initiatives for local youth champions and entrepreneurs.
- **Relocalize markets and develop market instruments** that promote outlets for multiple farm products. Integrate sustainable value chains that support agroecological systems and increased biological diversity.



LOCAL-LEVEL ACTION

- **Advocate for financial support**, particularly resources targeted for the benefit of small-scale women and youth farmers, entrepreneurs and their communities. This can include specific calls for support for detailed budget allocations (such as climate insurance, agroecological and conservation agriculture productive inputs) or for financial products tailored to the needs of a certain constituency, such as smallholder farmers, or the involvement of microfinance institutions to directly support smallholder development micro-projects.
- Lobby governments to increase support for projects and initiatives that meet **multiple development objectives**.
- **Support the diversification of local value chains** by working in collaboration with farmers to codevelop tailored locally specific approaches tied to multiscale outlets.
- **Collective action is key to successful project implementation**. Scientists, non-governmental organizations, government authorities, private sector, farmers and communities need to share their knowledge and experience to identify locally specific solutions. Furthermore, as with ICRAF's Africa Regreening project, South-South learning should be encouraged between programmes working in similar natural and socioeconomic environments.



IMPROVE LOCAL EVIDENCE TO INFORM POLICY MAKING

Science and evidence must support informed decision-making, prompting policymakers to further consider climate, biodiversity and food interactions and developments. While intergovernmental science-policy bodies and national agencies have a key role in evidence generation, this information should be complemented and developed in conjunction with locally specific and experimental approaches. Knowledge derived from and with local stakeholders and communities of practice at local, national and global levels should be systematically captured at a national level and shared to develop, adapt and replicate successful experiences. This will allow for the identification of knowledge gaps and strategic research and capacity-development priorities. In addition, it is important that global policy agendas are influenced and supported by local experiences from the field to strengthen ownership, practical application and relevance.



Tangible policy next steps:



NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Mainstream local best practices, evidence and experience through policy processes to allow for broad influence and replication.



LOCAL-LEVEL ACTION

- **Develop community-of-practice platforms and peer-to-peer learning exchanges** to open up spaces for discussion, generate new knowledge and share messages to both internal and external audiences.
- **Integrate local knowledge and experiences as well as accessible evidence into national and global level policy processes** through appropriate channels. This will ensure that best practices are replicated across various scales. For example, the codevelopment of local solutions in FFSSs, in collaboration with advisory services and scientists.
- **Utilize social media and policy-relevant communication tools** to share information and connect stakeholders with each other and with influential policy stakeholders. Social media can be used to broadcast and amplify climate advocacy campaigns, cultivate a strong internet presence, pitch a loud, persuasive statement, and expand their networks or secure collaborations with other relevant climate advocacy networks, multisector actors, and beyond.
- **Encourage local-level innovation for context specific adaptation.** Work with communities and farmers to codevelop innovative models at scale which deliver the multiple benefits associated with improved land stewardship, agro ecological and agroforestry approaches. Generate evidence on the benefits of the models and improved ecosystem functioning and service delivery to inform food systems policy.



STRENGTHEN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Broad-based participation and engagement by non-state actors is necessary to strengthen the legitimacy and ownership of policies in the region. To enhance the desired outcomes of all policy agendas, inclusive participation should be promoted throughout the entire policy process chain – from knowledge generation and management, through to policy development, implementation and monitoring.

‘Leave no one behind’ is at the forefront of these agendas. This includes difficult discussions about a move to a low carbon economy, nature-positive society, where the gains and losses from the transition are shared equitably and do not exacerbate existing inequalities. A just transition approach requires citizen engagement and participatory processes that specifically recognize the rights, needs and concerns of vulnerable groupings such as women, youth and children.



Tangible policy next steps:



NATIONAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Develop policy engagement opportunities and platforms for the promotion of multiple stakeholders in policy design and implementation. The ongoing and inclusive development of climate policies provides a platform for coordinated, long-term, country-wide interventions by state and non-state actors.



LOCAL-LEVEL ACTION

- Strengthen **local-level participation in policy development** through the active engagement in formal, government-led consultations and collaborative multistakeholder processes. This could be through speaking opportunities and/or formal submission of constituency statements.
- Identify **local-level champions** to breakdown the silos associated with local food systems and create an enabling policy environment for transformation. For example, develop the capacity of local-level stakeholder engagement champions to facilitate dialogue and collaborative action by actors involved in agricultural, climate change and natural resource management projects.
- Ensure that the voices of **marginalized groups**, especially women and the young people, are included in policy discussions and frameworks.
- Ensure that **local and village institutions**, such as Village Natural Resource Management Committees and Catchment Management Committees, are inclusive of representatives from vulnerable groupings.
- Advocate for the strengthening of content of climate, agriculture and food policies to **reflect farmer interests**. Policies should speak to the heart of farmers’ concerns and interests and seek to minimize their climate-related risks and enhance their opportunities.
- Strengthen the **agency and capacity** of local actors to proactively engage in policy processes such as the NDCs and other strategic climate policy processes. This can be achieved through enhanced technical, human, and financial resources. This can also include enhanced capacity to conduct monitoring and reporting.
- Enhance strategic participation in policy processes through **organized alliances and network groups** that represent one’s broader constituency groupings, such as farmer organizations and union bodies. These unifying and recognized platforms provide a structure where individuals/ projects can come together to proactively develop policy engagement strategies and produce collective input.
- Adopt a **‘science in development’ approach** and work with farmers to co-construct local solutions. For example, the FAO’s FFS approach is based on discovery learning and supports farmers to innovate and lead experiments in collaboration with scientists and advisory services.

5 Conclusion

While global policy dialogues and guidelines provide an important basis from which to coordinate action across global systems, country-level priorities and actions are essential to transform societal systems in support of biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, food and nutrition security and ecosystem restoration. For the building blocks and pledges delivered at these various global policy meetings to be urgently translated into action, robust and rapid policy and project implementation must occur. This includes collective action from all countries in Africa, and from all stakeholders across economies, including local champions and project implementors.

The responsibility is two-fold – firstly, for policy makers to encourage cohesion and dialogue between policy domains and enhance broad-

based inclusion in the policy process, and secondly, for local actors to remain proactively engaged in the policy development cycle and pursue opportunities for input and engagement. At a practical level, farm and local practices must be supported to align with, and build upon, the priorities represented in the key policy discussions. This includes the explicit promotion and implementation of ecosystem, landscape and nature-based solutions, and a focus on restoration and rehabilitation.

There also needs to be heightened advocacy among local actors to ensure that vulnerable groups, including women, youth and farmers, are adequately represented in the policy development process and that their specific needs and priorities are accounted for and supported.

6 Support for policy related actions at the national, sub-national and local scale

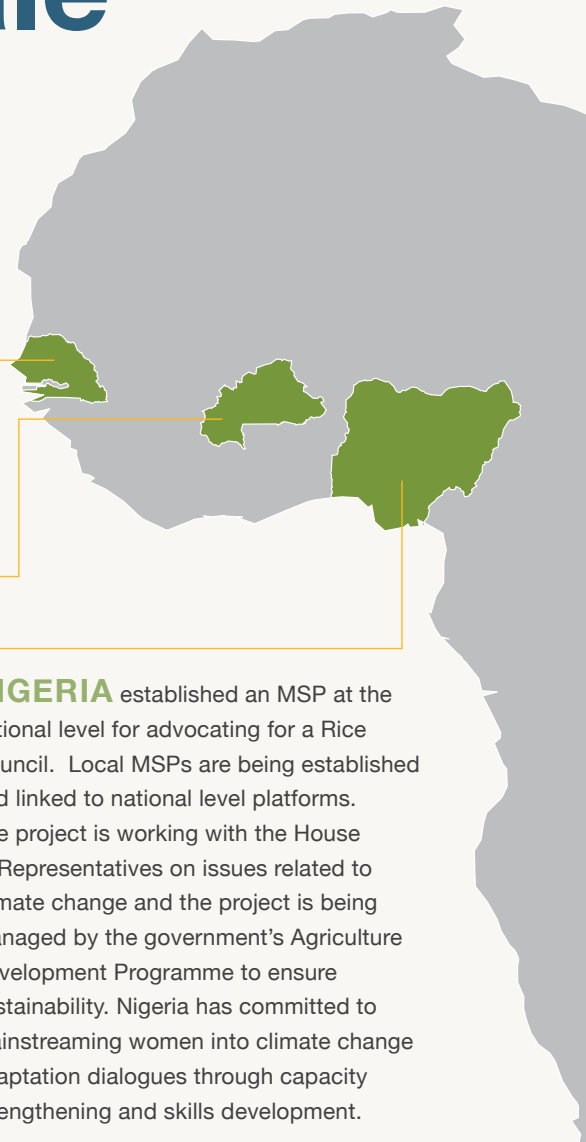
Many of the recommendations from this brief align with, and are being promoted by, existing RFS country projects. Through their various activities, these projects are contributing to the mechanisms, implementation strategies and targets across numerous policy agendas. Countries are demonstrating an interest and willingness to support these recommendations in terms of policy and stakeholder engagement and institutional strengthening. A few examples include:

SENEGAL is revitalizing its engagement on multistakeholder platforms (MSPs) such as National Climate Change Committee, Regional Climate Change Committee and National Strategic Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management. The project has ensured ongoing partnerships between state research institutes and decentralized state technical services, producer organizations and territorial communities.

BURKINA FASO is working to influence operational policy for consideration in climate change implementation. The project deploys a multistakeholder engagement approach to land tenure security working across scales in the country and have secured 477 formalized land agreements to incentivize sustainable land management practices and reduce conflict. With the National Forest Seed Centre the project has established a partnership to develop agroforestry with the aim of transferring skills and forest resources to grassroots actors.

ESWATINI has been facilitating community-based development plans and is prioritising the representation of women on National Resource Management Committees, Regional Management Committees, Community Development Councils and Inner Councils. The project has promoted youth inclusion in agriculture and access to land through national media platforms such as the Kusile Breakfast Show and the Eswatini Farming Magazine. The project has collaborated with the Ministry of Tinkhundla and Administration on training of Chiefdom groups on social cohesion and establishing Chiefdom Development Plans. Furthermore, for sustainability, the project engaged with the Land Use Planning Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology to ensure ecosystem and land management technologies and tools, such as the land degradation surveillance framework, are hosted at the national level.

NIGERIA established an MSP at the national level for advocating for a Rice Council. Local MSPs are being established and linked to national level platforms. The project is working with the House of Representatives on issues related to climate change and the project is being managed by the government's Agriculture Development Programme to ensure sustainability. Nigeria has committed to mainstreaming women into climate change adaptation dialogues through capacity strengthening and skills development.



ETHIOPIA RFS project has been led and managed at the federal level by a cross-sectoral and multistakeholder steering committee constituted of representatives from key sectors such as the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water, Ministry of Forestry and Climate Change, Ministry of Finance, the Ethiopia Biodiversity Institute and the Ethiopian Meteorological Agency. Other institutions from the Regional Bureau, such as the Woreda District Administrators, are key actors at the district level. The Ethiopia RFS project has included a focus on enhanced inclusion and engagement of women in policy formulation and design.

KENYA operates at both county level, where activities are under devolved functions, and at watershed level which crosses political and administrative boundaries. It also seeks to influence actors at national scale through a cross-sectoral collaboration bringing together Environment and Forestry Ministries, the National Environment Management Authority and the Water Resources Authority to support customisation and capacity support for legal preparations and enforcement that enable the ongoing support to sustainable land management.

UGANDA is establishing and strengthening MSPs building on different projects and using MSPs as a tool to profile the concerns and interests of its constituency and advance the greening of value chains from the farm to the table in the food system. The project is also successfully implementing agro-pastoral field schools, as platforms for local innovation and conflict management in an area with recurring security issues. The project is working with the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Environment Management Authority, the Ministry of Justice and district local governments to address policy gaps and identify appropriate incentives for the adoption of sustainable land management and integrated natural resources management practices.

BURUNDI has established FFSs which strengthen social engagement and contribute to good agroforestry practices, the development of sustainable food value chains and the overall sustainability of the highlands. These FFSs also form part of watershed management committees to restore degraded landscapes and are linked to relevant authorities and are advocating for the approach within the National Extension System. The project is working with stakeholders (government officials, technical and financial partners, territorial administration and community representatives) to strengthen Agriculture and Rural Development Sector Working Groups at the national and provincial levels.

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA has built the capacity of institutions at the village and district level such as committees on natural resource and environmental management, gender, and land use planning at the village level. Certificates of Customary Right Occupancy are issued to individuals or communities for legal ownership of land, catchment or forested areas and have served as an incentive for good land management in collaboration with the National Land Use Planning Commission. Further, by-laws have been prepared to guide committees in land use management with clear boundaries for land uses. The project works closely with a multi-institutional group to implement good practices and the project has established FFSs.

MALAWI is pushing for the inclusion of evidence-based research, lessons learned and good practices as central aspects of policy development. In addition, Malawi is aiming to strengthen the inclusion of youth, women, and men in local institutions such as Village Natural Resource Management Committees and Catchment Management Committees. The project works with several government departments such as the Environmental Affairs Department, the National Water Resources Authority, the Department of Forestry, the Department of Land Resources Conservation, the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services and the Department of Agriculture and Extension Services, which provide policy and technical guidance during planning and implementation of project activities.

