



LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

THIRTY-THIRD SESSION

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Update on the implementation of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030

Executive Summary

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 (the UN Decade) was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), through resolution A/RES/73/284¹ on 1 March 2019, “with the aim of supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration”¹. FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are co-leading the implementation of the Decade worldwide, ensuring strong cooperation with countries, other UN agencies and partners.

The UN Decade is positioned as a platform to integrate various restoration initiatives, including those related to the commitments assumed by the countries regarding restoration, as well as many other local, public, private and community-led efforts. The restoration ambitions of the countries are significant and combine various international commitments related to biological diversity, climate change and the fight against desertification. The highest estimates of these commitments add up to 186 million hectares in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), involving 21 countries.²

FAO framed a vision for the implementation of the Decade from the perspective of its mandate to make agricultural systems (crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) more productive, efficient and sustainable, while managing and protecting the environment and the natural resources base that these systems depend upon.³

¹ [A/RES/73/284 \(undocs.org\)](https://undocs.org/A/RES/73/284)

² Van der Esch, S., Sewell, A., Bakkenes, M., Berkhout, E., Doelman, J., Stehfest, E., . . . Bouwman, A. a. 2021. [The global potential for land restoration: Scenarios for the Global Land Outlook 2.](#)

³ [COFO/2020/Inf.7](#)

This document intends to provide an update on the Decade implementation with particular reference to the restoration of forested landscapes and FAO's support to restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean, and to obtain guidance of the 33rd Session of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission on the implications of addressing the restoration of these ecosystems for FAO policies and programmes.

Suggested action by the Commission for item 6.3

The Committee is invited to encourage Members to:

- Actively participate in the UN Decade by strengthening forest and landscape restoration activities.
- Implement the "Action Plan for the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean" developed within the framework of the UN Decade and adopted by the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment from Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Consider including restoration in their national forestry and sustainable development strategies, in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement, and in the REDD+ strategies.

The Committee is invited to recommend FAO to:

- support Members, upon request, with tools, methodologies and capacity development initiatives to scale-up forest ecosystems' restoration efforts, share good practices and monitor progress;
- provide technical support to Members of Latin America and the Caribbean, upon request, to facilitate their access to bilateral or multilateral instruments financing ecosystem restoration, such as the Integrated Programme on Ecosystem Restoration under the Global Environment Facility (GEF-8) or the Green Climate Fund.

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

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I. Introduction

1. The UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), through resolution A/RES/73/284 on 1 March 2019, with the aim of supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of effective ecosystem restoration. All initiatives within the context of the UN Decade will consequently have a dual focus – to avoid degradation as well as to restore ecosystems.
2. In 2020, FAO produced an Information Note named “*Position paper on Ecosystem Restoration of production ecosystems in the context of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030*”⁴ for the consideration by the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and the Committee on Forestry (COFO). The current document is building on its major provisions and being expanded to cover recent progress and developments within the Decade, as well as to address the linkages with the FAO policies and programming frameworks.

⁴ [COFO/2020/Inf.7](#)

3. At the heart of the above-mentioned position paper is the recognition that food production from various sectors comes frequently at a cost to ecosystem integrity that is acceptable and within the ecosystem's carrying capacity, yet there are always options and opportunities to improve trade-offs between economic, social and ecological objectives, ensuring the efficiency, resilience and sustainability of these systems and reducing their overall footprint.
4. Furthermore, restoration of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems can be seen as a crucial step in the fight to eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition, in the context of a growing human population and the increasing need for the provision of ecosystem services, including food.

II. FAO's involvement in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021- 2030

5. FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are co-leading the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Rio conventions, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Global Landscapes Forum, the Center for International Forestry Research and other key partners.
6. FAO takes an active role in framing a vision for the implementation of the Decade from the perspective of its mandate to make agricultural systems (crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) more productive, efficient, resilient and sustainable, while managing and protecting the environment and the natural resources base that these systems depend upon. For these systems, the primary objective of the Decade should be to restore them to the full productive capacity of their goods and services.
7. The strategy for the Decade⁵ was finalised in June 2021. To support the strategy and guide the Decade, ten principles for ecosystem restoration⁶ were prepared with the support of the UN Decade Task Force on *Best Practices* and launched in September 2021.
8. The global action plan for the implementation of the Strategy⁷ was launched in April 2023 and is structured across 12 thematic challenges; while the Action Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean⁸ (LAC) was adopted by the XXII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment from Latin America and the Caribbean and released in February 2021. The overarching vision is that by 2030, LAC have significantly advanced in defining policies and plans and implementing restoration projects in marine, terrestrial and inland water ecosystems at a spatial scale relevant to revert the negative impacts of degradation and, as a result, ecosystems and natural habitats across the region are in process of being restored, protected and managed sustainably.
9. Partnership is a cornerstone of the UN Decade. As of February 2023, the Decade's network of partners⁹ included over 100 organizations. Furthermore, five task forces were established¹⁰: (i) *Monitoring*, (ii) *Best Practices*, (iii) *Finance*, (iv) *Science*; and (v) *Youth*.
10. The *Monitoring* Task Force¹¹ is led by FAO and supports the development of the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring¹² (FERM) for the transparent monitoring and reporting

⁵ Original version of the Strategy: <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/strategy>; Summary in Spanish:

https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/31813/ERDStrat_sp.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y

⁶ www.decadeonrestoration.org/publications/principles-ecosystem-restoration-guide-united-nations-decade-2021-2030

⁷ [Action Plan for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, 2021-2030 Version April 2023 \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/resources/policy-and-strategy/action-plan-decade-ecosystem-restoration-latin-america-and-caribbean)

⁸ <https://www.unep.org/resources/policy-and-strategy/action-plan-decade-ecosystem-restoration-latin-america-and-caribbean>

⁹ <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/partners>

¹⁰ www.decadeonrestoration.org/task-forces

¹¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb0424en/cb0424en.pdf>

¹² www.fao.org/national-forest-monitoring/ferm

on the progress in restoration throughout the duration of the Decade by providing monitoring tools & geospatial information related to ecosystems. The FERM registry¹³ was launched in May 2022 in Seoul at the XV World Forestry Congress to harmonize and collect information on ecosystem restoration projects and programs.

11. The Task Force on *Best Practices*¹⁴, also led by FAO, is focused on shaping the knowledge component of the Decade, including capacity development efforts, development of Standards of practices as well as capitalization, sharing and dissemination of good practices for restoration in all ecosystems.
12. The UN Decade is guided by an Advisory Board¹⁵. Support has also come from major media houses to mainstream film-makers, street artists, musicians, etc. to help celebrate the promise of restoration and reaching hundreds of millions of people worldwide.
13. A UN Decade's Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) was created in 2021 by FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with the ambition to raise USD 100 million by 2030 to support the implementation of the UN Decade Strategy and its flagships.
14. In January 2022, the UN Decade launched the first call for countries to nominate their World Restoration Flagships, and the 10 best initiatives were unveiled at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) receiving 154 Expressions of Interest and 73 government-endorsed proposals. FAO supported the assessment of the submitted flagships through the work of the Best Practices Task Force, which - in collaboration with the Science Task Force - coordinated and developed the evaluation process building on the guiding principles for ecosystem restoration of the UN Decade. FAO also supported the preparation of the submission of several flagships, including one publication focusing on the Central America Dry Corridor.
15. FAO participates as a technical partner in the Initiative 20x20¹⁶, a country-led effort seeking to change the dynamics of land degradation in Latin America and the Caribbean by beginning to protect and restore 50 million hectares of forests, farms, pasture, and other landscapes by 2030. As part of this partnership, FAO participated in the last 20x20/Bonn Challenge/Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) 2040 joint meeting held in San Pedro, Belize, to identify synergies and foster collaboration among the global and regional activities, particularly between the Best Practices and Monitoring Task Forces of both the UN Decade and the Initiative 20x20.

III. Progress on the implementation of the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

16. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is now in the implementation phase, acknowledging the generous support from Germany and Denmark to a dedicated Multi-Partner Trust Fund.
17. In January 2022 the UN Decade launched the first call for countries to nominate their World Restoration Flagships. The first ten approved flagships were announced on 13th of December 2022 during the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Montreal, Canada, including two flagships in LAC: one on the Central American Dry Corridor, covering six countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama), and another on the Trinational Atlantic Forest Pact, covering Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.
18. From 2022 onwards, the invitation for nominations will be repeated each year. Any proposal for a Flagship Initiative by a non-state actor will require endorsement by the government(s) of the country(ies) that the Flagships target.

¹³ <https://ferm.fao.org/>

¹⁴ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/our-work/gl/tfbp/en/>

¹⁵ www.decadeonrestoration.org/advisory-board

¹⁶ <https://initiative20x20.org/>

19. In addition, FAO, under the mandate of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration Task Force on Monitoring, was requested by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to prepare an Information Document with methodological guidance for monitoring the Target 2 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, *Area under restoration*. As of November 2022, FAO, together with the UN Decade Monitoring Task Force and in collaboration with the Target 2 Working Group, have developed a draft methodology for monitoring and reporting area under restoration. The methodology is applicable for reporting progress under the UN Decade and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The draft methodology was presented during the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022 and will be finalized during 2023.

IV. Ecosystem restoration within FAO initiatives and programmes

20. The FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 was developed in the context of major global and regional challenges in the areas of FAO's mandate, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and was endorsed at the 42nd session of the FAO Conference on 18 June 2021. It seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.
21. Restoring productive ecosystems contributes to and supports all four betters and creates a basis for contributing to the achievement of relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (including SDGs 2, 13, 14, 15 and 17), and to the advancement of FAO's work within several Programme Priority Areas (PPAs).
22. In addition, FAO developed a proposed Value-Addition Impact Area Initiative (VAIA) under the *Better Environment* – Restoring Environment for Productive Agriculture, Investment and Resilience (REPAIR), aimed to step up large-scale land restoration for small-scaling farming, across different production systems (agroforestry, forestry, pastoral, mangroves, coastal) in Africa and Central America.
23. Concurrently, FAO is supporting existing efforts on forest and landscape restoration through its Trust Fund programme: The Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM)¹⁷, which aims at providing technical assistance for country-level implementation. FLRM is also:
- supporting national partners to mobilize additional financial resources from the GEF, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund (AF) for scaling up national/regional restoration initiatives;
 - developing and disseminating knowledge products and publications on ecosystem restoration and facilitating knowledge sharing events through its Community of Practices, webinars and online courses developed in partnership with the FAO eLearning Academy;
24. The FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors¹⁸ was approved by the FAO Conference in 2019¹⁹. Its implementation aims to reduce the negative impacts of agricultural practices on biodiversity, to promote sustainable agricultural practices and to conserve, enhance, preserve and restore biodiversity as a whole.
25. FAO's Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031²⁰ contributes to addressing a broad range of interlinked challenges, including the loss of biodiversity, desertification, land and environmental degradation, the need for accessible, renewable energy, and food and water

¹⁷ <https://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/en/>

¹⁸ <https://www.fao.org/3/ca7722en/ca7722en.pdf>

¹⁹ See document COFO/2022/6.2

²⁰ See documents COFO/2022/INF/9 and COFO/2022/5.1

security. Ecosystem restoration activities offer potential for both climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as resilience building.

26. FAO's Science and Innovation Strategy²¹ aims to strengthen FAO's capacities to deliver the SDGs and the Strategic Framework 2022-31. It addresses the complexity of agrifood systems, covering all relevant scientific disciplines and types of innovations, including those stemming from indigenous and local knowledge, as well as community-based innovation. These elements are crucial in terms of ensuring scaling up restoration efforts and bringing all partners and stakeholders on board.

V. FAO's work on ecosystem restoration in the region

27. In 2022, FAO carried out a study on 70 active projects from the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO RLC) between 2012 and 2022 in 31 countries of LAC. According to the study, 56 percent of the projects contain at least one type of restoration intervention. In the 31 countries where FAO has ongoing projects, there is at least one that includes restoration interventions in the field.
28. FAO, through its ongoing projects, is currently supporting the restoration of 3 million hectares in LAC, which represent between 1.6 percent and 2.1 percent of the restoration commitments assumed by the countries in the Bonn Challenge and the three Rio Conventions: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). They are mainly concentrated in the South American sub-region, particularly in Brazil, Colombia and Peru.
29. Only 14 percent of the projects define monitoring activities for the restoration measures they implement, over 11 percent of the total goal of FAO in LAC.
30. With the implementation of restoration activities, 81 percent of the projects aim at the recovery of ecological processes and key ecosystem services in the landscapes where they are developed. The generation of employment and the improvement of livelihoods is the second objective in order of importance (72 percent).
31. The most widely used techniques are natural or induced forest restoration (55 percent of projects), sustainable forest management (50 percent), and silvopastoral systems and other integrated agricultural-livestock-forestry systems (47 percent).
32. FAO, for the period and the projects analyzed, is supporting countries to invest and manage a restoration project portfolio of USD 167 million, intended exclusively for the implementation of restoration activities included as components of the projects. This represents 54 percent of the total funding from FAO led projects and 44 percent of the total of the portfolio implemented by FAO for the 70 projects analyzed. The investment made per restored hectare ranges from US 3 to US 865 per hectare.

VI. Challenges and opportunities

33. The number of efforts and the implementation of actions around the restoration of ecosystems is increasing. The UN Decade is consolidated as the platform to coordinate these efforts, but also as a provider of knowledge and tools that enable this coordination at a global level, mainly through the actions of its five task forces. Reaching a consensus and rendering these types of platforms and tools under development available to the formulators and implementers of projects, laws and policies is essential.
34. Due to the diversity of ecosystems and restoration techniques, the availability of a quick guide on the definition and scope of each restoration technique is important. IUCN has developed a

²¹ See documents COFO/2022/INF/10 and COFO/2022/7.5

Restoration Intervention Typology for Terrestrial Ecosystems²² that describes restoration activities commonly used in different types of terrestrial ecosystems. These types of tools can be expanded and adjusted to allow tools with sufficient flexibility so that they can be adjusted to the local reality and include a continuum of activities in the landscapes to be restored (restorative continuum), as defined in principle 3 of the UN Decade²³.

35. Monitoring the implementation in the field of restoration is one of the actions included in the principles defined by the UN Decade. It will be essential to promote, within the planning processes, the monitoring of the restored areas to facilitate their adaptive management beyond the useful life of the project.
36. Continuing to promote efforts to feed local and spatially explicit databases can facilitate a more precise analysis regarding reference ecosystems, areas and links with key processes and co-benefits (carbon sequestration, biodiversity, water, soil, among others).
37. Finally, designing and agreeing on the specific way to measure restoration impacts in LAC and linking it to the progress of the UN Decade could be valuable for countries, as well as producing a guide on the technical considerations that this implies when formulating projects in FAO.

VII. Final Remarks

38. SDGs are unlikely to be met unless ecosystem degradation is stopped, and ecosystem restoration is undertaken at larger scale (hundreds of millions of hectares) and at global level. Currently, there is insufficient political support and technical capacity in both the public and private sectors to invest in the many hundreds of thousands of ecosystem restoration initiatives worldwide that are needed to achieve restoration at such a scale.
39. The success of the Decade's implementation clearly depends on restoring agricultural production landscapes and seascapes, given their importance for reversing land degradation.
40. FAO has relevant technical expertise, operational capacities and frameworks in place to support Members in their restoration efforts and in scaling up and showcasing practical solutions along with pioneer innovations and mobilize partners and stakeholders.
41. Country and partner engagement is crucial to ensure ownership and local action in support of the Decade's ambition. Thus, FAO Members are in a lead role to scale up relevant commitments and activities and guide the implementation of the Decade in order to make it a success.

²² https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/content/documents/2021/iucn_restoration_intervention_typology.pdf

²³ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/es/c/cb6591en/>