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**Progress report on the development of a FAO Strategy on biodiversity
mainstreaming across agricultural sectors**

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Executive Summary

- 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.
- 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).”*¹
- This document reports on progress made in the development of a strategy on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors, proposes key elements for the strategy and seeks the Programme's Committee advice regarding the finalization of the strategy.

Guidance sought from the Programme Committee

- The Committee is invited to review proposed elements of the strategy on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors and provide advice regarding its finalization with a view to its adoption by the Conference at its 41st session.

¹ CL 160/REP, paragraph 6(o), 8(m) and 9(d)

Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development puts biodiversity at the centre of many economic activities, particularly those related to sustainable agricultural sectors, calling 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. 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."*²
3. The Council, at its 160th session, endorsed 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)."*³
4. This document reports on progress made in the development of a strategy on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors, proposes key elements for the strategy and seeks the Programme's Committee advice regarding the finalization of the strategy with a view to its adoption by the Conference at its 41st session.

Background

5. "Biological diversity" means "the variability among living organisms from all sources including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems."⁴ This definition recognizes three levels of biodiversity: ecosystems, species and genes. An ecosystem is the "dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit."⁵
6. Biodiversity forms the basis of all agricultural sectors. Biodiversity as a whole contributes to food and agriculture. Biodiversity for food and agriculture includes "associated biodiversity" which are the components of biodiversity supporting essential functions for food and agricultural production, by providing services such as nutrient cycling, decomposition of organic matter, soil formation and rehabilitation, pest and disease regulation, pollination that benefit crop and livestock production and the provision of habitat for other beneficial species. Associated biodiversity is an intrinsic and important part of agricultural ecosystems. Marine, coastal and inland ecosystems host a variety of aquatic biological diversity that greatly contribute to the economic, social and cultural aspects of communities around the world.
7. Biodiversity is key to food security and nutrition. It 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 first and foremost 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.
8. The agriculture 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

² C 2017/REP, paragraph 55.

³ CL 160/REP, paragraph 6(o), 8(m) and 9(d)

⁴ Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 2.

⁵ Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 2.

pressures on biodiversity unless those pressures are appropriately addressed. 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.

I. FAO's role on biodiversity

9. FAO strives to harmonize the need for food with that of protecting natural resources through the development of an integrated approach to sustainability across agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture.

10. Since its inception, FAO has provided an inter-governmental platform where biodiversity-related policies are discussed and relevant instruments negotiated and agreed upon by Members. FAO has developed a number of different instruments, guidelines and tools that address biodiversity concerns. This is particularly the case for soft law instruments and voluntary guidelines, such as: the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; the global plans of action for animal, forest and plant genetic resources developed under the *aegis* of FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture⁶; the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security; the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agricultural and Food Systems; the International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management.

11. Legally binding instruments of FAO relevant to biodiversity include the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA). The IPPC aims to secure common and effective action to prevent the spread and introduction of pests of plants and plant products, and to promote appropriate measures for their control.⁷ The objectives of the ITPGRFA are the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), for sustainable agriculture and food security.⁸ The ITPGRFA was once negotiated by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA), an intergovernmental body established under Article 6 of the FAO Constitution that specifically deals with all components of biodiversity relevant to food and agriculture.

12. FAO works closely with relevant international Conventions and instruments that focus on biodiversity issues. The Organization has a longstanding history of collaborating with the CBD as evidenced by joint work programmes and initiatives. FAO and the CBD collaborate in the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity, including the International Initiatives on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators and the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity and the Cross-cutting Initiative on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition.

13. FAO has a track record in carrying out assessments of genetic resources and biodiversity, and provides data for monitoring purposes, including the SDGs. Since 1948 FAO has reported on the status of the world's forests through the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA). The State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) is published every two years. Under the guidance of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO developed country-driven global assessments of the state of the world's plant, animal, forest and aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture.⁹ In February 2019, FAO launched the first report on *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. FAO is responsible for providing data for 28 indicators for the Aichi

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/cgrfa/policies/global-instruments/gpa/en/>

⁷ International Plant Protection Convention (1997), Article I.1.

⁸ International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Article 1.1.

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/cgrfa/assessments/global-assessments/en/>

Biodiversity Targets,¹⁰ 13 of which correspond to SDG indicators for which FAO is custodian agency.¹¹

14. FAO work at country level related to biodiversity includes, among others, Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). FAO has a strong track record of collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF). One of the focal areas of the GEF's Four-year Framework of Program Priorities for the Seventh Replenishment Period is biodiversity, with the first objective being to mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes. In 2018, FAO was selected as Lead Agency of the GEF-7 Drylands Sustainable Landscapes Impact Programme.

II. FAO's consultation on mainstreaming Biodiversity

15. On the occasion of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD, FAO announced the establishment of the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform to build bridges between sectors, identify synergies, align goals and develop integrated cross-sectoral approaches to mainstreaming biodiversity in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. The COP welcomed the Platform.¹²

16. The Conference, at its 40th session, endorsed the call on FAO and countries to mainstream biodiversity in agriculture, including livestock, to promote its contribution to ecosystem services and to climate change adaptation and mitigation.¹³ The Conference welcomed FAO's initiative to act as Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform and requested FAO to facilitate, in collaboration with its partners, such as the 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.¹⁴ The Conference also called upon the Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the Committee on Fisheries (COFI), and the Committee on Forestry (COFO) to address biodiversity as a cross-cutting issue at their next meetings in 2018.¹⁵

17. As a first activity of the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform, FAO held from 29 to 31 May 2018 a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across Agricultural Sectors. The meeting was co-organized with the CBD. The results of the dialogue were made available through a joint report of the co-chairs of working groups established during the dialogue.¹⁶ The report noted three cross-cutting issues identified by four working groups during the Dialogue:

- a) the need to prepare, at the latest by 2020 and in collaboration with partners and relevant stakeholders, a Biodiversity Strategy setting out future activities;
- b) the catalytic role of knowledge management; and
- c) the importance of metrics.

18. The joint report further notes suggestions with regard to global governance, national policies and legislation, and incentives, investment and voluntary certification schemes.

19. During their sessions in 2018, FAO's Technical Committee considered the outcomes of the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Biodiversity Mainstreaming across the Agricultural Sectors. The

¹⁰ The Aichi Biodiversity Targets serve to operationalize the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

¹¹ These include: Severity of food insecurity (2.1.2); Agricultural sustainability (2.4.1); Conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture (2.5.1); Risk status of livestock breeds (2.5.2); Women's ownership of agricultural land (5.a.1); Water use efficiency (6.4.1); Water stress (6.4.2); Fish stocks sustainability (14.4.1); Illegal, unreported unregulated fishing (14.6.1); Access rights for small-scale fisheries (14.b.1); Forest area (15.1.1); Sustainable forest management (15.2.1); and Mountain Green Cover Index (15.4.2).

¹² CBD/COP/DEC/XIII/3, paragraph 6.

¹³ C 2017/REP, paragraph 43(b).

¹⁴ C 2017/REP, paragraph 55.

¹⁵ C 2017/REP, paragraph 43(b).

¹⁶ See COAG/2018/10, Appendix; COFO/2018/Misc., Appendix.

COAG requested FAO to develop a strategy on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors, ensuring consistency with other FAO strategies including the one on climate change, 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 CBD.¹⁷ The COFI commended the work of FAO on biodiversity mainstreaming and requested FAO to prepare and operationalize a fisheries and aquaculture biodiversity plan as part of its Biodiversity Strategy and contribution to the CBD Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, building on its Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform.¹⁸ The COFO requested FAO to develop a biodiversity strategy which will include a plan to mainstream biodiversity in the forest sector, and bring to COFO's consideration.¹⁹

III. Proposed elements of the FAO Biodiversity Strategy

20. FAO envisions a world free from hunger and malnutrition, where food and agriculture contribute to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.²⁰ Biodiversity is a key element of this vision and a strategy should support the implementation of such a vision.

21. To implement such a vision and guarantee transition towards food and agricultural systems with better production and productivity, and the nutritional quality of food; reduced environmental impacts, ensuring the longterm provision of ecosystem services, the strategy could pursue as overarching goals:

- a) Sustainable use of biodiversity through landscape/seascape and ecosystem approaches.

Landscape/seascape and ecosystem approaches will generate positive co-benefits for agricultural production, biodiversity and rural communities. They aim to address environmental, social and economic issues in an integrated way to support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity while providing sustainable livelihoods.

- b) Conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services.

Rural communities depend on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Therefore, agricultural sectors have to reconsider the relationship between production and conservation and restoration of biodiversity. Conservation and restoration measures support agricultural production and ensure its sustainability.

- c) Promote sustainable food and agriculture systems that integrate biodiversity considerations throughout value chains.

Consumption is a major driver of production and influences agricultural practices and their sustainability. Therefore, it is crucial to promote responsible consumption and increase resource efficiency and environmental performance of food systems from primary producers to consumers.

- d) Enhance the contribution of biodiversity, and associated indigenous and local knowledge, to food security and nutrition, ending poverty, and safeguarding resilient livelihoods.

The important contribution of indigenous peoples' and local communities' knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity needs to be fully acknowledged and supported.

22. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, FAO would strive to achieve the above overarching goals through the following outcomes:

- a) FAO's programmes, policies and instruments strengthened by the integration of biodiversity

¹⁷ C 2019/21 paragraph 47

¹⁸ C 2019/23 paragraph 102

¹⁹ C 2019/24 paragraph 14 d) (iv)

²⁰ CL 155/3 paragraph 8

- b) Enhanced capacities of Members to develop and implement evidence-based policies, investments and programmes relevant to biodiversity and monitor and evaluate their impact
 - c) The important role of biodiversity for food security and nutrition, and the agriculture sectors, is fully reflected in relevant international agreements and processes
 - d) Strengthened coordination and delivery of FAO work relevant to biodiversity
23. Synergies will be established with other FAO strategies, including the FAO Strategy on Climate Change.

IV. Next steps

24. The Committee is invited to review the proposed elements of the strategy on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors and provide advice regarding its finalization with a view to its adoption by the Conference at its 41st session.