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# COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

## TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

5 - 9 October 2020

### UN DECADES: FAMILY FARMING AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION: BUILDING BACK BETTER, INCLUDING IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

#### Executive Summary

This document provides a summary description of the aims of the UN Decade of Family Farming, 2019-2028 and the UN Decade on Ecosystem restoration 2021-2030 and of progress made so far. It further informs about FAO's contribution to both Decades and highlights potential synergies, opportunities and risks, with particular reference to the importance of both decades in the context of responses to the COVID-19 from the forestry sector.

#### Suggested actions by the Committee on Forestry

The Committee may wish to invite countries to:

- Actively engage in responses to the COVID-19 pandemic which link to and build on the implementation of the UN Decade of Family Farming and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration at national level and identify and enhance synergies between the two;
- Support the implementation of the two Decades in ways that address both short term impacts of COVID-19 and lead to resilience of forests and forest dependent communities and businesses, including through voluntary contributions, as appropriate.

The Committee may wish to request FAO to:

- Continue and enhance sharing and learning about solutions to the short and long term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Ensure close coordination and collaboration between the UN Decade of Family Farming and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;
- Ensure that FAO's new strategic framework gives adequate recognition to FAO's leading role in ecosystem restoration - particularly with regard to productive ecosystems;
- Increase the engagement of the private sector, family farmers and forest and farm producer organizations in activities related to COVID-19 and the two UN Decades and scale up its support to forest and farm producer organizations through the Forest and Farm Facility;
- In accordance with UNGA resolution A/RES/73/284, ensure the full involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including women, children according to their evolving capacities,

young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration;

- Support countries with tools and methodologies to scale up forest and landscape restoration efforts, share best practices and monitor progress.

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## I. Introduction

1. Feeding humanity and conserving ecosystems and their biodiversity are two interlinked challenges. Addressing these, often competing, objectives in a holistic and integrated manner is central to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030<sup>1</sup> and the forthcoming global framework on biodiversity.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic puts immediate pressure on the health and livelihoods of forest dependent peoples and businesses and increases threats to sustainable management of forests. Small-holder family farmers and their rural forest dependent communities are on the front lines of the impacts from COVID-19. Impacts are differentiated according to the gender, indigenous peoples and levels of wealth, and smallholder family farmers are suffering from decreased incomes, increased debts, increased food insecurity, displacement, loss of properties, even lives. Despite all the challenges, these primary producers are not sitting idly. They are actively responding with innovative solutions through their forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs/FOs). Supporting these FFPOs to build their collective resilience may be the quickest way to reach the largest number of people in ways that will respond immediately to the current COVID-19 pandemic while at the same time building long term resilience to other shocks including those presented by climate change. Local and national governments, regional organizations, investors, larger scale private sector actors, and the FFPOs themselves all have a role to play.

3. Running concurrently for most of the coming decade, the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) provide an unprecedented opportunity to ensure effective coordination and enhancement of synergies and impact at global, regional, national and local levels.

## II. The UN Decade of Family Farming

4. The resolution establishing the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December, 2017<sup>2</sup>. FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) were called upon to lead the implementation of the Decade in collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system.

<sup>1</sup> <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/71/285>

<sup>2</sup> <https://undocs.org/A/C.2/72/L.12/Rev.1>

5. The resolution acknowledges family farmers as key leaders in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically in “improving nutrition and ensuring global food security, eradicating poverty, ending hunger, conserving biodiversity, achieving environmental sustainability and helping to address migration.”
6. It “encourages all States to develop, improve and implement public policies on family farming and share their experiences and best practices of family farming with other States”.
7. The Decade serves as an international effort to empower family farmers and expands upon the International Year of Family Farming in 2014 which, according to the UN General Assembly, “raised the profile of the role of family farming, pastoralism, and smallholder farming in contributing to the achievement of food security and improved nutrition.”
8. Through a Global Action Plan<sup>3</sup>, detailed guidance is provided for the international community on actions that can be taken to support family farmers. Designed around the following seven pillars of work, the Global Action Plan recommends a series of interconnected actions from the local to the global level:
  - 1) Develop an enabling policy environment to strengthen family farming;
  - 2) Support youth and ensure the generational sustainability of family farming;
  - 3) Promote gender equity in family farming and the leadership role of rural women;
  - 4) Strengthen family farmers’ organizations and capacities to generate knowledge, represent farmers and provide inclusive services in the urban-rural continuum;
  - 5) Improve socio-economic inclusion, resilience and well-being of family farmers, rural households and communities;
  - 6) Promote sustainability of family farming for climate-resilient food systems;
  - 7) Strengthen the multi-dimensionality of family farming to promote social innovations contributing to territorial development and food systems that safeguard biodiversity, environment and culture.
9. According to FAO’s *The State of Food and Agriculture 2016* about 750 million of the world’s extremely poor work in agriculture, usually as smallholder family farmers. Family farmers produce more than 80 percent of the world’s food and control 75 percent of all agricultural resources.
10. Family farming comprises many social groups including smallholder families, forest producers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, indigenous peoples and local communities. They all have a close relationship with farming in the context of different landscapes, where they produce crops, harvest, collect and add value to a variety of forest and farm products, raise livestock and fish for their livelihood.
11. A significant proportion of family farms are small scale, and a large number of these smallholder farmers manage forests and trees on farms and depend on forests and forest products as a vital part of their livelihoods and food systems. With the advent of the COVID-19 crises the Forestry Division has been working with the Secretariat for the Decade of Family Farming to convene a number of webinars with regional and country office engagement and the leadership of national and regional forest and farm producer organizations to share their experiences and solutions.
12. Farmers, forest users and their organizations (forest and farm producer organizations) can play a vital role in ensuring positive approaches to respond to the COVID-19 crises and the innovative solutions are proving of equal importance to address climate change and other stresses. These include a focus on territorial development through community forestry, agroforestry and innovative marketing

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4672en/ca4672en.pdf>

and branding efforts that include diverse “baskets of products” value chains to optimize forest and food production systems from landscapes that include both.

### III. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

13. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) unanimously passed resolution A/RES/73/284<sup>4</sup>, designating 2021-2030 as the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. FAO and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) were invited to lead the implementation of the Decade in collaboration with the secretariats of the Rio Conventions, other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and entities of the United Nations system.

14. The resolution aims at “*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*”.

15. In the resolution the UN General Assembly encourages Members:

- (a) To foster political will, the mobilization of resources, capacity-building, scientific research and cooperation and momentum for ecosystem restoration at the global, regional, national and local levels, as appropriate;
- (b) To mainstream ecosystem restoration into policies and plans to address current national development priorities and challenges due to the degradation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity loss and climate change vulnerability, thereby creating opportunities for ecosystems to increase their adaptive capacity and opportunities to maintain and improve livelihoods for all;
- (c) To develop and implement policies and plans to prevent ecosystem degradation, in line with national laws and priorities, as appropriate;
- (d) To build on and reinforce existing restoration initiatives in order to scale up good practices;
- (e) To facilitate synergies and a holistic view of how to achieve international commitments and national priorities through the restoration of ecosystems;
- (f) To promote the sharing of experiences and good practices in ecosystem conservation and restoration.

16. The resolution notes, among others, “the invitation extended to countries by the Committee on Forestry of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, at its Twenty-fourth session, to actively pursue more integrated approaches to the restoration of degraded lands, support the development of financing mechanisms dedicated to ecosystem restoration and better engage the private sector in restoration initiatives”.

### IV. FAO involvement in the Decade of Family Farming

17. FAO and IFAD jointly manage the Secretariat for the UN Decade of Family Farming and host the International Steering Committee, which includes a regionally representative group of Member Nations, as well as global and regional farmers’ organizations.

18. Under the guidance of the International Steering Committee, the Joint FAO-IFAD Secretariat coordinated the development of the Global Action Plan, which was developed through a participatory

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<sup>4</sup> <https://undocs.org/A/RES/73/284>

process to ensure the contributions of a wide range of relevant actors, including key government representatives, producer organizations and civil society.

19. FAO also hosts the Family Farming Knowledge Platform<sup>5</sup>, which gathers digitized information on family farming from all over the world including on national laws and regulations, public policies, best practices, relevant data and statistics, researches, articles and publications.

20. Within FAO, the Partnerships and UN Collaboration Office is leading the work under the Decade of Family Farming. However, the FAO Forestry Division has been playing a key role in the development of the Decade through the Forest and Farm Facility<sup>6</sup>, which provides support to improve the enabling environment and strengthen the capacity and role of forest and farm producer organizations.

21. The Forest and Farm Facility e.g. helped organize an exchange between 80 leaders of forest and farm producer organizations at a global Conference on the Decade of Family Farming convened by the World Rural Forum in Bilbao, Spain in March 2019. Participants were able to provide specific input into the design of a strategic action plan for the Decade including references to the importance of forests and trees for family farming and to Pillar 4 of the strategy, which aims to “Strengthen Family Farmers’ organizations and capacities to generate knowledge, represent farmers and to provide inclusive services in the urban-rural continuum”.

22. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic the Forestry Division and the Forest and Farm Facility has been working with the Secretariat for the Decade of Family Farming, regional technical teams and country offices to convene a number of regional and global webinars collaboratively planned with leadership of national and regional forest and farm producer organizations and government partners to share their experiences and solutions.

23. The Decade on Family Farming provides a useful mechanism for countries to highlight the linkages between forests, farms and other elements of the landscape by focusing attention on the role and challenges faced by the people, almost all family farmers, who depend on and help sustain forests. This role has become even more pronounced in the context of COVID-19. National strategies will be developed at the country level and national forestry departments are encouraged to engage actively in this process, while the Forestry Division will continue to provide leadership in the implementation of the Decade through the Forest and Farm Facility, Social Forestry Team and other relevant programmes.

## **V. FAO involvement in the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**

24. FAO and UNEP, as the lead organizations for the implementation of the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, are working closely together with the Secretariats of the Rio Conventions, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Global Landscapes Forum, the World Economic Forum and other key partners to prepare for the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration in 2021.

25. Within FAO, the Forestry Division and the Land and Water Division are jointly leading this process in close collaboration with other units at headquarters and within the regional offices.

26. Consultations with Members, UN entities, NGOs, CSOs, the private sector and youth organizations took place throughout 2019. Based on these, a draft implementation strategy was prepared, which was sent to Members and other stakeholders for comments in early March 2020. The final version of the Strategy is now available at <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org>.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/background/en/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fao.org/forest-farm-facility/en/>

27. In addition to the development of the website, the Strategy and an accompanying visual identity and communication strategy, two multi-stakeholder task forces have been set up to develop a monitoring framework and to gather and disseminate guidelines and good practices. A Multi-Partner Trust Fund is in the process of being established and resource mobilization efforts are underway.

28. Concurrently, FAO is supporting existing efforts of forest and landscape restoration, notably through two Trust Fund programmes: The Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism<sup>7</sup> and Action Against Desertification<sup>8</sup>. Restoration activities promise to provide employment and livelihood opportunities for rural communities, especially returning youth migrants.

29. FAO has also prepared a position paper on ‘Ecosystem Restoration’ of production ecosystems, in the context of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, which will be presented to all the Technical Committees. See COFO/2020/Inf.7.

## **VI. Synergies, opportunities and risks**

30. There are many obvious links and potential synergies between the two UN Decades and the proposed development of national strategies to implement the UN Decade of Family Farming provide an excellent opportunity to highlight the leading role family farmers and their organizations can play in implementing restoration efforts at scale. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accentuated the benefits from linking both decades to the immediate challenges precipitated for forest and farm producers and those living from ecosystem based services and products.

31. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration aims not only to restore degraded ecosystems, but also to prevent and halt the degradation of existing ecosystems. One way to reduce the rate of deforestation caused by agricultural expansion is through the restoration of the productivity of degraded agricultural lands. Other efforts to prevent and halt the degradation of forest ecosystems are supported by a number of other FAO programmes related to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation<sup>9</sup>; Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade<sup>10</sup>; Sustainable Forest Management<sup>11</sup> and Sustainable Wildlife Management<sup>12</sup> among others. There are strong links to the SDG Decade of Action and the Biodiversity Agenda.

32. Private sector commitments to reduce net emissions in the context of the Paris Agreement and voluntary partnerships are creating new opportunities for market transactions for carbon offsets from forests. While this could entail substantial funding for tree planting and other restoration efforts, concerns have been raised about risks related to such transactions. FAO is providing guidance to countries on opportunities, implications and technical considerations related to evolving carbon markets, in particular with a view to ensuring the integrity of countries’ own commitments under the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/en/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/en/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fao.org/redd/en/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/eu-fao-flegt-programme/en/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fao.org/forestry/sfm/en/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.fao.org/forestry/wildlife/95602/en/>