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8.3 Forests, biodiversity, protected areas and local communities

Secretariat Note

I. Introduction

1. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) contributes 14 percent of the agriculture production of the world, representing 23 percent of the global exports of basic products¹. Production and access to healthier, nutritious and safe food will need to address climate change, a growing population, the intensity of natural disasters, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and migration.

2. By 2050 the world's population will reach 9.7 billion, almost 30 percent more than the current population². In developing countries and regions, where the population depends primarily on the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors for internal consumption and as commodities, this will add pressure to natural resources and ecosystem services for production and sustainability.

3. The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Wellbeing as well as the overall contribution of biodiversity to healthy food, nutrition and sustainable agriculture is presented in FO:LACFC/2019/5 referring to FAO's work on biodiversity at the global level.

¹ OCDE-FAO, 2019. Perspectivas agrícolas 2019-2028. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5308es/CA5308ES.pdf>

² FAO. 2017. [The Future of Food and Agriculture. Trends and Challenges.](#)

4. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), prepared a Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services that highlighted the vital contribution of biodiversity to people, and informed that it is declining faster than any time in human history. The report also informed that transformative changes across economic, political, social and technological are requested for conservation and appropriate use of it.

5. IPBES informed that *in Latin America and the Caribbean the economic value of terrestrial nature's contributions to people is estimated to be at least \$24.3 trillion per year, equivalent to the region's gross domestic product. The countries with the greatest land area account for the largest values, while some island States account for the highest values per hectare per year. Such differences occur partly because the monetary value of specific ecosystem types varies, with units of analysis such as coastal areas and rainforests having particularly high economic values. Difficulties in valuation of non-market nature's contributions to people make comparative evaluations among subregions or units of analysis inconclusive.*

6. During the 35th FAO Regional Conference in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in March 2018³, the participating countries, led by the Government of Mexico, requested FAO to organize a regional dialogue on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors (following the global Dialogue held in Rome), as a contribution for the preparation of an FAO Strategy on Biodiversity.

7. The High Level Regional Dialogue on the Integration of Biodiversity in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DRANIBA⁴), took place in Mexico city in October 2018 offering an inter-sectoral exchange and discussion forum addressing issues of sustainable production in the agricultural, livestock, forestry and fisheries sectors, while mainstreaming biodiversity criteria that contribute to the sustainable use, conservation and restoration of biodiversity in the region.

8. Participants recommended the forestry sector to:

- Highlight that the actions recommended in this Dialogue should be consistent with FAO's Global Action Plan for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources, as well as the National Biodiversity Strategies and their related action plans.
- Develop a platform for SDG- related indicators, on legal and illegal land use change, restoration and remediation (including gallery forests), the participation of key stakeholders and actions to mitigate or reduce the negative effects of natural events (hydrological, meteorological, geophysical and biological) such as hurricanes and landslides, among others.
- Develop and use support tools in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), taking into account the use of up-to-date coverage and appropriate scales (example of Mexico).
- Develop a communication strategy on the importance of biodiversity for well-being, to engage other sectors and actors, highlighting the dependence of productive sectors, services and opportunities in the economic, social and cultural dimensions, by mainstreaming biodiversity.
- Work with financial and private institutions to implement international standards in productive sectors, for example, the International Finance Corporation's platform, among others.

³ 35th FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean. Jamaica, 2018.

⁴ 2018 FAO, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores de Mexico. Report on the High-level Regional Dialogue on the Mainstreaming of Biodiversity in the Agricultural, Forestry and Fisheries Sectors (DRANIBA)

- Promote the national and subnational use of planning tools at the landscape or basin level using ecosystem-based approaches in key projects, and promote the participation of the different stakeholders, particularly indigenous and local communities.
- Apply the value chain approach at the sectoral level for wood and non-wood forest products, and wildlife species with added value. Value chains must consider the producer communities to ending with the consumers. This must also be undertaken by engaging owners, local communities and indigenous peoples, considering local cultural and spiritual aspects, as each case may require.
- Develop marketing strategies with a view to obtaining benefits from their responsible use through stimulating consumer awareness and commitment, including issues involving the origin of products (wood and non-wood).
- Promote the development of productive forest projects, preferably with native species, under a territorial approach with productive diversification. In addition, these projects must include scientific criteria that allow the monitoring and evaluation of forest conditions to ensure their sustainability. It is also necessary to determine if there are enough individuals to allow reproduction and not perform selective logging of only one species.

II. Forests and protected areas

9. Generating accurate data on forests and on trends in forest biodiversity continues to be difficult because of the substantial field work and high financial investment involved. The information is normally drawn from general forest data through inferences from, for example, forest coverage, types of forests, designation, non-wood forest products, among others. In addition collecting data on the socioeconomic aspects of forests biodiversity i.e. their contribution to livelihoods and food security, is needed for policy development and national investment in forestry and biodiversity.

10. According to the FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015, forests and forest management have changed considerably in the past 25 years. Most forests are natural, accounting for 93 percent of the world's forests (3.7 billion hectares in 2015). Net loss of natural forest area fell from 10.6 million hectares per year between 1990 and 2000 to 6.5 million hectares between 2010 and 2015.

11. The total forest area allocated primarily for biodiversity conservation account for 13 percent of the total forest area worldwide (almost 524 million hectares). This area has increased 150 million hectares in size since 1990, although the rate of growth decelerated between 2010 and 2015. South America reports an expansion of approximately 1 million hectares per year between 2010 and 2015.

12. Seventeen percent of the world's forest area is located within legally established protected areas, accounting for a total of 651 million hectares, particularly evident in the tropics where an additional 143 million hectares were put under protection between 1990 and 2015.

13. Protected areas are vital for core biodiversity conservation; however, they cannot guarantee their conservation on their own. This is why the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recommends including "other effective area-based conservation measures" (OECM) that contribute to effective conservation of biodiversity *in situ*. These areas include territories under different types of governance, including indigenous lands, private spaces, communal areas, among others.

14. To define these areas, the CBD recommends identifying, mapping and prioritizing key areas for essential ecosystem functions and services, ecosystems that are important for food (e.g. mangroves for fishing), for climate mitigation (e.g. carbon-rich ecosystems, such as forests, peatlands, mangroves), for water security (e.g. mountains, wetlands and grasslands that provide surface and subsurface water),

poverty alleviation (e.g. ecosystems that provide a means of subsistence and jobs), and disaster risk reduction (e.g. ecosystems that absorb the impact of coastal storms, such as coral reefs, seagrass beds and floodplains).

15. Sustainable forest management (SFM) practices ensure that forest ecosystems and biodiversity are properly used by different actors, from communities and indigenous people to large scale producers. Agroforestry and certification schemes also encourage the sustainable management of forest ecosystems with additional social and environmental benefits.

16. Forest restoration practices, including through natural regeneration, agroforestry and planting forests can contribute to the establishment of biological corridors relevant as OECM areas, and providing forestry development opportunities, income generation activities for local communities, environmental benefits, and contributing to climate resilience, adaptation and mitigation.

III. Biodiversity, rural communities and indigenous people

17. According to the World Bank ⁵, a sample of 54 case studies indicated that forest related incomes had an average contribution to household income of some 22 percent in the populations sampled, and this rate is higher among the poorest population. The same report shows that children who live near natural forests are better nourished than children who live far from forests.

18. The State of the World Forest 2018 ⁶ mentioned that Forests act as a source of food, medicine and fuel for more than a billion people. In addition forests help to respond to climate change and protect soils and water, hold more than three-quarters of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, provide many products and services that contribute to socio-economic development, and are particularly important for hundreds of millions of people in rural areas, including many of the world's poorest around 40 percent of the extreme rural poor – around 250 million people. SOFO informed that forests and trees may provide around 20 percent of income for rural households in developing countries, both through cash income and by meeting subsistence needs. Nonwood forest products (NWFPs) provide food, income, and nutritional diversity for an estimated one in five people around the world, notably women, children, landless farmers and others in vulnerable situations.

19. Tenure and land ownership, governance, co-management arrangements and recognizing the existence of communities and indigenous people living close to or inside the protected areas, have become a priority in the region and crucial for appropriate management of protected areas. The lack of recognition means that people who live in these areas are invisible to technical and social assistance programmes. Their role in protecting biodiversity is not recognized, because their tenure and landholder rights have not been formally recognized, nor do any national registries exist. Ignoring the existence of populations in these areas is counterproductive for the appropriate management of protected areas, the implementation of SFM, and the adoption of appropriate practices for biodiversity conservation.

20. In order to address this issue, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder work is fundamental. Likewise, prior and informed consultation with indigenous groups is an acquired right that must be respected. There is still limited capacity to conduct consultations in forested territories.

IV. For the consideration of the Commission

⁵ 2004 World Bank. Counting on the Environment. Forest income for rural poor. Environmental Economics Series. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/825651468778804896/pdf/300260PAPER0Counting0on0ENV0EDP0198.pdf>

⁶ 2018 FAO. State of the World Forest 2018. <http://www.fao.org/state-of-forests/en/>

21. The Regional Forest Commission may wish to invite countries to:
 - Promote integrated approaches in forest sector policies and strategies that consider forestry practices for biodiversity conservation and restoration.
 - Explore ways to improve forest monitoring systems to deliver accurate data on biodiversity, its conservation and use and the ecosystems services provided by forests.
 - Create landscape governance and restoration mechanisms that consider protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures, biological corridors, indigenous territories and rural communities recognizing the existence of people living inside and close to protected areas.
22. The Regional Forest Commission may wish to request that FAO:
 - Support countries in designing and implementing national adaptation and mitigation strategies considering biodiversity as a particularly relevant element for the forest sector.
 - Establish a regional cross-sectoral platform to foster biodiversity mainstreaming in the sustainable management of forest resources and to share knowledge on other effective area-based conservation measures.

Encourage countries to use the FAO Free, Prior and Informed Consent Manual to support the appropriate involvement and recognition of the role of indigenous communities in the restoration and maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem services within forests.