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FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors

Guidance sought from the Council

As mandated by the 41st Session of the Conference (June 2019), the Council is invited to consider and adopt the draft FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors, as reviewed by the 127th Session of the Programme Committee (November 2019).

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background

Vision, Scope, Aim and Goals

- I. Operating principles
- II. Outcomes
- III. Activities
- IV. Development of an Action Plan on Biodiversity Mainstreaming
- V. Monitoring and review

BACKGROUND

1. In recent years, the role of biodiversity and the need to embed biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies, and practices of key public and private actors (thus, to “mainstream biodiversity”) across all economic sectors have been gaining growing global attention. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development puts biodiversity as one of the key elements for many economic activities, particularly those related to sustainable agricultural sectors. Biodiversity is a prominent theme in the 21 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators for which FAO is the custodian agency; 14 of them correspond with indicators for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.¹²

2. Achieving food security and nutrition for all depends on biodiversity, which generates multiple livelihood benefits. As highlighted by two recent landmark global assessments,³ biodiversity and ecosystem services are essential for sustainable agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries. They enable sustainable production in the agricultural sectors. Biodiversity provides regulating and supporting ecosystem services including nutrient cycling, soil formation and rehabilitation, carbon sequestration, water storage and filtration, habitat provision for wild species, biological pest control and pollination. Biodiversity makes production systems and livelihoods more resilient to economic, social and environmental shocks and stresses, including the effects of climate change. The impacts of climate change to biodiversity are a concern to food security and nutrition.

3. Despite global efforts spanning several decades, biodiversity generally continues to be eroded, leading to the call for biodiversity mainstreaming across all sectors. The two assessment reports also provide evidence that many of the drivers that have negative impacts on biodiversity, are at least partly caused by inappropriate agricultural practices. As the demand for agricultural products grows, the role of the agricultural sectors in the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity will become even more significant.

4. Since its establishment, FAO has provided a neutral and open forum where biodiversity-related policies are discussed and agreements negotiated between Members. FAO has developed a number of different instruments, guidelines and tools that address biodiversity concerns.⁴ FAO works closely with international biodiversity-related conventions and instruments, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

¹ 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); Frameworks for fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources’ benefits (15.6.1) and Mountain Green Cover Index (15.4.2).

² The Aichi Biodiversity Targets serve to operationalize the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 of the CBD.

³ FAO. 2019. *The State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, J. Bélanger & D. Pilling (eds.). FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture Assessments. Rome. 572 pp. and IPBES. 2019. *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*.

⁴ These include soft law instruments and voluntary guidelines, such as: the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; the global plans of action for animal, forest and plant genetic resources developed under the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; 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, the Revised World Soil Charter, the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management and the International Code of Conduct for the Sustainable Use and Management of Fertilizers.

5. Through established instruments and bodies, including the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO already provides a global framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture, including genetic resources.

6. 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)*.”⁵

VISION

7. A world where agriculture and food systems reduce their negative impacts on, and make the best use of the potential of biological diversity and ecosystems, and contribute to the conservation, sustainable use, management and restoration of biodiversity ensuring food security and nutrition for present and future generations and supporting livelihoods.

SCOPE

8. The Strategy applies to FAO’s relevant work on crop and livestock production, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture (“agricultural sectors”) that are sustained by, or may have impact on, biodiversity, ecosystem and other services biodiversity provides.

AIM

9. The Strategy aims to mainstream biodiversity across agricultural sectors at national, regional and international levels in a structured and coherent manner, taking into account national priorities, needs, regulations and policies and country programming frameworks.

10. The expected result of the application of the Strategy would be 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.

GOALS

11. Cognizant of the aim of this Strategy and mindful of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), FAO pursues four overarching goals.

Goal 1: Promote sustainable use and management of biodiversity with special focus on landscape and ecosystem approaches in agricultural sectors

12. Agricultural production systems should try to limit the negative impacts on biodiversity. Food and agricultural production, in particular, depends on a wide range of ecosystem services derived from the biodiversity present in landscapes/seascapes and ecosystems surrounding production systems.

Goal 2: Conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services

13. Biodiversity conservation is a critical means to ensure future productive use and the resilience of production systems. Biodiversity needs to be restored where ecosystems have lost their functionality and ability to provide services due to unsustainable practices. The continued provision of ecosystem services will require the agricultural sectors to curb activities affecting biodiversity.

⁵ CL 160/REP, paragraph 6(o), 8(m) and 9(d).

Goal 3: Promote sustainable agriculture and food systems that integrate the conservation, recognition and promotion of biodiversity throughout value chains

14. A food and agricultural system-wide perspective allows the identification of leverage points (including policies, incentives and market systems) throughout the value chains for promoting markets that support biodiversity.

Goal 4: Safeguard the livelihoods of small-scale producers and indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity, and emphasize the role of all relevant stakeholders as custodians of biodiversity

15. The livelihoods of poor people depend particularly on products and services provided by biodiversity. Indigenous peoples and local communities as well as small-scale producers, especially women and youth, are important custodians of biodiversity. The contribution of biodiversity to their food security, nutrition and health, resilient livelihoods and poverty alleviation is supported by an enabling framework, including resources tenure security and the application and development of indigenous and local knowledge.

I. OPERATING PRINCIPLES

FAO implements the Strategy based on the principles of effective governance, partnerships, a knowledge-based approach, inclusiveness, and gender equality and women's empowerment.

Effective governance

Members, through the FAO's Governing and Statutory Bodies, play a vital role in providing impetus and guidance to the implementation of the Strategy and reflecting biodiversity mainstreaming, as appropriate, in the policies, programmes and activities of FAO.

In implementing the Strategy, FAO takes into full account national policies, regulations and priorities and the national and international obligations of Members including those relevant to trade issues, having due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments.

The implementation of the Strategy is a shared responsibility of departments and work streams in FAO. FAO strengthens collaboration between existing bodies and initiatives while respecting existing mandates, and facilitates information exchange and collaboration between FAO units while avoiding duplication.

Partnerships

In the implementation of the Strategy, FAO Governing Bodies, Statutory Bodies, such as the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and Secretariat work in partnership with Members, relevant international organizations and instruments, such as the CBD, and the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and relevant national, regional and international research institutes, such as Bioversity International, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector.

Knowledge based approach

In the implementation of the Strategy, FAO relies on scientific evidence and takes into account local and indigenous knowledge.

Inclusiveness

In the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy, FAO pays attention to the differentiated views, roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders and partners.

Stakeholders include governments, producers, consumers, public research and extension institutions, intergovernmental organizations, including relevant financial mechanisms, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

In most societies, women and men producers have differentiated knowledge and roles with respect to biodiversity. FAO strives to ensure the effective participation of women in its efforts to mainstream biodiversity across the agricultural sectors.

II. OUTCOMES

Achieving the Strategy's aim and goals requires action that will focus on the following Outcomes which reflect FAO's core functions:

Outcome 1: Support provided to Members, at their request, to enhance their capacity to mainstream biodiversity

FAO assistance is provided to enhance capacities of Members to develop and implement evidence-based policies, programmes and activities for biodiversity mainstreaming across the agricultural sectors and to monitor and evaluate their impact.

Outcome 2: Biodiversity mainstreamed across FAO's policies, programmes and activities

A biodiversity perspective is integrated into FAO policies, programmes and activities, and biodiversity is regularly considered by relevant Governing and Statutory Bodies.

Outcome 3: Role of biodiversity and its ecosystem services for food security and nutrition globally recognized

The important role of biodiversity and its ecosystem services for food security and nutrition, and the agricultural sectors, is fully reflected in relevant international agreements and processes, particularly those related to the CBD.

Outcome 4: Coordination and delivery of FAO's work on biodiversity strengthened

Coordination and delivery of FAO's work relevant to biodiversity are strengthened, including through enhanced technical capacity of and better coordination between FAO departments, regional and country offices.

III. ACTIVITIES

Activities to achieve the Outcomes may include;

- 1. Support provided to Members, at their request, to enhance their capacity to mainstream biodiversity (Outcome 1)**
 - 1.1 Raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services to enhance resource-use efficiency and resilience, including through assisting FAO Members in convening national dialogues on biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors with the participation of related sectors, such as environment, health, and finance, and support Members to develop relevant policies and mechanisms.
 - 1.2 Provide information on agricultural production practices that conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and favour the provision of ecosystem services, for example agroforestry, organic farming, agroecology, sustainable intensification and integrated pest management.
 - 1.3 Assist Members in building their capacity to conduct participatory assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services, including impact assessments, with relevant stakeholders and partners, contributing to country driven assessments such as those carried out by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the CBD, or to those of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
 - 1.4 Continue to facilitate, through relevant FAO programmes and bodies, Members' reviews of the impact of relevant national priorities and policies on biodiversity.
 - 1.5 Continue to assist FAO Members in fostering their capacity to collect, analyse and provide data regarding the status of their biodiversity, including as required under relevant international instruments.
 - 1.6 Assist Members in the coherent mainstreaming of biodiversity into relevant policies, strategies and practices, including through the development of enabling frameworks.
 - 1.7 Assist Members in integrating a biodiversity perspective, including related gender strategies, in relevant planning instruments, including FAO Country Programming Frameworks and regional initiatives, national plans for agricultural sectors, and national plans for food security and nutrition.
 - 1.8 Support Members in mobilizing resources for biodiversity mainstreaming and investments in sustainable agriculture approaches that better contribute to biodiversity.
 - 1.9 Support Members in implementing measures at landscape and seascape level to both promote sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, taking into account both research findings and indigenous and local knowledge. Such measures may include the reduction of the use of external inputs, avoidance of unsustainable water abstraction, avoidance of fishing beyond biologically sustainable levels, halting the loss of soil biodiversity and combatting deforestation and land degradation.
 - 1.10 Provide advice on options to internalize the positive and negative economic, environmental and social impacts (externalities) of different agriculture and food systems.
 - 1.11 Assist Members in seizing the opportunities for creating synergies and in overcoming trade-offs they may face in pursuing multiple SDGs.
 - 1.12 Assist Members in sharing and disseminating best practices and experiences learned in mainstreaming biodiversity across productive systems and related policies, plans and programmes.

- 1.13 Assist Members in designing and implementing policies and instruments for the sharing of benefits arising from the use of biodiversity for food and agriculture as a means to promote conservation and sustainable use of those resources.

2. Mainstreaming biodiversity across FAO's programmes, policies and activities

(Outcome 2)

- 2.1 Include biodiversity mainstreaming as a regular item on the agenda of relevant FAO Governing and Statutory Bodies and other regional bodies to ensure regular review of their work in the light of the Strategy.
- 2.2 Strengthen dialogue and collaboration on biodiversity across all agricultural sectors with other relevant sectors, including the environment, health, economic, educational and finance sectors.
- 2.3 Continue to align relevant FAO programmes, policies and activities and their implementation with the SDGs, including the SDGs related to biodiversity.
- 2.4 Strengthen the evidence base on the quantitative and qualitative interactions between biodiversity, the agricultural sectors and related value chains, gender, climate change, and food security and nutrition, building on scientific, indigenous and local knowledge.
- 2.5 Identify and address data gaps and develop, where applicable, gender disaggregated data of relevance to biodiversity mainstreaming.
- 2.6 Facilitate collaboration among relevant bodies of FAO with a view to exchange experiences and best practices with biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors.
- 2.7 Report regularly to relevant FAO Governing and Statutory Bodies on biodiversity developments in other fora.

3. Advocate the recognition of the role of biodiversity for food security and nutrition

(Outcome 3)

- 3.1 Raise awareness and provide technical expertise at global, regional and national levels, including in the development and implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, about the role of biodiversity for food security and nutrition, the contribution of the agricultural sectors to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods, and the risk of further loss of biodiversity.
- 3.2 Raise awareness of stakeholders along the value chain of the positive and negative environmental and social impacts (externalities) of the different agriculture and food systems.
- 3.3 Bring the Strategy to the attention of the Parties to the CBD as an important contribution to the development and implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
- 3.4 Strengthen collaboration and partnerships between FAO and international instruments and organizations and initiatives relevant to biodiversity, including the CBD.
- 3.5 Review, in the follow-up to the adoption of the Strategy and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, memoranda of understanding or related work plans with relevant partners, with a view to identify areas of mutual interest and for possible future collaboration.

- 3.6 Foster the integration of biodiversity in the implementation of global processes and UN Decades⁶ related to food security and nutrition.

4. Strengthen coordination and delivery of FAO's work on biodiversity
(Outcome 4)

- 4.1 Strengthen FAO's institutional capacity across departments and offices to address biodiversity by facilitating knowledge management and cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration on biodiversity mainstreaming and developing an action plan for the implementation of the Strategy.
- 4.2 Review the project cycle processes, and environmental and social safeguards with a view to mainstreaming biodiversity, in consultation with Members and stakeholders.
- 4.3 Consider the establishment of biodiversity as a cross-cutting theme like climate change, gender, governance and nutrition.
- 4.4 Appoint biodiversity focal points in Regional Offices and technical divisions and facilitate their collaboration through a technical network and an interdepartmental working group.
- 4.5 Provide learning opportunities on biodiversity mainstreaming for staff based on identified needs.

**IV. DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACTION PLAN FOR
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY**

FAO will develop an action plan, including a timetable, to operationalize the Strategy, for consideration by the FAO Technical Committees and approval by the Council. The action plan will address mainstreaming biodiversity both between and within the agricultural sectors in a coherent and coordinated manner. FAO will engage all relevant departments to develop and implement the action plan, which will include cross-sectoral and sectoral components. In its endeavour to facilitate the mainstreaming of biodiversity across the agricultural sectors, FAO will continue to strengthen dialogue and collaboration with relevant sectors, including the environment, health, economic, educational and financial sectors.

The action plan will specify actions to be taken to implement the activities foreseen in the Strategy. It will take into account ongoing work by FAO and its partners with a view to increase synergies and avoid duplication of work. In the development and implementation of the action plan, FAO will further ensure complementarity with other strategies and policies, including the FAO Strategy on Climate Change, the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition, the FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the FAO Policy on Gender Equality.

V. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The implementation of the Strategy will be monitored and reported to the relevant FAO Governing and Statutory Bodies. Progress will be reported regularly.

The Strategy will be updated periodically to reflect evaluation outcomes and in response to new global agreements, including those arising from the CBD and the Commission. A first update, including the implementation plan, will be presented to the Conference in 2021.

⁶ UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, UN Decade of Family Farming, UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Use, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development.