



COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

WORKING GROUP ON DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS

Third Session (Hybrid)

Amman, 11-13 September 2023

REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Third Session of the Committee on Forestry's Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems was held from 11 to 13 September 2023 in hybrid mode and hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
2. The Session was attended by a total of 31 member countries both online and in-person. In addition, there were observers from five countries, 14 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and from eight academic and business institutions. A list of participants is provided in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. The Session was also attended by Mr Günter Walkner, Chairperson of the Committee on Forestry; His Excellency Mr Carlos Bernardo Cherniak, Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture Sub-Committee on Livestock, and Ms Julie Edmond, Chairperson of the Committee on Agriculture.
3. The Session was held in conjunction with the Twenty-sixth Session of the Near East Forest and Range Commission (NEFRC) and included a one-day field visit to Al-Yarmouk Reserve, Umm Qais and Jarash on 12 September 2023. The Session also included technical events as part of the Fifth Near East Forestry Week.
4. The first Committee on Forestry (COFO) Working Group Summer School on Drylands was conducted in parallel with the Third Session, from 12 to 15 September 2023, in partnership with the Agricultural Research Council of South Africa, Jordan University of Science and Technology, the Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania, Swedish University of Agricultural Science, the University of Jordan, and the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT), with the objective of reducing the gaps between awareness and the interventions used to combat problems in managing dryland forest and agrosilvopastoral resources. In total, 21 champions - 43 percent of whom were women - participated and represented different disciplinary backgrounds from all dryland regions.

II. OPENING OF THE SESSION (Item 1)

5. The Chairperson of the Working Group, Mr Anders Malmer (Sweden) opened the meeting. He provided his welcoming remarks and thanked all contributors and supporters for securing the extra-budgetary funds to organize the Third Session of the Working Group. Mr Malmer, on behalf of Working Group members, extended words of appreciation to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and to the Near East Forest and Range Commission for hosting the Third Session of the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems.
6. Ms. Tiina Vähänen, Deputy Director of FAO Forestry Division, welcomed participants to the Session. She noted that the Working Group is an anchor for South-South cooperation, coordinating responses to members' needs for an integrated dryland management approach through collaboration between members, multiple stakeholders, and across disciplines, including with other FAO statutory bodies such as the Committee on Agriculture Sub-Committee on Livestock (COAG-LI).
7. The Agenda was adopted as presented.
8. The Working Group agreed to receive the draft report of the Session in English for consideration and adoption. The final report will be published in five languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish).
9. The Working Group endorsed the role of observers to provide notes and advice during the discussion Sessions.

III. PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS (2022-2024) (Item 2)

10. The Working Group acknowledged the progress made on the implementation of the Workplan 2022-2024 and took note of the key challenges and lessons learned, including the limited availability of extra-budgetary resources during the 2021-2023 period.
11. Members emphasized the need to strengthen the cross-sectorial work between the forestry and livestock sectors in restoring dryland and strengthening the resilience of communities that depend on them. The Working Group encouraged its members to actively engage in knowledge sharing between member countries on solutions to challenges in dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.
12. The Working Group endorsed the progress report and invited members and observers to continue its Workplan, subject to the availability of necessary funds.
13. The Working Group was encouraged to continue strengthening its collaboration with the FAO Committee on Agriculture Sub-Committee on Livestock (COAG-LI).
14. The Working Group requested the Secretariat to provide an update on its work and activities at the next Session in 2025.

IV. REVIEW OF THE RELEVANCE AND OPERATIONAL MODALITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Item 3)

15. The Working Group considered the key findings of the independent review report and took note of the key challenges and opportunities identified to strengthen the Working Group's operational modalities.

16. The Working Group acknowledged the guidance of the Working Group's Steering Committee and agreed to their proposed recommendations.

17. Working Group members emphasized the importance of science, technology, innovation and the agrosilvopastoral approach in restoring dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.

18. The Working Group recommended to continue the facilitation of technical collaboration between members, multiple stakeholders and across disciplines, including with other FAO statutory bodies, such as COAG-LI, to enhance coordinated responses to members' needs for an integrated dryland management approach.

19. The Working Group emphasized the need to strengthen partnerships and collaboration to better understand the status, trends and development of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and the people who depend on them, particularly through the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), to support countries facing serious drought and desertification-related challenges.

V. FOREST AND AGRICULTURE LINKAGES: STRENGTHENING FOREST AND RANGELAND RESILIENCE THROUGH RESTORING SILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS FOR BETTER DROUGHT AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT (Item 4)

20. The Working Group acknowledged the multiple linkages between the agriculture and forestry sectors in dryland ecosystems and underscored the need to achieve better synergies between them, highlighting the potential role of the silvopastoral approach in addressing drought management and restoring dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.

21. The Working Group called for the need to improve cross-sectoral coordination on forests, rangelands, food production, land use, and rural development policies for more effective drought resilience and management of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.

22. The Working Group encouraged its members to strengthen equitable and inclusive gender-sensitive planning and management to improve livelihoods and mitigate the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations by using available guidelines such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT).

23. The Working Group recommended that FAO conduct - subject to available extra-budgetary resources - a stocktaking exercise on the inclusion of integrated silvopastoral management in land-use and planning-related policies and regulations for better drought management. This would contribute to FAO's biennial theme for 2024-25 'Water resources management for the four betters: better production, better nutrition, better environment, and better life to achieve the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'. The Working Group will submit a progress report on this point to the Twenty-seventh Session of COFO.

24. The Working Group invited FAO to support countries in strengthening their forest and rangeland monitoring systems to measure silvopastoral, social, economic and environmental values in response to accelerating the achievement of the SDGs as well as other pledges, such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

25. The Working Group requested the Secretariat to share the conclusions of this Session prior to the Second Session of the COAG-LI (to be held in May 2024) and the Twenty-seventh Session of COFO (to be held on 22–26 July 2024) for their considerations.

VI. IN-SESSION SEMINAR: ENHANCING SOUTH-SOUTH KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND COOPERATION FOR BETTER DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL RESTORATION

26. The Working Group and the Near East Forest and Range Commission (NEFRC) acknowledged the joint informative seminar and underscored the need to achieve better synergies between forest and agriculture in drylands through inter-sectorial approaches, for more sustainable agrifood systems.

27. The participants welcomed the importance of South-South knowledge and sharing lessons learned between and among countries in the global South including through the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and other related global initiatives and processes.

VII. STRENGTHENING THE WORKING GROUP ON DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES AND PLEDGES ON TRANSFORMING THE DRYLANDS PRODUCTION SYSTEMS (Item 5)

28. The Working Group highlighted the need to join forces to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through national policy dialogue processes, joint implementation, capacity development, scaling up of activities, and advocacy to track efforts made by countries related to restoration so far.

29. The Working Group welcomed the main priorities identified for the Multi-Year Workplan (MYWP), with the aim of capitalizing on partnership opportunities to strengthen the sustainable management of drylands and ultimately accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

30. The Working Group called for urgent action at scale to restore dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems for a more sustainable future for people, planet, and prosperity, leaving no one behind.

31. The Working Group emphasized the importance of South-South knowledge sharing in promoting cross-sectoral work and nominated an advisory group to review and document good practices in contribution to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

32. The Working Group called to enhance the collaboration with the UNCCD and other relevant members of the CPF in promoting dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and their role in supporting the implementation of the MYWP.

33. The Working Group encouraged FAO to continue to support the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 in close collaboration with the COAG- LI to promote sustainable agrifood systems, silvopastoralism, and sustainable forest management in an integrated and inclusive manner.

34. The Working Group welcomed the Summer School on Drylands initiative and acknowledged the partnership with the University of Jordan, Jordan University of Science and Technology, the Swedish University of Agricultural Science, Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania, Agricultural Research Council of South Africa, and the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) in supporting its first edition, which was conducted in Amman from 12–15 September 2023.

35. The Working Group welcomed and acknowledged partnership offers received from the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) to host the second edition of the Summer School in Kenya in 2024 and from the Global Rangeland Congress to host the third edition in Australia in 2025.

33. The Working Group endorsed the draft MYWP and requested that the Secretariat finalize the MYWP under the guidance of the Working Group's Steering Committee and publish it on the Working Group's website.

34. The Working Group called for more resource mobilization to support the implementation of the MYWP and contribute to the efforts on restoration and conservation efforts.

VIII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS OF THE WORKING GROUP (Item 6)

36. The Working Group elected Mr Batkuu Nyam-Osor, Mongolia, as Chairperson.

37. Mr Humberto Junior Navarro de Mesquita, Brazil, and Mr Lewis Radzire of Zimbabwe were elected as Vice-Chairpersons.

IX. DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Item 7)

38. The Working Group strongly encouraged countries to nominate their experts to act as Working Group members in supporting the technical role of the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems, taking into consideration gender balance.

39. The Working Group invited donors and countries to contribute extra-budgetary financial resources to support the next Session and the Multi-Lateral Proposal on the operationalization of the Working Group and its proposed MYWP.

40. The Working Group welcomed Mongolia as host of the next Working Group meeting and agreed to provide logistical support.

X. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (Item 11)

41. The Working Group adopted the report as amended by consensus.

XI. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION (Item 12)

42. In closing, the Chairperson closed the Session at 15:15 on 13 September 2023.

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