



# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## Thirty-fifth Session

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### Mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture,<sup>1</sup> forestry, fisheries and aquaculture

1. Biodiversity is an important factor for the achievement of food security and improved nutrition. All agricultural sectors (including crop and livestock farming, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) rely on biodiversity and on the ecosystem functions and services on which they are based. However, these sectors also have an impact on biodiversity through several direct and indirect factors. The effects of the loss of biodiversity can harm agricultural sectors, and therefore constitute a potential risk to food security and nutrition, and to the provision of vital ecosystem functions and services.

2. Biodiversity forms the basis of all agricultural sectors, since it is at the origin of all crops and species of domesticated livestock, aquatic plants and animals and trees, and the variety among them. Essential functions, such as nutrient cycling, decomposition of organic matter, dispersion of seeds, soil formation and rehabilitation, pest and disease control, and pollination that benefit agricultural, fishery, aquaculture and forestry production, are maintained by ecosystems which are critical to sustain food production, nutrition and, therefore, human well-being. Marine, coastal and inland ecosystems host a variety of aquatic biological diversity that greatly contributes to the economic, social and cultural aspects of communities around the world. Fisheries and aquaculture depend on the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems to maintain economic, social and ecological benefits in the long term. Biodiversity is the source of wild fisheries, and mainstreaming biodiversity in fishery policies, programmes and plans is key to sustaining the habitats which serve as feeding, spawning and nursery sites which are essential for wild fish populations. Forests hold the majority of the world's terrestrial biodiversity. Forest biodiversity includes all the life forms found within forested areas as well as the ecological roles they perform. Prospects for sustainable development will be greatly influenced by the

<sup>1</sup> FAO defines "agriculture" as also encompassing horticulture, livestock, fishing and forestry activities, along with forage and milk production.



diversity status of forest ecosystems and species. They provide people with a range of benefits which extend far beyond the provision of timber. The ecosystem services that forests provide are particularly important for the poor and vulnerable.

3. Decision XIII/3 of the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Mexico in December 2016, and pursuant to the Aichi Targets, urges governments to mainstream biodiversity in and across the agriculture, forestry, fishery and aquaculture, and tourism sectors, at different scales and using multisectoral platforms, considering genetic safety standards and the legal and regulatory mechanisms that underpin them.

4. The FAO Conference: (a) welcomed the Organization's initiative to act as a biodiversity mainstreaming platform; and (b) called on it to work with its partners, such as the CBD and other United Nations organizations, to facilitate structured and consistent actions for the conservation, sustainable use, management and restoration of biological diversity in all agricultural sectors on the national, regional and international scales.<sup>2</sup> By acting as a biodiversity mainstreaming platform, FAO will make a decisive contribution toward Target 15.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – *By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.*

5. Conference also highlighted the importance of protected areas and their interface with production practices and biodiversity criteria in buffer zones. These biodiverse production systems increase connectedness between the areas and guarantee the ecosystem services planned in their design. The structural heterogeneity of landscapes enhances the provision of ecosystem services such as pollination and biological control.

6. The CBD also emphasized that traditional communities, indigenous peoples and local communities are relevant to the conservation of biodiversity, which, in turn, is essential to for ensuring a healthy and nutritious diet.

7. SDG 2 aims to *end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.* With these different targets, SDG 2 exemplifies a key feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which stresses the interrelatedness and interdependence of many SDGs and their targets. Effective reduction of food insecurity and malnutrition depends on sustainable agricultural sectors. Conversely, progress towards SDG 2 will depend on progress made towards several of the other SDGs, including poverty reduction and the response to climate change. In order to make progress on SDG 2, policy-makers and stakeholders will need to address such critical interactions, in terms of both synergies and trade-offs, among the different SDG 2 targets and between SDG 2 and the other goals. For example, Goal 14, which aims to *conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources* and Goal 15, *to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.* Biodiversity mainstreaming across agricultural sectors will thus significantly contribute to the achievement of SDGs 2, 14 and 15 and the 2030 Agenda, as a whole.

8. In relation to SDG 2, FAO promotes the conservation and responsible use of animal and plant germplasm, *in situ* traditional practices, the restoration of landscapes to conserve it, and clear and transparent governance in the protection of genetic material, its commercialization and the standards associated with food safety and sanitation.<sup>3</sup> In addition, 32 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean signed the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. In its role as this treaty's Executive Secretariat, FAO facilitates the information exchange on plant genetic resources through the Global System on Plant Genetic Resources (CGRFA), where countries continuously update information. Under the auspices of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO has developed the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic

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<sup>2</sup> C 2017/REP, para. 55

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/goals/goal-2/es/>

Resources for Food and Agriculture. The Organization has also held two regional seminars on agroecology, which, among other things, have been instrumental in drawing attention to the role of this approach in biodiversity conservation and regeneration. It is also promoting the recognition of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) as a mechanism for protecting agrobiodiversity, with sites having been declared in Chile and Peru and others proposed and under construction in Brazil, Cuba and Ecuador.

9. In the case of livestock, the diversity of domestic animals has declined considerably in recent years, because livestock production has focused on a handful of more profitable breeds, which contributes to the disappearance of animal genetic resources. Many autochthonous breeds, some of which are in danger of extinction, have genetic characteristics such as the ability to resist climate stress, diseases and parasites, which means they are better adapted to local conditions and could be very important for livestock production in the future. FAO and its Member States have developed the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources, with the aim of creating an efficient system for the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture; and, recognizing the importance of systematizing information on animal genetic resources, it has also set up the Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS), as a global platform of data on livestock breeds and diversity.

10. SDG 14 refers to coastal ecosystems as fundamental to marine life and fish stocks.<sup>4</sup> In Latin America and the Caribbean, FAO has worked to strengthen links between fishing communities and coastal marine protected areas, promoting joint management practices, which are widespread in the region. Fishery regulations and management plans for protected areas have become tools for the conservation and sustainable use of coastal marine territories. Application of the ecosystemic approach in fisheries and aquaculture has made it possible to adopt measures aimed at the sustainable development of the fishing sector. The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and the eradication of poverty are an internationally agreed instrument that promotes sustainable use, prudent and responsible management and conservation of fishery resources.

11. In addition to the actions and programmes already mentioned under other goals that directly contribute to SDG 15, FAO, in conjunction with its Member States, has developed the Global Plan of Action for Forest Genetic Resources; and it is now working on implementation of the Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 which comprises 26 targets aligned with the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. With regard to SDG 15, it should also be noted that the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity has recognized the interdependence of all countries with respect to genetic resources for food and agriculture, as well as their special nature and importance for achieving food security throughout the world. It also highlights the sustainable development of agriculture in the context of poverty reduction and climate change, recognizing the fundamental role of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in this regard.<sup>5</sup>

12. In region, FAO has engaged in an intensive and wide-ranging consultation process for preparation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Agro-Environmental Policies,<sup>6</sup> which aim to reconcile the economic viability of food and consumer goods production with biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of natural resources. These guidelines highlight the adoption and application of the ecosystemic approach in production systems; the strengthening of regulatory frameworks that

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals/goals/goal-14/es/>

<sup>5</sup> The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Derived from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity – Preamble

<sup>6</sup> FAO. 2016. Voluntary Guidelines for Agro-environmental Policies; Santiago (available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5462s.pdf>)

guide and support agro-ecosystem restoration and recovery processes; the adaptation of norms on animal and plant germplasm to guarantee the rights of farmers on access to plant and animal, terrestrial and aquatic genetic resources; and the enhancement of agrobiodiversity and biodiversity products.

13. Overcoming the challenges of biodiversity for food and agriculture requires innovation or updating of economic, social and environmental policies to conserve biodiversity and to maintain and rehabilitate productive ecosystems. Public-private partnerships will also need to be strengthened to complement government efforts in the region.