

171st Session of the Council

Item 6.4: Report of the 26th Session of the Committee on Forestry (3-7 October 2022)

The Committee on Forestry (COFO) held its 26th Session from 3 to 7 October 2022. The Session was conducted as a hybrid event for the first time. Of the 120 Members of the Committee, 109 participated in the Session, including five Ministers, and a total of 758 participants.

The Report of the 26th Session of COFO is submitted to the Council in document C 2023/25. The Committee reviewed the 24 items on its agenda, as highlighted below.

The Committee welcomed the adjustment of the *Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) 2020-2023*, the progress in its implementation and recommended to align the planning cycle of the COFO MYPOW with that of the other Technical Committees, starting in 2024, in order to facilitate cross-sectoral work among the Committees.

The Committee endorsed the proposed priority areas of work in forestry in 2022-2023 and beyond, and welcomed their strong alignment with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

The Committee discussed the key findings of the 2022 edition of *The State of the World's Forests (SOFO)* and its three interrelated pathways, and recognized the potential of forests to help mitigate the impacts of global challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee provided guidance to FAO to:

- continue supporting the provision of sufficient, reliable information and knowledge, the development of innovative tools, as well as mobilization of finance on the topics covered in SOFO 2022, for science- and evidence-based policy decisions and effective programmes for forestry and agrifood systems transformation;
- consider collecting, assessing, and disseminating good practices of sustainable production and trade of charcoal and other forms of wood energy, with a view to supporting Members' efforts and dialogue towards the transition to sustainable uses of wood fuels and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets;
- support Members to accelerate South-South and Triangular Cooperation, including through voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research, and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms with a view to promoting the development and use of sustainable wood and non-wood forest products, addressing the challenges faced by developing countries, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- continue FAO's support for strengthening the role of forest ecosystems in global climate policy;
- support Members in halting forest loss and degradation, restoring degraded lands and drylands, implementing sustainable forest management, and strengthening work on forest fire management;
- reflect the importance of addressing deforestation, forest biodiversity loss and of scaling up the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity in the implementation of the 2024-27 Action Plan of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors;
- continue to review the Regional Forestry Commissions, including through consideration of the ongoing governance reviews;
- conduct, subject to available extra-budgetary resources, a global assessment of the status and scaling-up potential of agroforestry, including agroecological principles and practices and other innovative approaches, to update the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) categories covering production systems integrating trees and forests, and to report on progress to COFO 27.

The Committee took note of the outcomes of the XV World Forestry Congress, appreciated the Youth Call for Action made at the event, and invited Members to consider appropriate actions for supporting youth engagement in forestry at all levels.

The Committee discussed forests and sustainable production of wood and non-wood forest products and took note of the Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood (as part of the outcomes of the XV World Forestry Congress). Further, COFO 26 recommended FAO to support Members to promote the development and sustainable

consumption and production of wood and non-wood forest products, contributing to improved livelihoods, including through building capacities of women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The Committee welcomed FAO and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) co-leadership to promote the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 and recommended FAO to support Members with tools, methodologies and capacity development initiatives to strengthen their capacity to scale-up forest ecosystem restoration efforts.

The Committee discussed the item on agriculture and forestry linkages, presented to both the 28th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG 28) and COFO 26, in line with the Council's request to strengthen coordination on cross-sectoral matters and to present papers dealing with interrelated issues between agriculture and forests to both Committees.

The Committee requested FAO to continue actively identifying the important and mutually beneficial linkages between agriculture and forestry and scaling up its related activities in the relevant Programme Priority Areas (PPAs) of its Strategic Framework. Moreover, COFO 26 recommended FAO to continue collecting and analysing necessary science- and evidence-based data on agriculture and forestry interdependencies, including on the direct and underlying drivers of deforestation and land degradation, by further enhancing consistency between agricultural and forest data sets, and compiling case studies and good practices which should be reported at COFO 27.

The Committee recommended that the Action Plan for the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031, clearly sets out FAO's priorities for climate action in agrifood systems at a sectoral level, including for the crop, forest, fisheries and aquaculture, and livestock sectors, at local, national, regional and global levels, and recognized the importance of mobilizing additional resources to support the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 through its Action Plan, including for forest-related climate action.

The Committee called on FAO to include relevant forms of science and innovation in forestry in the preparation of the regional action plans for the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy (2022-25).

The Committee also encouraged the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems to support the preparations for the UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026.

The Committee welcomed the ongoing improvements of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) process, the recent FAO FRA Remote Sensing Survey, and recommended FAO to continue the development and harmonization of methods and definitions for forest data collection, including for primary forests, and recommended further efforts towards a definition of "forest degradation" during the FRA 2025 cycle.

The Committee recommended FAO to strengthen its leadership role in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), and to facilitate active participation of CPF Members in the mid-term review of the International Arrangement on Forests.

Mr Günter Walkner, Chairperson of the Committee on Forestry