

43rd Session of the Conference

Introduction to Item 12.4: 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 was endorsed by the 171st Session of the Council (CL 171/REP) and is submitted to the Conference in document C 2023/25. The following items are brought to the attention of the Conference.

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 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. 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 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. COFO also recommended FAO to 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 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 the progress made in the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors and its 2021-23 Action Plan, and encouraged FAO to continue to provide support to its Members in their efforts to mainstream biodiversity, in particular on forestry-related actions.

The Committee welcomed the ongoing improvements of the 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. It also recommended further efforts towards a definition of "forest degradation" during the FRA 2025 cycle.

The Committee welcomed FAO's and the United Nations Environment Programme's (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 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 welcomed the joint FAO and UNEP initiative to develop and implement the Global Fire Management Platform to reduce the negative impacts of wildfires on livelihoods, landscapes and the global climate, in consultation with, and building on, Members' expertise, existing processes and expert networks to avoid duplication and overlaps.

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 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).

The Committee acknowledged the work of the Statutory Bodies in forestry, including the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs), the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea*, the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACFSI), the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-Growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment (IPC), and the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems.

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