

CFS50: Side Event No. 26

Imagine a future where new generations and ecosystems thrive, making the national pathways to sustainable food systems the accelerator for SDGs

Thursday, 13 October 2022

According to the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(2022\)](#), one of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that investing in biodiversity conservation and eco-systems restoration is key to both halting deforestation and to reducing risk for new pandemics.

Despite alarming degradation trends, clear opportunities exist to reduce pressure on landscapes and ecosystems and improve the sustainability of agri-food systems.

Nearly one hundred participants registered to the CFS 50 side event entitled “*Imagine a future where new generations and ecosystems thrive, making the national pathways to sustainable food systems the accelerator for SDGs*” held on 13 October 2022.

In the context of the GEF-7 [Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program \(FOLUR\)](#), the event was co-organized by ESF (Food Systems and Food Safety Division) and NFO (Forestry Division) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), along with the International Dairy Federation (IDF) and the World Farmers’ Organization (WFO).

The event aimed to highlight the importance of adopting a sustainable food system approach with science-led assessments to inform policymaking and accelerate the implementation of the [national pathways for food systems transformation](#) emerging from the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Opening the event, Mr Ewald Rametsteiner (FAO) highlighted recent developments within international fora and FAO governing bodies to link forestry and agriculture more closely together to synergistically support transformation of agri-food systems with benefit for both planet and people. Moreover, he expanded on the need for participatory, inclusive, cross-sectoral and multi-level integration with collaboration to accelerate action and achieve desired impact. Finally, he underscored that the FAO Forestry Division is proud to spearhead integrated implementation in a “One-FAO” approach to advance two GEF-7 Flagship Impact Programmes on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes (DSL-IP) and Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR-IP).

Mr Christopher Brett (World Bank) provided additional opening remarks introducing the objectives and scope of the GEF-7 FOLUR explaining that FOLUR is aimed as an accelerator of change to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a wide range of transformative activities including the re-purposing of agriculture investments for better production and better environment at local, national and global levels.

In the two keynote speeches, Mr Fritjof Boerstler (FAO) introduced the novel Sustainable Production Landscape Approach (SPL) pioneered by FAO within the GEF-7 FOLUR to generate reliable and updated data at the landscape level and to improve knowledge and capacities from the national to the farm level.

The overall goal of the SPL is to support multi-stakeholder groups towards the development of integrated land use plans (ILUPs) for more inclusive, informed and evidence-based decision making with subsequent more sustainable management and governance of the landscape. The SPL flow was illustrated on the FOLUR project in Paraguay focusing on livestock as a targeted commodity. Mr Boerstler illustrated how the SPL will support the Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) multistakeholder process from the definition of the ILM objectives to the monitoring and evaluation phase. Moreover, an example for the baseline assessment of targeted landscapes was provided showing how the SPL geospatial platform will allow seamless integration of GIS and remote sensing analysis (i.e. based on biophysical, socio-economic and commodity specific data) with aggregation of complementary in-situ tailored assessments at household and farm level (i.e. providing detailed information on land tenure and rights, management practices, environmental impacts of crop and livestock systems, etc.). This will enable an informed and common understanding among all landscape stakeholders of the current landscape's conditions, the ecological and environmental challenges related to the production systems, the ambitions of different stakeholder groups, the opportunities for ecosystems restoration and for the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices towards greener value chains.

This was followed by Mr James Lomax (UNEP) who stressed the importance of analyzing food systems dynamics at country and global level to enhance resilience of agri-food systems and best respond to shocks on the markets from climate, conflicts and diseases. It was highlighted how food security and resilience are major pillars of a sustainable food systems approach.

From the country level, Mr Wang Quanhui (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, China) and Ms Graciela Miret Martínez (Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Paraguay) introduced the GEF-7 FOLUR country projects in China and Paraguay, respectively. While activities are planned for action at local level, the importance of inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue and action at all levels, to accelerate sustainable food systems national pathways, was acknowledged.

Mr Kouassi Tehua Pascal Angui (Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Cote d'Ivoire) intervened at the closing of the meeting to point out how climate action and environmental projects should always keep food security as a primary objective in developing countries.

Facilitated by Mr José Valls Bedeau (FAO), a panel discussion featuring Ms Elizabeth Nsimadala (Chair of National Alliance of Agricultural Co-operatives (NAAC) in Uganda), Mr Piercristiano Brazzale (IDF President) and Mr Jack Bobo (the Nature Conservancy) allowed to hear perspectives from other key stakeholders on the race to the SDGs. Ms Nsimadala pointed out that farmers are at the core of sustainable food systems' national pathways and that their engagement is fundamental to shaping and moving ahead gender-sensitive and youth-oriented national policies and investments. She also reminded the audience how agriculture needs to be kept profitable to support agri-food systems transformation to achieve the SDGs. While Ms Nsimadala pointed to the [Global Sustainable Livestock Coalition](#) as one WFP initiative catalyzing increasing interest to change the narrative of livestock in the UNFSS national pathways, Mr Brazzale mentioned the proactive role that the dairy sector plays in supporting the climate agenda and the SDGs. He mentioned the [latest developments of the IDF normative work](#) (i.e. revised methodology on carbon footprint, guideline on soil carbon storage account in life cycle assessment), and the new initiative of the dairy sector called [Pathways to Dairy Net-Zero](#), which is harnessing all dairy production systems in reducing their carbon footprint. Mr Bobo noted that there is no single approach to a sustainable future. Understanding the diversity that underpins our global food system is a first step

towards changing it—and transformative change is needed. How food is produced in one place also impacts production choices in other places. Solutions must be relevant to the communities where they are implemented. He remarked how global transformation hence starts with local change.

Mr Divine Njie (FAO) closed the event underlining the importance for the UNFSS national pathways to conduct scenario analyses and to rely on quantitative assessments at multiple scales and multi-stakeholder engagement. Ensuring coherence across policies on sustainable production and sustainable consumption is of paramount importance to achieve better production, better nutrition, better environment and better lives through sustainable food systems and healthy diets, Mr Njie also said. He concluded wishing success to FOLUR and inviting all speakers to continue the discussions started in this event and to make use of performance indicators to assess and to report progress on the many facets of food systems transformation, including sustainable production, resilience and profitability, to make future generations and ecosystems thrive.