

SE06: Bridging Rio Conventions – Uniting climate, biodiversity and land tenure agendas for sustainable agrifood systems

Organized by: FAO; Alliance Bioversity-CIAT; China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation; International Land Coalition; One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme, Rights and Resources Initiative; Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture; UNDP, UNEP; WWF International.

Summary of the side event

The event gathered global stakeholders to discuss agrifood systems' role in addressing climate change, land tenure, biodiversity loss, and land degradation. As part of the Committee on World Food Security's 52nd session, the panel emphasized the transformative potential of agrifood systems in achieving climate, biodiversity, and sustainability goals. This shift reframes agrifood systems as solutions, highlighting the importance of environmental, socio-economic, and food security goals alongside climate action, land and biodiversity restoration, and tenure security for all. Collaboration with the private sector, local communities, and technological innovations was deemed essential for accelerating these transformations.

Brazil's presentation highlighted its commitment to sustainability, with aims for net-zero deforestation and the protection of 30% of its natural resources by 2030. Brazil's integrated governmental approach aligns agrifood strategies with environmental and economic goals, demonstrating how cross-ministerial collaboration can advance the objectives of the Rio Conventions.

Switzerland promotes policy alignment to foster healthy and sustainable nutrition, reduce emissions, and support resilient food production systems, integrating targets and measures from various agendas into national strategies and action plans. This is illustrated by Switzerland's Strategy for Sustainable Development and the Climate Strategy for Food and Agriculture. Switzerland also supports global advocacy for policy convergence, acting as Co-Leads of the One Planet Network's

Sustainable Food Systems Programme and Co-Chair of the Agroecology Coalition.

The China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF) shared China's "Glory Project," a cross-sectoral initiative empowering communities through sustainable employment. Initiated by young Chinese returnees in the 1980s, this model united farmers, businesses, government, and NGOs to alleviate poverty. Each sector contributed unique resources, with companies providing financial backing and the government supporting infrastructure. This model quickly expanded, lifting millions out of poverty by the mid-1990s.

The CBCGDF outlined the Africa Soil Strength Project led by The Soil Solution in The Gambia, where the CBCGDF and BGI are major project partners. The project is in the pilot stage, developing two major pillars: the Soil Doctor Programme and the Soil Information System. Its goal is to implement a community-based, science-guided approach to support small lot farmers in improving soil quality, which is critically deteriorated in The Gambia and across Africa.

Cameroon's National Development Strategy (2020-2030) exemplifies coordinated efforts across ministries to achieve food security and sustainability. By uniting food system efforts across multiple ministries, the strategy addresses local and national sustainability goals through agroecology, food security coalitions, and resilient supply chain initiatives.

Throughout the event, the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration, grassroots involvement, and innovation emerged as key themes. Cameroon's food coalition strategy involves focal points in various ministries to bridge communication gaps and coordinate actions toward sustainable food systems. Brazil's recent public policy reforms represent another example, with improvements in food security achieved through cash transfers and support for local food systems, including a school meal program serving millions of children. Brazil's environmental efforts also focus on reducing deforestation and promoting sustainable agriculture, with land tenure security and traceability supported by the Rural Environmental Registry. Additionally, Gambia's grassroots "Soil Solution" project was discussed, showcasing efforts to combat soil degradation and food insecurity. By training "soil doctors" and creating a soil monitoring system, the initiative supports sustainable farming practices and aims to scale up significantly, inspiring similar efforts in other African countries.

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UNDP emphasized the need for robust funding, integrated budgeting, and people-centered approaches to address the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity, and poverty. Leadership and coordination across sectors are crucial for implementing integrated strategies and tackling political challenges in aligning ministry goals.

The panel called for maintaining momentum through international dialogue, underscoring that sustainable food systems require cooperation across climate, biodiversity, and agricultural sectors to achieve global development objectives.