

# Seeds of resilience: Unlocking Food Systems Transformation through Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS) and agroecological approaches

## Concept Note

**Date:** Tuesday, 21 October 2025 | **Time:** 13:30 – 14:45 (75 minutes total) | **Location:** FAO HQ, Rome |  
**Interpretation:** English ↔ French

**Registration link (for both in-person and virtual attendance):** [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

### Abstract

In the face of climate change, biodiversity loss, rising hunger and malnutrition, transforming current unsustainable food systems towards resilience, sustainability, and equity is imperative. This side event explores how Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS) and agroecology contribute to this transformation. Drawing on concrete experiences from CROPS4HD (India, Niger, Chad, Tanzania) and SUSTLIVES (Burkina Faso, Niger), the event highlights diverse approaches—from strengthened farmer seed systems and increased crop diversity to healthy product development, market access, and consumer behaviour change—all while empowering women and youth. Panelists representing governments, farmers, civil society, research, and UN organisations will share lessons learned, address challenges, and discuss how these experiences inform a new multi-stakeholder initiative to scale NUS and agroecology in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### Objectives

1. Promote evidence-based policy dialogue: To share lessons learned from country-level experiences on sustainably using agrobiodiversity through promoting Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS) and agroecology, informing inclusive policy processes that support resilience, biodiversity, nutrition, and sustainable food systems.
2. Strengthen multistakeholder collaboration: To foster dialogue among governments, civil society, small-scale producers, private sector, researchers, and UN organizations aiming to co-create pathways for scaling up NUS through agroecological approaches.
3. Support uptake of CFS policy products: To identify opportunities for aligning national and regional actions with existing CFS policy recommendations—especially on agroecological transitions, gender equality, youth engagement, and resilient food systems—and enhance their practical implementation on the ground.

Organized by:

## Relevance to CFS work

This side event directly addresses several core CFS priorities outlined in the Multi-Year Programme of Work 2024-2027: 1) Transforming resilient food systems: It showcases practical, field-tested approaches using NUS and agroecology to enhance the resilience of smallholder farming systems to climate shocks and economic uncertainties, contributing directly to diversification and sustainability. 2) Climate, agrobiodiversity and the right to food: The focus on NUS conservation and agroecological practices directly supports agrobiodiversity preservation and climate adaptation strategies, which are fundamental to realizing the right to adequate nutritious food in the face of environmental challenges. 3) Unlocking potential of agroecological and other innovative approaches by strengthening responsible investment and financing: The event highlights community-led approaches and multi-stakeholder partnerships that invest in agroecology based local food systems, aligning with the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems and the HLPE14 report recommendations, as well as the CFS policy recommendations on agroecological and other innovative approaches. 4) Increase awareness, ownership and use of CFS policy products: The session provides concrete examples of how principles from CFS guidelines (e.g., on Food Systems and Nutrition, Gender Equality, Responsible Investment, and Agroecological and other innovative approaches) are being applied and can be scaled up through projects showcased. 5) Cross-cutting issues: The projects explicitly address gender dimensions, focusing on women's empowerment and leadership in agroecology and seed systems, and contribute to youth engagement in agriculture.

## Linkages to CFS Policy Products

- Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition
- Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition
- Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems
- Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition
- Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of the national food security
- Policy recommendations on agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition

## Objectives

- Promote evidence-based dialogue on Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS) and an agroecological approach.
- Showcase concrete country-level experiences to inform inclusive policy processes.
- Strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration among governments, farmers, researchers, and UN organizations.
- Identify concrete actions, partnerships, and investment opportunities to scale up these approaches.

## Provisional Agenda:

Moderator: *Ron Hartman, Director of Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division*

Welcoming remarks: *H.E. Ambassador Christian Frutiger (Switzerland)*

Presentation delivered by: *Ms Nicole Stolz, Head of Development Cooperation, SWISSAID*

Closing remarks: *Ms Annette Schneegans, Head of the United Nations Section, Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations organizations*

### Panelists:

- Dr Grazia Sgarra, Head of the Food Security and Rural Development Office, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, AICS
- Mr Hakim Baliraine, AFSA Board member
- Mr Precious Phiri Member CSIPM; regenerative practitioner, facilitator, and founding trustee of iGugu Trust, Farmer Org. Representative
- Dr Devesh Chaturvedi, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India
- Ms Antonella Cordone, Senior Technical Specialist on Nutrition, IFAD

<b>Time (CEST)</b>	<b>Segment</b>	<b>Speakers</b>
13:30 (5 mins)	Opening & Welcome	H.E. Ambassador Christian Frutiger (Switzerland)
13:35 (10 mins)	Scene-setting Presentation Overview of key evidence and lessons on agroecology and NUS to set the stage for discussion	Ms Nicole Stolz, SWISSAID
13:45 (50 mins)	Moderated Panel Discussion Panelists share perspective on scaling NUS and agroecology	Dr Grazia Sgarra Mr Hakim Baliraine Mr Precious Phiri Dr Devesh Chaturvedi Ms Antonella Cordone
14:35 (5 mins)	Closing Remarks Summary of the discussion and reflections from the EU perspective	Ms Annette Schneegans (EU)
14:40 (5 mins)	Final Wrap-up & Adjournment	Ron Hartman
14:45	Session Ends	–