

26th Session of the Committee on Forestry

Item 6. Agriculture and forestry linkages

At its 164th and 165th Sessions the FAO Council requested FAO “to showcase and promote existing and complementary practices between agriculture activities and the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of forests, avoiding deforestation and maintaining ecosystem services, noting that agriculture and forestry can synergistically support sustainable development”. It also suggested that the Committee on Forestry (COFO) “review the drivers of the expansion of agricultural land in light of sustainable forest management”, requested “strengthening coordination between COFO and the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) on cross-sectoral matters, and recommended that future papers dealing with inter-related issues between agriculture and forests be presented to both COFO and COAG”.

Agriculture and forestry face global challenges, including hunger and malnutrition, poverty and inequalities, climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN Food Systems Summit affirmed that transforming agrifood systems was paramount in responding to those crises. Enhancing synergies between agriculture and forestry and addressing some of their trade-offs, like competition for land use, are core solutions for speeding up this critical change.

This agenda item recalls the various interconnections between agriculture and forestry, stressing the role of forests and forest-related communities in providing critical ecosystem services for agriculture. It highlights opportunities for closer integration between the agriculture and forestry sectors in four fields of action:

- *Policy coherence and integrated land planning*: land is a limited and strategic resource which management requests an effective governance, relying on cross-sectoral approaches and multi-stakeholder participation;
- *Better data and evidence*: reliable and transparent data are critical to inform decisions and catalyse support for an inclusive and equitable transformation of the agriculture and forestry sectors;
- *Scaling up innovative approaches*: innovation for sustainable agricultural production, based on research and traditional knowledge, offers multiple technical and social options integrating forest and trees, including agroforestry and sylvopastoralism, optimizing environmental outcomes and resilience; and
- *Promoting responsible agricultural supply chains*: by seizing the opportunities offered by increased trade of agricultural and forest commodities, public and private actors are taking action to limit the environmental and social trade-offs of the related supply chains, notably the pressure they may put on forests.

Furthermore, this agenda item proposes a way forward, building on FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and its twenty Programme Priority Areas, many of which closely interlink forestry and agriculture. Practical results will also be achieved through major FAO initiatives aiming at increasing synergies between agriculture and forestry like the FAO-Global Environmental Facility (GEF) partnership and FAO-led Green Climate Fund (GCF) programmes and projects. The role of governments in setting a coherent policy and planning framework that is conducive to promoting linkages and complementarity between agriculture and forestry will be critical, as well as a broad participation of the private sector, practitioners, women, youth and Indigenous Peoples.

The Committee is invited to:

- recommend FAO to further identify opportunities to improve complementarity between the agriculture and forest sectors, strengthen coordinated policy responses in addressing common challenges, and improve understanding of synergies and trade-offs between agriculture and forestry;
- call on FAO to continue to collect and analyse necessary data and evidence, including on the direct and underlying drivers of deforestation and land degradation, by further enhancing consistency between agricultural and forest data sets, and by compiling case studies and best practices, and to report back to the next respective sessions of COFO27 and COAG29;
- invite FAO to conduct, subject to available extra-budgetary resources, a global assessment of the status and scaling-up potential of agroforestry, building on, improving and integrating methodologies related to measuring the extent and status of agroforestry and trees on agricultural land, and to report on progress to the next respective sessions of COFO27 and COAG29; and
- encourage FAO to continue playing an active role in relevant international fora, by promoting open dialogue on enhancing sustainable production and reducing the environmental impact of agrifood systems.

The Committee may wish to invite Members to:

- promote greater and inclusive policy coherence between the agriculture and forest sectors, including through integrated land use planning and landscape approaches, with a special focus on women, youth and Indigenous Peoples;
- support small-scale producers, including youth and women, family farmers, local communities, Indigenous Peoples and producer organizations, by safeguarding access to land whilst enhancing access to resources and markets and contributing to sustainable and gender responsive value chains. This may be achieved, as appropriate, through the development of clear and consistent legal frameworks; recognition of customary rights to natural resources; and provision of equal opportunities to women and men;
- enhance mainstreaming of biodiversity in the agriculture and forestry sectors by promoting sustainable agroforestry practices, land restoration and development of sustainable agricultural and forestry products value chains; and
- strengthen extension services that take a holistic approach to promote sustainable agrifood systems, agroforestry and sustainable forest management in an integrated and inclusive manner, while combating climate change and using biodiversity in a sustainable way.

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