

Statement by the African Regional Group

Agenda Item 5: Forests for Food Security and Nutrition – Strengthening the Contribution of Forests and Trees to Sustainable Agrifood Systems

Chairperson, we congratulate FAO in the preparations and arrangement of COFO 28 and 10 World Forest Week

Tanzania, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Regional Group.

The African Regional Group welcomes document COFO/2026/3 – Forests for food security and nutrition: Strengthening the contribution of forests and trees to sustainable agrifood systems and commends FAO for bringing greater and valuable attention to the important, yet often underrecognized, contribution of forests and trees to food security, nutrition, livelihoods and the resilience of agrifood systems. We note in particular that more than 5 billion people globally rely on forests and tree-based systems for food and income, while forests provide critical ecosystem services that sustain agricultural production.

For Africa, this nexus is particularly important. Millions of rural households, smallholder and family farmers and local communities depend directly or indirectly on forests and tree-based systems for food, energy and livelihoods. We therefore agree that forests should not be considered in isolation from agriculture, nutrition and rural development. Forest foods can complement staple crops, improve dietary diversity and provide important sources of micronutrients and protein.

The ARG also underscores the important contribution of forests to climate resilience and agricultural productivity. Forests sustain pollinators, soil fertility and water cycles, regulate local climates and protect watersheds. These ecosystem services are increasingly important for African countries confronting droughts, land degradation, changing rainfall patterns and other climate-related shocks.

At the same time, we take note of the challenges identified in the document, particularly fragmented policies across forestry, agriculture, food security and nutrition; limited institutional capacities; insufficient data; and gaps in coordination and monitoring. The African Regional Group therefore supports stronger cross-sectoral approaches that enable countries to integrate forests and trees more systematically into national agrifood systems, food security, climate adaptation and sustainable development strategies.

Chairperson,

The Group is concerned by the continuing pressures of deforestation and forest degradation. As the document rightly recognizes, these challenges are multidimensional and addressing them requires integrated responses that combine

sustainable forest management and restoration with improved livelihoods, stronger institutions and enhanced resilience of rural communities.

In this regard, the African Regional Group welcomes FAO's continued support for agroforestry, integrated landscape management and sustainable forest-based value chains. We particularly welcome the practical work being undertaken to develop agroforestry guidance, Farmer Field Schools and tools to strengthen the business case for agroforestry. We encourage FAO to expand such technical assistance and capacity development, particularly for African countries, and to facilitate access to adequate and predictable financing for implementation.

We also welcome the continued promotion of South–South and triangular cooperation. The Group takes positive note of the Addis Action Roadmap for Sustainable Forests and Agriculture in Africa and encourages further support for African-led approaches that seek to increase agricultural production and food security while reducing pressure on forests.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, the African Regional Group supports the proposed actions, including better integration of forest foods and foods from trees outside forests into relevant national policies and programmes, wider dissemination of the findings of the *Global Report on Forests for Food: Nourishing People, Sustaining the Planet*, and the mainstreaming of the contribution of forests and trees to food security and nutrition across FAO's work.

Africa's forests are not only environmental assets. They are sources of food, livelihoods, resilience and opportunity. Their sustainable management must therefore remain an integral part of our collective efforts to transform agrifood systems, eradicate hunger and malnutrition, and build resilient rural economies while safeguarding forests for future generations.

I thank you.