

**STAKEHOLDER OPEN WEBINAR – SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, FOOD SYSTEMS
TRANSITION AND NATURE: LINKAGES TO THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY
FRAMEWORK, HELD ON 23 MARCH 2021, 7-9 A.M. EDT**

SUMMARY REPORT

**Prepared by the Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020
Global Biodiversity Framework**

I. BACKGROUND

1. The second in a series of informal “stakeholder open webinars” organized by the Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, Mr. Francis Ogwal (Uganda) and Mr. Basile van Havre (Canada), designed to explore with Parties and stakeholders the key concepts and issues for the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
2. The theme of this second webinar was “sustainable agriculture, food systems transition and nature: linkages to the post-2020 global biodiversity Framework”, spotlighting the important and complex nexus between agriculture, food, nature and biodiversity.
3. About 460 representatives of Parties and non-Party stakeholders participated in the event, and every effort was made to ensure that both Parties and stakeholders were provided with an equal opportunity to speak. A total of 730 participants registered for the webinar, and 98 comments were received during the session. All requests for oral intervention (5) were accommodated.

II. KEY MESSAGES

4. The Co-Chairs would like to highlight the following key messages from the webinar as being particularly relevant to the preparations of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework:
 - (a) A sustainable food system requires redesigning agricultural systems to enhance their productivity and sustainability, thus reducing pressures on biodiverse ecosystems. Mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture means scaling up agroecological systems and other innovative approaches to enhance productivity while minimizing negative impacts on biodiversity:
 - (i) A set of aligned and coherent policies and programmes that directs funding, investments and research to incentivize agroecology and integrated, diversified farming systems is needed;
 - (b) Smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples and local communities are stewards of biodiversity. Policies to secure rights to land, water and seeds for family farmers, smallholders, etc., are important tools that can support the mainstreaming of biodiversity. Participative governance for smallholders and indigenous peoples and local communities can also help with biodiversity mainstreaming at the landscape level. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and inclusive governance that treats all actors as equal partners are important so that all recommendations are heard and there is increased ownership in biodiversity-based programmes and initiatives;
 - (c) A food systems transition requires rethinking how agriculture is financed:
 - (i) Different and more diverse ways of remunerating farmers are needed. Farming is about producing food, but farmers are also stewards of biodiversity. Therefore, remunerating their stewardship can encourage uptake of sustainable farming techniques. Incentives, payments for ecosystem services and blended finance for farmers organizations to promote agroecological practices are useful tools in this regard;
 - (ii) Food systems can be recalibrated by looking at how subsidies are delivered. The \$1 trillion in annual agricultural subsidies that have a negative effect on biodiversity or that promote

unsustainable agricultural practices could be redirected or repurposed to support and incentivize sustainable agricultural practices with the potential to support the transformation of food systems.

(d) There is a need for interministerial coordination to ensure coherence and complementarity in food systems policymaking and implementation. Ministers of environment, agriculture, health and finance should not have contradictory policies. The current system, which promotes working in silos, impedes the whole-of-government collaboration required;

(e) National guidelines, such as food-based dietary guidelines or the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, are an important entry point to promote and integrate biodiversity into local diets.

III. SUMMARY

5. After welcome remarks by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Co-Chair Basile van Havre opened the proceedings. He expressed apologies from his fellow Co-Chair, Francis Ogwal, who had been unable to attend the webinar due to a family emergency. Mr. van Havre then presented the theme of the webinar and reminded participants that the webinar was not intended as a negotiation session but as an open space for discussion to allow all participants to share their views and hear different perspectives, and to improve their understanding of the many complex issues related to the preparations for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

6. The Co-Chair then invited Ms. Alison Blay-Palmer, UNESCO Chair on Food, Biodiversity, and Sustainability Studies, and Ms. Maryam Rahmanian, Co-chair of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food), to jointly deliver a context-setting presentation on “the nexus of sustainable agriculture, food systems transition and nature”. Ms. Blay-Palmer highlighted the complexity of food systems and the adverse impacts of traditional agricultural intensification driving biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and landscape simplification, but also loss of crop biodiversity, causing food waste and resulting in food insecurity and malnutrition. She highlighted that reducing dependence on intensive, industrial farming and instead investing in agroecology and related approaches could help towards a more resilient future. In order to achieve that, she stressed the need to support the 500 million small-scale farmers, women and indigenous peoples and local communities, who are guardians of global biodiversity. The targets, goals and indicators of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework play an important role in bringing about the transformative changes required.

7. Ms. Rahmanian highlighted the role of biodiversity and ecosystem services as a key component in food systems transformation, as they are central to reducing external negative inputs, increasing resilience, providing buffers against environmental and economic risks, and enabling climate adaptation. She cautioned that the experience with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets was not sufficient to engender far-reaching transformation, citing a recent IPES-Food report identifying several lock-ins that undermined a successful food system transformation.¹ One of the lock-ins identified was the excessive focus on productivity as a sole measure of success, as currently enshrined in Target 9 of the zero draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.² Such unidimensional measures were not appropriate for small, diverse farming systems and polycultures. Even when output-based measures were applied, diversified food systems actually outperform conventional systems in developing countries by as much as 80 per cent when all crops were taken into account. Greater crop diversity put a lower strain on soils and provided benefits such as increased resilience to crop diseases. Ms. Rahmanian further emphasized the need for holistic metrics and

¹ The report and further relevant literature that was shared in advance of the webinar can be accessed here: <https://www.cbd.int/article/stakeholder-open-webinar-agrifood-2021>

² [CBD/POST2020/PREP/2/1](https://www.cbd.int/post2020/prep/2/1).

indicators that allowed realistic measures of the value of diversified food systems and account for trade-offs. Moreover, she called for greater public investment and policies to promote diversified agroecology.

8. Following the context-setting presentation, Mr. van Havre invited three selected discussants, representing different stakeholders, to share their perspectives on the vital importance of biodiversity in the agriculture and food systems transition.

9. Ms. Tammi Jonas, President of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance and Representative of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), pointed out that the Convention on Biological Diversity was primarily constituted by the environmental community and that smallholder farmers and peasants were also important constituencies, since they were also rights-holders under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.³ As a result, the role of smallholders and peasants in maintaining biodiversity had been overlooked. Ms. Jonas further called for a shift in focus for Target 9 of the zero draft from productivity to agroecology and for Target 10 to aim at an increase by 2030 by at least 70 per cent the area of ecosystems and areas managed under ecosystem-based approaches, relevant to the restoration and protection of ecosystem functions, and omit references to nature-based solutions.

10. Mr. Eric Soubeiran, Vice-President for Nature and Water Cycles and Chief Sustainability Officer at Danone and Chief Executive of the Danone Ecosystem Fund, identified several key problems in food systems that harmed biodiversity, including food waste (30 per cent of global food production) and an increasing disconnect from consumers, who often did not know where their food came from. He shared the experience of Danone's commitment to transition to regenerative agriculture by 2025 by protecting soils (e.g. crop rotation and reduced tillage), ensuring animal welfare (e.g. sustainable grazing) and supporting generations of farmers (e.g. direct sourcing). Mr. Soubeiran further called for the rethinking of financing for agriculture beyond productivity and instead empowering farmers as stewards of biodiversity. That, he suggested, could be achieved in part by including payments for ecosystem services in pricing models and redirecting the \$1 trillion spent on agricultural subsidies to sustainable alternatives.

11. Ms. Estrella Penunia, Secretary-General of the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), highlighted the vital role of biodiversity in increasing the resilience to pests, diseases, price fluctuations and climate change, provide health, beauty and nutrition. She further identified three enablers to scale up and scale out agroecological practices and agrobiodiversity. Firstly, empowering the agency of small-scale family farmers, fishers, livestock breeders, forest-based producers and pastoralists to consolidate their voice and strengthen their capacity. The direct financing of producer organizations with affirmative actions for women could strengthen their agency. Secondly, providing a set of aligned and coherent policies and programmes to direct funding, investment and research to incentivize agroecology and integrated, diversified farming systems. Thirdly, building multi-stakeholder partnerships and promoting inclusive governance to ensure all actors were treated as equals and to increase ownership of smallholders over how solutions or policies were developed. That could be supported by guidelines from development partners and donor agencies.

12. After the interventions by the discussants, Mr. van Havre invited participants to consider the following focus questions that were displayed on-screen to guide the open discussion among Parties and stakeholders:

(a) How do we ensure that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework speaks to agriculture sectors, from small to industrial farmers, fisherfolk, livestock keepers, etc., rather than to the environmental community alone?

(b) How can the private sector shift away from a mindset that protecting biodiversity is merely a "nice-to-have"?

³ General Assembly resolution [73/165](#), annex.

(c) How can we strengthen the interdependencies of food production and consumption patterns in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

(d) How can the post-2020 global biodiversity framework influence policy areas that boost responsible investments and redirect harmful subsidies in support of nature-based solutions?

(e) What enablers are needed to reap the co-benefits of food systems transitions that not only support biodiversity but use it also as a solution?

13. Subsequently, Mr. van Havre invited all participants into an open exchange of views and questions guided by the focus questions outlined above. The session was moderated by the Secretariat, which, at the outset, outlined modalities for making interventions, ensuring that Parties and non-Party stakeholders were accorded equal opportunities to speak.

14. During the open discussion, the participants and panelists exchanged views on many important aspects of the sustainable agriculture and food systems transition and the role of biodiversity. The following summary is not intended as a detailed reproduction of the discussion but, rather, is aimed at imparting an idea of the breadth of interventions made during the session and to capture the essence of what was discussed.

15. A key theme of the open discussion concerned the question regarding how the post-2020 global biodiversity framework can speak to the agriculture sector and not only to the environmental conservation community (focus question a). In particular, participants inquired how cross-sectoral collaboration between respective ministries could be encouraged and how the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is traditionally constituted by the conservation community, could bring in smallholder farmers, peasants, fisherfolk, livestock keepers and others with expertise on productive systems. Mainstreaming was identified as a key strategy to encourage such collaboration, with specific examples given of efforts being made at the international level (e.g. by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)). Institutionally, that collaboration could be further strengthened through participative inter-ministerial decision-making and communication and by leveraging multi-stakeholder engagement platforms. One way to reflect mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework would be to increase land cover of agroecological landscapes worked by smallholders and ensuring participative governance for indigenous peoples and local communities.

16. Many participants raised the question of what governments could and should do to support the sustainable agriculture and food systems transition. To promote agroecology, in particular, policies to secure rights to land, water and seeds for family farmers are necessary. Further, governments could strengthen their policies by providing incentives, payments for ecosystem services and blended finance for farmers' organizations. In order to implement such policies and incentives, a multi-stakeholder approach and an ecosystems approach would be critical to avoid contradiction and duplication and to ensure the relevance of those policies. With regard to protecting soil biodiversity, voluntary guidelines on the sustainable use of soil were deemed useful and effective.

17. A shift from intensive traditional agriculture to agroecology was highlighted both by the panellists and participants as a central pillar of the transition. One participant remarked that agroecology was often presented as an either-or solution, but it should rather be promoted to co-exist with appropriate innovative, conventional systems. With regard to the banning of hazardous pesticides, it was suggested that farmers planning to shift to organic production would have to do so gradually and should ideally be incentivized since they were likely to incur financial losses in the early years. On a larger scale, the transition was also about narratives. As such, it was also deemed important to tell the story of the detrimental impacts of intensive agricultural systems and how farmers were losing the capacity to protect themselves.

18. Participants and panellists also addressed the issue of food production and consumption patterns (focus question c). It was suggested that while consumers played an important role, it was policymakers who shaped consumption, and thus their power in shaping consumer choices should not be overlooked.

Meat and dairy consumption was discussed as an example where countries had developed specific national food-based dietary guidelines to integrate biodiversity concerns into local dietary advice. Some countries had adopted food labels and were developing public procurement mechanisms or had explored the possibility of adopting guidelines or regulations on marketing certain foods for children. It was also highlighted that animal protein consumption had a place in food systems and could remain within planetary boundaries if, for example, grazing was managed sustainably.

19. Another critical issue discussed concerned how the post-2020 global biodiversity framework could help promote responsible investments and redirect harmful subsidies (focus question d). It was suggested that biodiversity should be valued as a natural asset, in particular its regenerative capacity. By protecting biodiversity, a positive feedback loop was initiated that created more value over time. Another view was that valuing water as a natural asset, and thus as a tradeable commodity, could cause problems since access was removed for those who need it most, and smallholders may be disempowered. A possible solution discussed was charging for the cost of using natural resources and using the proceeds to compensate those who were stewards of the land. Ecosystem services could thus be priced using a cost-based approach, rather than a global pricing system, in order to identify the true cost of production and negotiate a safety net for farmers as they transition to more sustainable methods. Relatedly, eliminating harmful, unsustainable subsidies would require a power shift, for example, by empowering agroecological farmers to qualify for insurance without having to rely on synthetic products. One participant reminded everyone that diversity could create value, growth and innovation and thus offers an untapped synergistic opportunity.

20. A question was also raised regarding the definition of family farmers, as they made up 90 per cent of all farms worldwide. According to FAO, family farming is done by a family as opposed to a corporation, and labor is free. One of the speakers indicated that size was not a criterion; rather, the relevant question was whether such farmers engaged in agroecological practices.

21. Throughout the open discussion, many participants shared their views on what the post-2020 global biodiversity framework should deliver, including views on specific targets. It was suggested that the framework needed to value heterogeneity in agricultural systems as these were biodiverse, and the targets should therefore include penalties for homogeneity. One participant remarked that agriculture was currently dealt with under Target 9, linked to biodiversity for food production, but agroecosystems were not reflected as part of the conservation of wild species and habitat connectivity. To incorporate sustainable use, key changes to Targets 9 and 10 would be required as proposed by one of the panellists. Similarly, one participant proposed that Target 9 should call for an increase in land area under established agroecological production and to ensure the participation of smallholders and stewards of the land in decision-making and protect their rights and resources under Target 20. Moreover, it was suggested that the Convention on Biological Diversity could employ its programme of work on agricultural diversity, for example, by building on its past work on ecosystem approaches with FAO. Another participant stressed that Target 1 should address managed working landscapes, which harboured more biodiversity than protected areas, thus providing more visibility to conserving biodiversity in agricultural landscapes. The importance of ensuring that resources were mobilized, and smallholders and women were empowered was also raised.

22. Finally, the panellists were given an opportunity to provide closing messages. Ms. Blay-Palmer re-emphasized the need to integrate agroecology into the many dimensions of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework as a step in the right direction for creating multi-stakeholder conversations. Mr. Soubeiran reminded participants that we should not forget that there was already a nascent movement supporting the sustainable agriculture and food systems transition and that incentive mechanisms can be created to further support and strengthen it. An acceleration was needed to enable the necessary transformative changes in the next nine years. Ms. Jonas pinpointed that the necessary changes lie with more localized and democratized decision-making. Closing the final round, Ms. Penunia indicated that, given the right support and incentives, farmers aware of the benefits of diversified practices would quickly adopt them. The empowerment of small-scale family farmers could be one of the solutions for a massive scaling up of biodiverse agroecological systems in farms, fisheries and forests.

23. Reflecting on what had been an open and fruitful discussion, Mr. van Havre delivered the closing remarks on behalf of Mr. Francis Ogwal and on his own behalf. He identified five personal highlights and messages: (a) defining the future we want; (b) how we manage the change; (c) the role of farmers as stewards of the land; (d) enabling public finance as well as private investments; (e) integrating agriculture and environment through dietary guidelines.

24. Mr. van Havre thanked the panellists and participants for their active and stimulating discussion, and said that he was looking forward to their participation in future webinars in the series.

IV. RECORDING OF THE WEBINAR

25. For those interested, a recording of the Stakeholder Open Webinar held on 23 March 2021 can be accessed at: <https://youtu.be/itrHztqj01g>.
