

Some comments SBSTTA and SBI on the theme of “Biodiversity, One Health and the response to COVID-19”, *Philip Dobie and Anja Gassner, World Agroforestry (ICRAF)*
<https://www.worldagroforestry.org>

Background

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have raised even more questions about the viability of modern agriculture. Many people have lost their jobs and millions of poor people have been driven further into poverty, not even able to buy food due to the loss of income as well as increased prices and limited availability of daily goods. Crop exports, especially high-value exports that depend on air freight, have been badly affected as air borders closed and stranded exports were dumped. Demand for commodities in developed countries has slumped because people have reduced consumption during lock-downs, leading to surpluses in exporting countries.

There is a growing consensus that COVID-19 has revealed the vulnerability of our world's economies and that a “green recovery”, based on principles of sustainability, must be pursued. **This can only be achieved by moving away from geographic specialization and simplified agricultural landscapes, shortening value chains and stimulating local and national food businesses that deliver to the dietary needs of growing urban populations.** Global food trading will continue to be important, including the export of agricultural commodities from developing countries, but there needs to be a shift in balance to growing domestic markets and greatly increasing added value along national value chains. Diverse agricultural landscapes that combine modern farming technologies with practices that are based on agroecological principles will be the key to deliver the transformational change that is needed to build biodiverse, inclusive, resilient and safe food systems for all.

We would like to propose the following amendments to the current draft

1. Adding semi -natural ecosystems to Target 1

We strongly feel that given the importance of agriculture land both for the “meeting peoples need dimension”, in terms of food production and for the “reducing threat dimension” in terms of semi-natural ecosystem, the current Target 9 is not sufficient.

We do however have some reservations that simply rewording Target 9 will not achieve much unless Target 1 is dealt with. Leaving agricultural landscapes in the “meeting people’s needs” section and not dealing with them under “reducing threats to biodiversity” misses the importance to agriculture as a threat and takes up to 40% of the world’s terrestrial surface out of any discussion of biodiversity conservation. A serious practical outcome will be the continuation of the current situation in tropical countries where biodiversity conservation is managed by ministries of environment (who have least influence over land use) and the huge issue of biodiversity conservation in agricultural landscapes will be marginalized under ministries of agriculture as their mandate is food security. Experience to date suggests that conservation of biodiversity is not a priority for agricultural ministries.

We therefore suggest to change Target 1 from

By 2030, [50%] of land and sea areas globally are under spatial planning addressing land/sea use change, retaining most of the existing intact and wilderness areas, and allow to restore [X%] of degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial natural ecosystems and connectivity among them.

to

By 2030, [50%] of land and sea areas globally are under spatial planning addressing land/sea use change, retaining most of the existing intact and wilderness areas, and allow to restore [X%] of degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial natural **and semi -natural** ecosystems and connectivity among them.

We are referring to both the IPBES and WCMC used definitions:

WCMC¹ (quoting the European investment bank):

“Semi-natural habitats have ecological assemblages that have been substantially modified in their composition, balance or function by human activities. They may have evolved through traditional agricultural, pastoral or other human activities and depend on their continuation to retain their characteristic composition, structure and function. Despite not being natural, these habitats and ecosystems often have high value in terms of biodiversity and the services they provide”

IPBES²:

“An ecosystem with most of its processes and biodiversity intact, though altered by human activity in strength or abundance relative to the natural state”

2. Highlighting the landscape approach as a means of achieving cross sectorial collaboration

We would like to point to the difference between spatial planning and landscape approach. Regional/spatial planning gives geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of a society. Spatial planning is used by governments to manage the development of land within their jurisdictions.

The Landscape approach is addressing intersectoral collaboration above and beyond ministries mandates and jurisdictions. It is a tool to overcome silos.

There has been some reservations during the virtual consultation on sustainable use that “landscape approach” is referring exclusively to terrestrial landscapes and not seascapes. We do not agree with that reservation and would suggest that the way forward would be for the CBD to define the landscape approach, so it is inclusive of all ecosystems.

Landscape approaches usually are achieved through multi-stakeholder engagement and multi-sectoral platforms.

¹ <https://www.biodiversitya-z.org/content/semi-natural-habitats>

² <https://ipbes.net/glossary/semi-natural-habitats>

We therefore suggest to exchange the term “spatial planning” in Target 1 with the term “landscape and seascape approaches”

Target 1. By 2030, [50%] of land and sea areas globally are under “landscape and seascape approaches” addressing land/sea use change, retaining most of the existing intact and wilderness areas, and allow to restore [X%] of degraded freshwater, marine and terrestrial natural ecosystems and connectivity among them.

Rewording of Target 9

As currently drafted Target 9 is very problematic (“*support the productivity of biodiversity*”) and unachievable (“*reducing productivity gaps by at least [50%] through conservation and sustainable use of ... ecosystems*”). Productivity gaps is very specific to agricultural landscapes.

We would strongly suggest to focus the target on “agri-food systems. In addition we would suggest overcome the current false dichotomy between agroecological approaches and modern technologies.

So it should read

By 2030, transform agri- food systems to ensure they contribute to biodiversity, human and planetary health and livelihoods, and provide enough nutritious and culturally appropriate food for all people today and in the future, and, in particular:

- a. *Ensure agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture production are fully sustainable, resilient and contribute to biodiversity by integrating ecological approaches and modern technologies*
- b. *Protect and support the recovery of agrobiodiversity, pollinators and organisms critical for soil fertility and soil health, and invest in large scale soil restoration and rehabilitation*