

Bioversity International: Biodiversity Champions Update for CBD COP 12 September 2014

Bioversity International's Bridging Agriculture and Conservation Initiative (BACI) builds on the growing consensus that conservation and agriculture must work together. The synergies that result by bridging conservation and agriculture will accelerate the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and contribute to food security for a growing population facing environmental change.

BACI works on two main levels. First, it leverages the ecological and biodiversity science that underpins both the sustainable production of food and ecosystem services as well as the conservation of the biodiversity essential for the function and resilience of the world's ecosystems. Second, BACI helps to develop and implement policy and management options that bridge agricultural and production landscapes with the environment and conservation sector. Several projects bridging agriculture and conservation are contributing solutions to help achieve multiple Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Bioversity International collaborates with various partners in Nepal to develop community-based Biodiversity Management (CBD) systems in 15 districts to enhance the biodiversity based livelihood security of local communities. This participatory action research project is building capacity and empowering farmer institutions, documenting the status and traditional knowledge of local varieties and developing appropriate conservation and promotional plans. Success in restoring degraded areas, increasing incomes, and bringing back agricultural biodiversity that was threatened by disuse and neglect has helped to raise awareness that biodiversity can play an important role in developing local economies and food security in areas with unique and diverse ecosystems.

In Cuba, the Institute of Tropical Agriculture (INIFAT) and the National Center for Protected areas (CNAP) are working together with Bioversity International on a project 'Agrobiodiversity Conservation and Man & the Biosphere Reserves in Cuba: Bridging Managed and Natural Landscapes', to study the relationship between farming systems and biodiversity in two UNESCO Man & the Biosphere Reserves. The family farmers within the MaB Reserves have proven to be sources of expertise on agro-ecological practices and sources of crop and tree diversity thus supporting national policies to achieve food sovereignty and better diets through family farming. At the same time, farmers in and around the protected areas have become important allies and monitors to conserve the ecosystem functions and services of the 19% of the territory that is now under environmental protection.

Similarly, in Sri Lanka, we are currently launching a project called, 'Mainstreaming Agro-biodiversity conservation and use in Agro-ecosystems for Livelihoods and adaptation to climate change'. The project brings together the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Resources and the Department of Agriculture to address the impacts of climate change on the conservation of biodiversity and on rural livelihoods and food security. The project will also be implemented by farmers in villages, who maintain a historic and unique system of agricultural biodiversity, known as the Kandyan Home Garden System. This system in the central highlands of the country evolved over centuries through incorporating high biodiversity and providing a diverse and stable supply of socio-economic products and service benefits to rural households. These villages are surrounded by the protected natural forest, containing many plant and animal species, covering an estimated area of 900 km² and 126 of households. The synergies and services that flow between agricultural landscapes and protected areas are now recognized and supported.

A toolkit of indicators for resilience in socio-ecological production landscapes (SEPLs) will be published by Bioversity International in collaboration with the Satoyama Initiative, United Nations University - Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) and UNDP's Community Development and Knowledge Management (COMDEKS)). The indicators are to be used by communities in agricultural and forest landscapes, pastoral areas, and coastal seascapes that exemplify the goals of biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming biodiversity into production landscapes. Mongolia, Fiji, Kenya, Bolivia, Cuba, Nepal are among the countries testing these community-based social and ecological resilience indicators to identify landscapes that contribute to biodiversity conservation while providing both ecosystem services and secure livelihoods.

At a global policy level, Bioversity International is leading a Science for People and Nature project called 'Making Ecosystems Count in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'. This project will support the development of indicators around natural resources in the SDGs that are linked to the Aichi biodiversity targets and Biodiversity Indicators Project recommendations. It proposes to develop natural resource and ecosystem service-based indicators and test them against two existing investment decisions in East and West Africa. The aim is to develop indicators that measure across goals including agriculture, conservation, energy, poverty, and health. As the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals are developed, Bioversity International, as member of the working group on Forest, Ocean, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, works to ensure that the indicators and monitoring of targets are aligned and support of the Aichi targets. We have also recently coordinated two high-level sessions: Climate-Change Resilient Agro-ecosystems and Sustainable and Healthy Food Systems during climate change discussion in New York City.

Bioversity International is honoured and grateful to serve as a Biodiversity Champion and works to accelerate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and achieving the Aichi Targets by (i) including and strengthening the contribution that agricultural biodiversity can make, and (ii) providing the evidence for strong social and political framework to bridge biodiversity and ecosystem functions in agriculture and conservation programmes.