



PRESS RELEASE

Integrating agricultural issues in national biodiversity strategies

FAO paves the way towards mainstreaming ecosystems services and biodiversity into agriculture

Montreal/Nairobi, 3 June 2016 – Biodiversity and ecosystem services are at the heart of many solutions to sustainable increase in agricultural productivity. They not only deliver better outcomes for food and nutrition security but also reduce negative environmental externalities of production.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the Nature Conservancy (TNC) organized a regional policy dialogue on the role of ecosystem services and biodiversity in agricultural production. This came close to the heels of this year's International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May) and within the context of the United Nation's Environment Assembly in Nairobi (23-27 May) whose overarching theme was *Delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The event – organized under the EU-funded project “Capacity Building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Countries Phase 2 (ACP/MEAs 2)” and the FAO Programme on “Incentives for Ecosystem Services in agriculture (IES)” - brought together some sixty key national and regional stakeholders, including representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, the Pest Control Products Board, Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organization, non-governmental organizations and research institutions.

The meeting was officially opened by Robert Allport, FAO Kenya's Acting Representative. He emphasized the relevance of the meeting towards achieving a sustainable approach to agriculture, “that recognizes and rewards the vital role that other elements of the ecosystem – from broad water catchments to pollinators and earth worms – provide to both local agricultural systems and to other sectors of society, through reduced soil erosion, clean water, biodiversity protection and carbon sequestration.”

Ecosystem based solutions that benefit production and beyond

Approaches that can address both the negative externalities of conventional production systems and assist resource-poor farmers in overcoming sustainability challenges have a central common thread: they recognize that agriculture and food systems are biological and social systems. They can be designed to build upon and harness the forces of biodiversity and ecosystem services to underpin sustainable agricultural production - soil fertility, natural pest and weed control, pollination, water retention – so that these are optimized and encouraged.



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The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, pointed out the need to build agricultural landscapes and food systems able to face, and to be more resilient to increasingly frequent extreme weather events. He highlighted that a key strategy that should be promoted to achieve this goal is *sustainable ecological intensification* of agriculture, which includes reduced reliance on agrochemicals for increasing and improving yields, and instead, reliance on ecosystem services and biodiversity.

Supporting the integration of agricultural issues in the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans

The two-day workshop revolved around a newly released technical guidance document by FAO and the CBD which aims to mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services into country National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The document has been prepared as part of FAO's Major Area of Work on Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity (MAW-ESB), whose goal is to demonstrate the importance of Integrated Landscape Management in the protection and enhancement of ecosystem and biodiversity for Sustainable Food and Agriculture.

The guidance document provides insights on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and their relevance to agriculture. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets are form the core of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 as an overarching framework on biodiversity for the entire United Nations system and all other partners engaged in biodiversity management and policy development. The guidance document comprises seven technical papers from leading experts on managing ecosystem services and biodiversity to reduce the use of agrochemicals, focusing on natural pest control; water; soil; pollination; indigenous knowledge; crop-livestock integration and weed management. The document also includes a section on policy measures, from Kenya and other regions of the world, that offer examples of entry points for harnessing synergies between sound chemical management and biodiversity conservation.

The identification of key contributions of ecosystem services and biodiversity to Kenya's agricultural sector was instrumental in the deliberations held. Kenya's NBSAP revision is scheduled to start later in 2016. Recommendations towards mainstreaming an ecosystem-based approach to the country's agriculture were gathered during the meeting. Other examples of initiatives that assist farmers in overcoming adoption barriers to best practices, by linking them with public and private initiatives were also shared. Case studies from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda showed examples of collaboration between research, environment, agriculture development and private sector companies. These examples of Incentives for Ecosystem Services (IES) from agriculture reveal that there are abundant resources available to offer farmers an integrated support package, capable of supporting a lasting transition to sustainable agriculture.

In a bid to improve coherence in these investments, an ecosystem services and biodiversity mainstreaming task-force was assembled from the Kenyan participating institutions. FAO Kenya will reconvene the task-force in the coming weeks to further define the work plan and joint fund-raising priorities that will enable them to better bridge the gaps between environment, food security and better rural livelihoods.

Notes to editors

FAO Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity portal: www.fao.org/ecosystem-services-biodiversity

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The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties up to now, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 170 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 76 Parties. For more information visit: www.cbd.int. For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 287 7025 or at david.ainsworth@cbd.int; or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at johan.hedlund@cbd.int.
