



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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High Level Political Forum 2022 5-7 and 11-15 July 2022

“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

ANNEX 5

Inputs by the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA)

The FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) is the only permanent intergovernmental body that specifically addresses biological diversity for food and agriculture. It aims to reach international consensus on policies for the sustainable use and conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from their use.

The Commission initiates, oversees and guides the preparation of global sectoral and cross-sectoral assessments. These assessments address the state of biodiversity and genetic resources in the respective sectors, along with their uses, drivers that contribute to their erosion, and the challenges and opportunities involved in conserving and using them in a sustainable manner to contribute to food security and nutrition. The global assessments are prepared through participatory, country-driven processes.

In response to the main gaps and challenges identified in the global assessments, the Commission may decide to agree on policy responses, such as voluntary Global Plans of Action through which governments commit to take action to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and genetic resources in their respective sector. Implementation of these policy instruments is monitored by countries through the Commission which, on the basis of the implementation results produces new global assessments of the sectors at about every ten years.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission were postponed and held virtually, as agreed by the Commission’s Bureau. The Commission convened nine virtual intersessional meetings including meetings of its four intergovernmental technical working groups on [forest](#) (April 2021), [animal](#) (May 2021), [aquatic](#) (June 2021) and [plant](#) (June 2021) genetic resources for food and agriculture, and the Commission’s [18th Regular Session](#). These sessions allowed for wider participation than comparable past physical sessions, and reduced the costs and CO₂ footprint of meetings. In addition, the Commission Secretariat held several non-intergovernmental international conferences and regional capacity building workshops virtually. The virtual mode of organizing conferences during the Covid-19 pandemic also allowed the Secretariat to make presentations at wide range of intergovernmental, scientific and other conferences, thereby increasing the Commission’s outreach and raising international awareness about the importance of biodiversity for food and agriculture for the achievements of the SDGs.

Actions and policy recommendations in areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the implementation of the SDGs under review

Biodiversity for food and agriculture

The decline in biodiversity for food and agriculture, including the loss of both domesticated and wild biodiversity, at genetic, species and ecosystem level, poses a severe threat to the productivity and resilience of food and agricultural systems, livelihoods and food security, particularly in the context of climate change. *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture* (SoW-BFA)¹, developed under the aegis of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Commission), revealed alarming trends which demand an urgent international policy response. As a follow-up to the SoW-BFA, after extensive consultations, a **Framework for Action on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture** was endorsed by the 18th Regular Session of the Commission in October 2021² and consequently adopted by the FAO Council in December 2021. The Framework represents an important commitment from the agriculture sectors to strengthen efforts on biodiversity and sustainable agriculture.

The Framework, which addresses biodiversity for food and agriculture as a whole and is voluntary in nature, aims to improve the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity for food and agriculture at genetic, species and ecosystem levels and serves as an important contributor towards achieving SDGs 2, 14 and 15. It contains three strategic priority areas: (1) characterization, assessment and monitoring of biodiversity for food and agriculture, (2) management of biodiversity for food and agriculture and (3) institutional frameworks for biodiversity for food and agriculture.

Aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture

Since 2007, the Commission has recognized the importance and vulnerability of aquatic genetic resources (AqGR). Following the publication of *The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*³ (SoW-AqGR), which *inter alia* highlighted the need to focus on responsible and sustainable aquaculture in order to meet the increasing global demand for aquatic products, a **Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture** (GPA-AqGR) was endorsed by the 18th Regular Session of the Commission⁴ and adopted by the FAO Council in December 2021. The GPA-AqGR serves as an important policy tool for the promotion of enhanced and effective conservation, sustainable use and development of aquatic genetic resources. The implementation of the GPA-AqGR, which is voluntary, will make an important contribution to various SDGs, including SDG 14 and international efforts to promote food security and to alleviate poverty.

Key messages to consider including in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2022 HLPF

The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture, within production systems and other relevant terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, is essential for tackling the challenges ahead, for transitioning to sustainable and resilient agri-food systems, reducing poverty, ensuring food security and healthy nutrition, halting biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, and for adapting to and mitigating climate change. The global response to the loss of biodiversity for food and agriculture needs to be strengthened. Ambitious and adequate actions have to be implemented, supporting the transition to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems that promote the sustainable use, conservation and restoration of biodiversity for food and agriculture, leaving no farmer, livestock keeper and pastoralist, forest-based producer, fisher and aquaculturalist behind; and taking into account the

¹ [FAO. 2019. The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture. J. Bélanger & D. Pilling \(eds.\). FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture Assessments. Rome. 572 pp.](#)

² [CGRFA-18/21/Report, Appendix C](#)

³ [FAO. 2019. The State of the World's Aquatic Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture assessments. Rome.](#)

⁴ [CGRFA-18/21/Report, Appendix D](#)

contributions and needs of women, indigenous peoples and local communities. The Commission's global plans of action on plant, animal, forest and aquatic genetic resources and the cross-sectoral Framework for Action on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture constitute important policy instruments relevant to the achievement of various SDGs being discussed at the HPLF (e.g., SDGs 14 & 15). They contribute to the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources and the conservation of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, fostering the implementation the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, currently being developed under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The international community and governments should give a high priority to increasing the awareness of the value of biodiversity for food and agriculture, strengthening enabling frameworks for its sustainable use and conservation and improving cross-sectoral collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement. Incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are to be repurposed.