



SBSTTA 24 online session - Feb, 2021
Agenda Item 7 - Biodiversity and agriculture

Madam / Mister Chair

This intervention is delivered on behalf of the CBD Alliance and gathers a diverse range of views and proposals from civil society.

Soil Biodiversity

The plan of action for soil biodiversity should put emphasis on the elimination of perverse incentives when addressing the need to remove drivers of biodiversity loss. It should also contain explicit references to agro-ecological and agroforestry practices; promote spatial planning as a tool to conserve soil biodiversity and minimize or eliminate the use of all pesticide and artificial fertilizers.

Forest ecosystems, agroforestry and agroecology contribute to healthy soil biodiversity which is reflected in the production of healthy and nutritious food. Indigenous peoples and local communities, and small-scale farmers, especially women, are aware of the living nature of soil, therefore it is key to include their knowledge and wisdom in soil management and governance within the framework of food sovereignty by recognizing, supporting and securing their traditional agroecosystems and agricultural practices and their rights (eg: UNDRIP, UNDROP, Farmers rights).

Knowledge and Technology

It is not a matter of transferring knowledge to farmers or IPLCs, but, more so, of learning from their long-standing knowledge, innovations and practices and co-creating solutions with them, rather than imposing these upon them. We should particularly foster the traditional knowledge of women in this respect.

We need to ensure that the use of new technologies such as; molecular sequencing techniques and “big data”, artificial intelligence and novel metagenomics do not adversely affect human knowledge and relationships with the soil biodiversity of a particular territory.

Industrial agriculture

Industrial agriculture, especially monocultures for livestock feed and deforestation for livestock grazing, have severe consequences for soil fertility and biodiversity. Subsidies and investments must be redirected towards agroecological solutions and regenerative agriculture which supports biodiversity, including agricultural biodiversity, in all its forms and at all levels (genetic, species and agroecosystem) . This must be addressed in the currently proposed targets 1, 6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 in the GBF.

We question the framing of targets 8 and 9 and the suggested indicators, which could exacerbate current trends by encouraging intensive farming practices which may reduce productivity gaps, but harm biodiversity. Further, indicator 9.0.1 is limited. Clarification is needed to define what is meant by "sustainable agriculture" and that this is agriculture which contributes to biodiversity.

It is also important to promote practices such as crop diversification, no-till farming without herbicides, integrated fertilizer and pest management, erosion-minimizing irrigation technologies, crop rotations, permaculture and agroforestry, all of which have been practiced in indigenous farming systems and by small-scale food producers.

Unsustainable livestock production

A recent report by UNEP and others make it clear that feeding the world's population without destroying biodiversity is not possible without a significant reduction in the consumption of meat and dairy from intensive livestock production systems, because animal farming occupies 78% of agricultural land while providing only 18% of global calorie supply and 37% of global protein supply. An immediate phase out of all perverse incentives and investments that promote unsustainable livestock production and monocultures for producing their feed is indispensable. The report also highlights that more balanced diets, biodiversity conservation and supporting agroecology are mutually reinforcing strategies that cannot be implemented in isolation from each other.

Finally, we warn against the inclusion of language not yet defined under the CBD, such as ‘nature-based solutions’ that can potentially open doors for ‘mitigation pathways’ such as large-scale afforestation that are neither ‘natural’, nor ‘solutions’ and distract from true transformative actions. The CBD has its own well-defined terminology, ecosystem approach and ecosystem-based approaches (decision V/6) and should continue to use these rather than adopting new, sweeping, hard to define terminology.

Thank you,