



COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY

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Report on forestry relevant deliberations at the UN Food Systems Summit 2021

Executive Summary

The 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO25) requested FAO to report on the relevant deliberations of the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 during the 26th Session of the Committee.

The UN Food Systems Summit was convened on 23 September 2021 as a virtual event during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), culminating an eighteen-month consulting process involving thousands of stakeholders.

The Summit was a historic opportunity to empower all people to leverage agrifood systems transformation, to underpin robust and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to accelerate action towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The main outcomes of the Summit, built on numerous inputs received from participants, included the voluntary submission by 116 countries of “national pathways” to transform their foods systems, the Secretary-General’s Chair Summary and Statement of Action highlighting five action areas, and proposals to constitute “coalitions of action” to act on specific topics.

Among the five action areas identified by the Secretary General’s Chair Statement of Action, the action area “Boost nature-based solutions” is the most relevant to forestry. At least 27 countries included actions that are directly linked to forests in their national pathways, including enhancing forest restoration, ensuring sustainable forest management, and halting deforestation or reducing forest degradation.

Many of the 30 coalitions that emerged during the Summit may generate outcomes with a forestry dimension, but seven have explicit links to the forest sector and to FAO’s actions in this sector: 1) the coalition on agroecology and regenerative agriculture; 2) the coalition on Family Farming and on strengthening actions in support of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming; 3) the coalition on Restoring grasslands, shrublands and savannahs through sustainable extensive livestock-based food systems; 4) The Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus coalition; 5) The Climate Resilient Food Systems Alliance; 6) The Coalition on Halting deforestation and conversion from agricultural commodities; and 7) The Coalition Better data better decisions for nature-positive production.

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I. The UN Food Systems Summit

1. As requested by the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO25), this information note has been prepared to report on the relevant deliberations of the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS)¹. The note describes the UNFSS outcomes relevant to forestry and outlines the possible next steps.

2. The UN Food Systems Summit (hereafter “the Summit”) was convened on 23 September 2021 as a virtual event during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Over 50 000 people across 193 countries watched the Summit and 37 000 registered delegates participated in the event.

3. The Summit was a historic opportunity to empower all people to leverage agrifood systems transformation, to underpin robust and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to accelerate action towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

4. The Summit was the result of an 18-month process convening a broad array of stakeholders, including all UN Members and constituencies around the world, thousands of youth, food producers, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, researchers, private sector, and the UN system. All were invited to identify solutions to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and thinks about food.

5. During the preparation phase, the discussions were initially organized around five “Action tracks”. The Summit opened a call for stakeholders to submit “game-changing solutions” for food systems transformation. Between December 2020 and May 2021, the leaders of the five Action Tracks organized a number of public fora, online consultations and calls for submissions, which resulted in more than 2 200 ideas and submissions.

6. Main outcomes of the Summit, built on those numerous inputs, included:

- Commitments from Members through statements and national pathways. One hundred and sixty three Members made statements at the Summit speaking to the importance of food systems in advancing the 2030 Agenda nationally and globally. One hundred and sixteen Members have so far submitted national pathways for food systems transformation that offer a basis for realizing the vision of the 2030 Agenda at country level.
- The Secretary-General’s Chair Summary and Statement of Action². This calls on the world to keep its promises for a better future through food systems that work for people, the planet and prosperity. It outlines how progress in five key action areas at national and regional levels can amount to a global shift in progress on the SDGs, securing fundamental human rights for all. It lays out expectations on the follow-up to the Summit to deliver action and results for the 2030 Agenda. These five action areas are: 1) Nourish All People; 2) Boost Nature-based Solutions; 3) Advance Equitable Livelihoods, Decent Work and Empowered Communities; 4) Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stresses; and 5) Accelerating the Means of Implementation.
- Coalitions of Action, as voluntary commitments from Members and other stakeholders align behind delivering on national and regional pathways for food systems transformation.

7. The Secretary-General has also committed the UN System to establish a UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub) to support countries on advancing their food systems transformation in support of accelerating the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The Hub has been established and is hosted in FAO on behalf of the UN System. More information on the Hub can be found in document COAG/2022/INF/11.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/3/ne205en/ne205en.pdf>

² <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/making-food-systems-work-people-planet-and-prosperity>

II. Relevant outcomes for forestry

A. Consideration of forests in national pathways

8. At the date of preparing this document, 116 countries had presented their national pathways to achieving sustainable food systems. FAO has elaborated a database³ to facilitate information-sharing of their content. It is structured around the five action areas deriving from the Summit: 1) Nourish All People; 2) Boost Nature-based Solutions; 3) Advance Equitable Livelihoods, Decent Work and Empowered Communities; 4) Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stresses; and 5) Accelerating the Means of Implementation.

9. The action area “Boost nature-based solutions” is the most relevant to forestry. At least 27 countries (ten in Africa, four in Near East and Asia, eight in Europe, four in South and Central America and the Caribbean and one in Oceania) included forest-related actions in their national pathways, including enhancing forest restoration (nine countries), ensuring sustainable forest management (six countries), halting deforestation (five countries) and reducing forest degradation (five countries). Some countries referred to their REDD+⁴ strategies and others - mainly from Europe - highlighted the objective of ensuring that global food value chains do not cause deforestation.

10. At least 18 countries proposed measures for developing agroforestry, as an action under the agroecology theme. Agroforestry is connected to all five Action Areas of the Food Systems Summit, particularly to Action Area 2 on Boosting nature-based solutions of production. Many of the “game-changing” solutions proposed for the Food Systems Summit explicitly mention agroforestry, particularly as a tool for restoring degraded lands, halting deforestation and increasing levels of biodiversity. Agroforestry was also mentioned as an important nature-positive solution for improving short and long-term outcomes for farmers, maximizing land use, and increasing ecosystem services.

11. The recently-launched USD 345 million GEF-7 Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR) Impact Program (IP)⁵, which seeks to promote sustainable integrated landscapes and efficient food value chains at scale, will contribute to achieving the national pathways. It will also contribute to the achievement of other outcomes of the Summit such as the tangible actions of the Coalitions across FOLUR participating countries⁶, expanding the evidence on how sustainable agrifood systems can reduce deforestation, tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and achieve land degradation neutrality.

B. Coalitions relevant for forestry matters

12. With the aim of turning solution pathways into actions, participants of the UN Food Systems Summit launched several “Coalitions for action”. These voluntary alliances gather governments or public entities, civil society organizations, business and farmer associations, academic institutions and international organizations. They focus on a specific aspect of transforming food systems. Some organizations or countries volunteered to lead the different coalitions and they are currently in an inception phase, in the process of defining their roadmap and identifying the means to be mobilized for the actions of each coalition.

13. Because of the important role of forests in agrifood systems transformation, among the 30 coalitions that emerged, many could have aspects involving or affecting forests and trees.

³ <https://datalab.review.fao.org/datalab/dashboard/food-systems-summit/>

⁴ REDD+ : Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries

⁵ <https://www.folur.org/>

⁶ Brazil, Burundi, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan

However, some have more direct links to forestry and to FAO's work in forestry. In particular, the following seven coalitions can be mentioned:

- 1) The coalition on agroecology and regenerative agriculture;
- 2) The coalition on Family Farming and on strengthening actions in support of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming;
- 3) The coalition on Restoring grasslands, shrublands and savannahs through sustainable extensive livestock-based food systems;
- 4) The Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus coalition;
- 5) The Climate Resilient Food Systems Alliance;
- 6) The Coalition on Halting deforestation and conversion from agricultural commodities; and
- 7) The Coalition Better data better decisions for nature-positive production.

14. *Coalition on Agroecology and regenerative agriculture*⁷

Among the numerous contributions received in the Summit consultation phase, more than 80 submissions referred to agroecology and regenerative agriculture as a promising solution, which formed the basis for this coalition, advocated for by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food), the Asian Farmer Association for Sustainable Rural Development, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), through the Transformative Partnership Platform on Agroecology⁸. At the moment, 26 countries have officially joined the Coalition (eleven from Africa, six from Europe, four from Asia, three from Latin America and the Caribbean and two from Near East) along with the African Union and 35 organizations, including FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and farmers', civil society, philanthropic, research and Indigenous Peoples' organizations.

15. *Coalition on Family Farming and on strengthening actions in support of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming*

As a follow-up to the Summit, the Coalition on Family Farming and on strengthening actions in support of the UN Decade of Family Farming (UNDF) was launched thanks to the initiative of Members.⁹ The Coalition leverages the results, networks, governance and implementation mechanisms created in the framework of the Decade, with the objective to scale up and scale out the achieved results. The work of the Forest and Farm Facility¹⁰ (FFF) linked to the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028), will also contribute to the Coalition.

16. *Coalition on Restoring grasslands, shrublands and savannahs through sustainable extensive livestock-based food systems*

Many countries are under pressure to reduce their carbon footprint and biodiversity loss including of extensive livestock-based systems. To reverse and mitigate negative trends, the coalition seeks to increase the international and national attention paid to the need of restoring and reviving grasslands, shrublands and savannahs. The Coalition, proposed by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), aims at improving data on those systems to enable better-informed decisions, notably for investments including restoration investment opportunities.

⁷ <https://www.fao.org/agroecology/database/detail/en/c/1447459/>

⁸ <https://www.fao.org/agroecology/database/detail/en/c/1376154/>

⁹ Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Spain and Switzerland. The Islamic Republic of Iran and Philippines have already expressed their interest in joining the initiative.

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/forest-farm-facility>

17. *Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus (HDPN) Coalition*

Fighting Food Crises along the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus coalition is co-led by the World Food Programme (WFP), FAO and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) to promote a comprehensive approach to food systems' resilience in fragile contexts. The coalition brings together Members, UN agencies, international organizations, research institutes and think tanks. The coalition aims at strengthening the resilience of food systems, which will in turn foster peace and stability. FAO's work on dryland ecosystems, as well as the publications launched during the Summit itself¹¹ and the related interactive map¹², contribute to FAO's efforts in this coalition.

18. *Climate Resilient Food Systems (CRFS) Alliance*

The CRFS Alliance emerged from Action area 4 on Resilience and is composed of a "core group" (including UN agencies such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), UNEP, WFP and FAO), and a "leadership group" composed of Members and private sector stakeholders. FAO has direct participation to the coalition where issues ranging from climate change adaptation, integrating resilience into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), nature-based solutions, and the water-food-energy nexus are discussed. The mission of the alliance is to join forces to accelerate action towards climate resilient, sustainable, equitable and inclusive food systems in a coherent manner, focusing on the most vulnerable countries and regions, in particular arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Land-Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

19. *Coalition on Halting deforestation and conversion from agricultural commodities*

The World Resource Institute- Food and Land Use Coalition (WRI-FOLU) and the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA) proposed the Coalition. Considering the proximity of the proposed actions to the work undertaken under REDD+ initiatives, including the UN-REDD Programme, as well as with the Good Growth Partnership, FAO and UNDP proposed their support to FOLU and TFA for structuring the coalition. This coalition aims to work with like-minded countries as well as other partners to support actions aiming at decoupling agricultural production from deforestation and forest degradation, and at developing food value chains that can demonstrate neutral or positive impacts on forests. From the start, there has been parallel engagement with the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade Dialogue (FACT) led by the governments of the United Kingdom and Indonesia in the framework of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP26) in Glasgow. TFA and FOLU were both involved in this process and the coalition will be designed to complement it.

20. *Coalition "Better Data Better Decisions for Nature-Positive Production"*

The coalition aims at enhancing the production and the accessibility of transparent, accurate, and credible data to support decision-making on the protection, sustainable management and restoration of the landscapes that support food systems. This coalition will align data, stakeholders, and evidence as a catalyst for sustainable landscapes and food systems transformation. It is led by FAO (National Forest Monitoring team) and involves strategic partners such as The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and World Agroforestry (ICRAF), World Economic Forum (WEF), World Resources Institute, Climate Focus, World Vision, Society for Ecological Restoration, IUCN and the African Union.

21. In line with this Coalition, FAO is co-leading a Forest Data Partnership with the World Resources Institute. Initiated in October 2021, this five-year partnership established with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State, brings together leading organizations, governments and private sector partners to collectively address the challenge of improving land use data. This Partnership will develop a consistent geospatial data

¹¹ Deploying a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach: Exploring, strengthening and reviving dryland ecosystems (<https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb6917en>)

¹² <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8efcbd4edc5f4922be1ab51791c54015>

system that will enable all actors - local, government, producers, traders and financiers - to access consistent, open-source and publicly available geospatial data related to forest-risk commodities.

III. Next steps

22. The Food Systems Summit has created a momentum for accelerating efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, through the transformation of agrifood systems to ensure economic, social and environmental sustainability. Enhancing the integration of forests in the national pathways could maximize the potential of forests and trees to contribute to higher resilience and sustainability of food systems, notably through the sustainable provision of multiple ecosystem services needed by agriculture. It would also be key for identifying responses to the competition for land between agriculture and forestry. A strong participation of countries in the Coalitions is encouraged.

23. FAO will continue to engage actively in the Coalitions, in particular with those relevant to forestry matters, including by acting as the coalition leader or co-leader, when relevant, and dependent on the availability of appropriate extra-budgetary resources, thus ensuring that the collaborative work undertaken in this context directly supports the efforts made at country level in transforming food systems. FAO will continue to ensure a cross-divisional approach in supporting the work of the Coordination Hub, hosted at FAO on behalf of the UN system, and in following up on the commitments undertaken during the Summit, including in the task of stocktaking progress on food systems transformation in the build-up to 2030.

24. Finally, FAO will continue to make efforts to leverage FAO's ongoing strategic partnerships and multi-country or impact programmes, such as the GEF-7 Impact Programs on Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR-IP) and the Dryland Sustainable Landscapes (DSL-IP)¹³, the UNREDD Programme, the Transformative Partnership Platform on Agroecology (TPP), the Forest Data Partnership, to enhance implementation at country level in strengthening positive linkages between forests and sustainable agrifood systems.

¹³ <https://www.fao.org/gef/dryland-sustainable-landscapes/en/#:~:text=The%20Sustainable%20Forest%20Management%20Impact,sustainable%20management%20of%20production%20landscapes>