



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

UNFF12 Panel on SDG2: Food Security

Agriculture and forest sector policies and how these can be aligned to improve food security

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10:00 – 13:00

Meeting Room

Distinguished guests,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Thank you – I am pleased to represent the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on this panel.
2. From ending poverty and hunger to responding to climate change and sustaining our natural resources, **food and agriculture lie at the very heart of the 2030 Agenda.**
3. **SDG2** - aimed at **ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture** - is at the **core of FAO's work.**
4. As such, we especially promote **the close links between the agricultural sectors** - including agriculture, forestry and fisheries – and the **objectives of SDG2.**

5. Our **keynote speaker** has brilliantly illustrated the **importance of forests for food security and nutrition**, based on the comprehensive report prepared by the CPF through its Global Forests Expert Panels initiative.
6. Yet, **deforestation continues**.
7. According to FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment, **every year, there is a global net loss of forest area of 3.3 million hectares**.
8. **An estimated 80% is due to the conversion of forests to agriculture**, both for the large-scale production of agricultural commodities and for small scale subsistence agriculture.
9. Most of the **loss of forest area** happens in **tropical and low-income countries** – seven million hectares per year - twice the global average.
10. At the same time, these countries exhibit a similar **increase in agricultural area**.
11. FAO's 2016 flagship *State of the World's Forests* addressed the **land use challenges and opportunities of forests and agriculture**.
12. It found that, **while most countries have formal policies for their agriculture and forest sectors, few have policies governing land use change**.
13. **Deforestation and expansion is encroachment**. This is recognized as an important **driving force in emerging infectious diseases** that can spill over from forests and affect humans, or with hunting, bring back animals to the village, where outbreaks like Ebola, Lassa or other diseases can occur.
14. In addition, the **legal frameworks for the conversion of forest to agricultural land are often complex**.

15. **The role of customary law**, based on traditional rights, is especially important for vulnerable groups but **has often been ignored** when land use policies were developed and implemented.
16. The majority of the forests of the world are publicly owned and **communities and vulnerable groups often do not have secure rights to them**.

Distinguished delegates,

17. **The SDGs are integrated and indivisible, reflect the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental, and are made bold by the promise to ‘leave no one behind’.**
18. The **SDGs** present **sustainable development as a universal challenge** – and a collective responsibility – for all countries, and for all actors.
19. It calls for **new approaches** to policies, programmes, and investments, and calls upon governments and their partners to undertake **new ways of working together across sectors and disciplines**.
20. This means that the agricultural sectors cannot develop their policies in isolation and must urgently adopt a **more integrated approach to policy development and implementation**.
21. Policy makers and stakeholders will need to address the interactions between sectors and SDGs in terms of both **synergies and trade-offs**.
22. **FAO** has developed a **common vision** and an **integrated approach to sustainability across agriculture, forestry and fisheries**.
23. It ensures the **effectiveness of action on the ground** and is **underpinned** by knowledge based on the **best available science**, and **adaptation at community and country levels** to ensure local relevance and applicability.

24. FAO's common vision on sustainable food and agriculture is based on the following **five principles**:

- Improving efficiency in the use of resources is crucial to sustainable agriculture
- Sustainability requires direct action to conserve, protect and enhance natural resources
- Agriculture that fails to protect and improve rural livelihoods, equity and social well-being is unsustainable
- Enhanced resilience of people, communities and ecosystems is key to sustainable agriculture
- Sustainable food and agriculture requires responsible and effective governance mechanisms

25. The principles recognize that **food and agricultural production depends on natural resources** and therefore the sustainability of production depends on the sustainability of the resources themselves.

26. Much can be done to **reduce negative impacts and enhance the status of natural resources, including forests**.

27. First and foremost, it calls for **better cross-sectoral coordination of policies on agriculture, food and forests, and environment**.

28. This starts with a **recognition** at the **highest political level** of the **importance of sustainable agriculture and forestry to achieve food security**, while maintaining and improving governance of the limited natural resources.

29. **Institutional frameworks** should **encompass all stakeholders** who should be consulted in the policy formulation processes.

30. Secondly, **policies** have to be **accompanied** by the **right policy instruments to promote sustainable agriculture, and forestry and ecosystem services**.

31. If **large-scale agricultural commodity production** is the **main driver of deforestation**, appropriate instruments may include **measures to regulate land-use change and to prevent conflict** with existing land tenure rights.
32. Where expansion of **small-scale subsistence farming** is the main driver, policy instruments could address **improving farming practices and promoting agroforestry, and natural resource stewardship**.
33. **Improving tenure rights and legal frameworks** is crucial for making progress in many countries.
34. **Laws and regulations should be clear and consistent** with cross-sectoral policy objectives.
35. The **legal framework** should **provide tenure security** and the rights to the use of land and forest resources.
36. The **Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of Food Security**, agreed by countries in 2012, provide an **excellent basis** for establishing **appropriate tenure arrangements** supporting sustainable agriculture and forestry.
37. They call on States to provide **policy, legal and institutional frameworks** that promote **responsible governance** and should be developed through **participatory processes** involving all affected parties, incorporating gender-sensitive approaches.
38. Finally, to achieve better policy coordination, **integrated land-use planning** should be considered that takes into account the need to produce sufficient food while maintaining the natural resources-base that supports sustainable agriculture.

39. Agricultural landscapes typically are a mosaic of land uses including crops, livestock, agroforestry and forests.

40. Therefore, the **land-use planning of the future will require a landscape-based approach to land use planning rather than a sectorial one.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

41. FAO's State of the World's Forests 2016 argues that **achieving food security and simultaneously maintaining or even increasing forest resources is possible.**

42. Over **20 countries have demonstrated this in the past 25 years.** Factors contributing to this success are precisely those I just mentioned.

43. And there are more good news: In **2013**, FAO organized the first international conference on **forests for food security and nutrition.**

44. Since then, the topic has been discussed by its **Committee on Forestry** which issued concrete recommendations to countries on improving relevant policies.

45. The important **links** between **forests** and **food security** are also **increasingly recognized beyond the forest sector.**

46. The **Committee on World Food Security** has commissioned a **report** by its **High Level Panel of Experts on sustainable forestry for food security and nutrition** that will be **launched in late June** and discussed at the 44th Session of the Committee.

47. The Committee is expected to make policy decisions on food security based on the recommendations of the report.

48. Further **positive signals** come from the **biodiversity community**.
49. **Food security depends on maintaining biodiversity in all its three dimensions, in agriculture, fisheries and forests.**
50. In December 2016, at the **COP13** of the Convention on Biological Diversity, countries issued the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-Being.
51. **Countries committed themselves to mainstreaming biodiversity across agriculture, forestry and fisheries.**
52. Their **commitments** include establishing effective institutional, legislative and regulatory frameworks and ensuring that sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, plans and programmes, as well as legal and administrative measures and budgets **integrate the conservation, sustainable use, management, and restoration of biological diversity and ecosystems.**
53. **FAO has offered to establish a platform to facilitate mainstreaming.**
54. This commitment is an **important step to supporting the Sustainable Development Goals** and towards safeguarding food security for future generations.
55. I would like to conclude by saying that, **while achieving both SDG 2 on zero hunger and SDG 15 on life on land is certainly a challenge, I am optimistic** that it is possible, and there are already positive signs of progress being made.

Thank you.