



# IUCN's Operational Framework on Agriculture and Land Health

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## Introduction

Agriculture is expected to cover an increasing world food demand for 8.5 billion people in 2030. The world is projected to reach peak agricultural land area within the next 20 years, yet food production will probably continue rising beyond 2050 through intensification. Agriculture is the leading driver of global land-use change (IPBES, 2019). Agricultural intensification and inputs have generated environmental hazards, including pollution, decline in pollinators populations and land degradation, threatening food production as well as other important ecosystem services like water supply and climate regulation. Land degradation affects an estimated 40% of the world's agricultural land, which jeopardises food production as well as other important ecosystem services like water supply and climate regulation.

Agriculture is a vital human activity that deeply impacts but also deeply relies on Nature. The shift to more sustainable food systems and agricultural practices is a building block to achieve more sustainable and resilient societies. IUCN's role will be to provide policy and investment solutions and consensus building for moving towards productive and sustainable food production systems that conserve and benefit from biodiversity, manage soil as a living ecosystem and contribute to land health and resilient livelihoods.

## Background / rationale

IUCN has a long history of engagement on agriculture themes, responding to 110 resolutions and 67 recommendations on agriculture and food. IUCN has mostly contributed to scientific understanding of the threats from agriculture to biodiversity and has convened dialogue between conservation and agriculture actors to seek consensus over sustainability in the agriculture sector. Many of IUCN's field activities include components on agriculture as a livelihood activity for rural communities, mostly focusing on mitigating land-use change and biodiversity loss. Nevertheless, agriculture-related activities have been disjointed and uncoordinated, and IUCN lacks visibility in global debates on sustainable agriculture and as a possible go-to implementation partner in this field.

There is a strong case for IUCN to engage on agriculture. Agricultural production systems are major drivers of biodiversity loss and erosion of ecosystem integrity and functionality. Moreover, agricultural systems are – at their core – modified ecological systems that remain strongly dependent on nature. The relative stability of these systems and the benefits they provide, directly and indirectly, to billions of people may vary according to cultural and traditional practices, but are critically dependent on biodiversity. Therefore, the agriculture-conservation nexus is also one of mutual dependence.

In order to begin a more systematic engagement with agriculture, and establish a coherent platform on which to build its credentials and have long-term influence, it is critical to define a limited number of mutually supportive entry points. This Operational Framework outlines the main elements on which we will build a coherent and coordinated programme of work for purposeful engagement in the food and agriculture sector.

## Positioning within the IUCN Global Programme

The **goal of the Operational Framework** is: "Biodiversity is restored and conserved on farms and in agricultural landscapes, contributing to thriving production systems, resilient livelihoods, and sustainable societies"



The Operational Framework therefore makes a primary contribution to Impact Target 2 of the Nature 2030 programme: “Thriving production landscapes are sustainable, and nature’s value and benefits are safeguarded in the long term”.

**The framework contributes to the following indicators under the Land Programme Area:**

- SDG 15.2.1. Progress towards sustainable forest management
- SDG 15.3.1. Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area

We define our understanding of agriculture from a systems perspective, encompassing crop, livestock, non-timber plantation, and aquaculture systems, for the production of food, fibre, and other commodities. A systems-based framing also implies that our understanding of the agriculture and conservation nexus extends to productive landscapes, connecting with other land uses (forests, wetlands...) and including value chains and consumption behaviours. However, while acknowledging the broad scope of the agriculture-conservation interface, the proposed programmatic approach focuses on issues where IUCN has a comparative advantage, where there is clear demand for our inputs and engagement, and where a realistic prospect of making a substantive but clearly defined contribution to a change-based agenda exists. A collective effort across IUCN will be necessary to deliver this programmatic approach.

**The Operational Framework will contribute to:**

1. Improving food security, healthy diets and livelihoods of agricultural communities and gender equality (SDG2 and SDG1), including SDG 2.4.1: “Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture”
2. IUCN People Impact Target 1: “Fully realised rights, roles, obligations and responsibilities to ensure just and inclusive conservation and sustainable use of nature”, including SDG 1.4.2 (Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land...)
3. IUCN People Impact Target 2: “Equitable and effective governance of natural resources at all levels to benefit people and nature”, including SDG 16.7.2 Proportion of population who believe decision making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group
4. IUCN Water Impact Target 2: “Equitable access to water resources and all associated ecosystem services are secured”, including SDG 6.4.2. (Level of water stress) and SDG 6.6.1. (Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems)
5. IUCN Water Impact Target 3: “Water governance, law and investment decisions address the multiple values of nature and incorporate biodiversity knowledge”, including SDG 6.5.1. (Degree of integrated water resources management implementation)
6. IUCN Climate Impact Target 1: “Countries use Nature-based Solutions to scale up effective adaptation to the impacts of climate change” and Impact target 2: “Countries scale up Nature-based Solutions to reach climate mitigation targets” (SDG13)
7. IUCN Land Impact Target 1: “Ecosystems are retained and restored, species are conserved and recovered, and key biodiversity areas are safeguarded”.
8. Pursuing land degradation neutrality and enhancing soil and wider ecosystem health (SDG15.3)
9. Conserving agrobiodiversity and wild relatives, biocultural diversity and traditional agricultural knowledge
10. Enhancing the viability of supply chains with reduced deforestation and other land use changes
11. Sustaining and enhancing the role for agroecology in building sustainable rural landscapes and communities, as part of integrated landscape approaches
12. Integrating biodiversity and climate change considerations into agricultural policies



## Results of the Operational Framework

The goal and results of the operational framework have been reviewed in detail by the core group guiding the process. The targets were developed in a workshop with Secretariat staff.

### **Result 1: Policies and governance support the scale up of sustainable farming as Nature based Solutions**

Targets:

1. Countries commit to promote sustainable agriculture (e.g. agroecological approaches and regenerative farming) under international agreements (including the Rio Conventions) and in national action plans (e.g. agriculture and environment sector)
2. Countries implement policies that reward the conservation value and ecosystem services of farming, reduce perverse public incentives for unsustainable practices, and uphold the rights of farmers
3. Farmers' organisations, including women farmers, youth and indigenous peoples, are enabled and empowered to influence public policy in favour of sustainably managing their agricultural landscapes
4. Land tenure and resource management rights are strengthened to enable farmers to manage their resources sustainably

### **Result 2: Land area under sustainable agriculture practices is increased, with improved soil biodiversity and ecosystem function**

Targets:

1. Farmer-led processes promote validated agroecological and regenerative farming approaches that restore biodiversity in agricultural soil and on the farm
2. Landscape planning mechanisms are developed to ensure that sustainable agriculture projects are equitably scaled-up and contribute to enhancing agroecosystem services
3. Agriculture investments and policies are designed and monitored to fully account for the positive and negative impact of agriculture on biodiversity and to assure measurable improvements in social and economic indicators, including positive impact on women and youth

### **Result 3: Responsible investments in food and agriculture supply chains incentivize sustainable land management**

Targets:

1. Innovative investment solutions are developed to incentivise sustainable agriculture (e.g. blended finance, payments for ecosystem services)
2. Private agribusinesses and local MSMEs are enabled to improve their contribution to sustainability in the food & agriculture sector
3. Companies adopt sustainability guidelines and report their full impact on biodiversity (Nature Positive Agriculture), including reduced land use change and habitat loss and increased on-farm conservation
4. Consumer groups raise public demand for sustainable agriculture and raise consumers' awareness on their contribution to conserve/restore biodiversity



## Actions and programme development under the Operational Framework

Target	Current Actions	Proposed Action
<b>Result 1: Policies and governance support the scale up of sustainable farming as Nature based Solutions</b>		
<b>Target 1.1:</b> Countries commit to promote sustainable agriculture (e.g. agroecological approaches and regenerative farming) under international agreements (including the Rio Conventions) and in national action plans (e.g. agriculture and environment sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Common Ground dialogues (global, regional, national)</li> <li>- Flagship Report on Agriculture</li> <li>- Bonn Challenge and Restoration Barometer</li> <li>- Engagement in international fora (UNFSS, CBD, FCCC etc.)</li> <li>- BRUSSELS - Food agriculture and nature. Policy implementation of green deal F2F, mission of soil...CAP, BD strategies (Dutch project on NBS, metrics and dialogues). Forum for the future of the agriculture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop agreements with International/regional organisations linked to agriculture (CGIAR, IFAD, WFP...)</li> <li>- Partner with national and regional integration bodies/ initiatives</li> </ul>
<b>Target 1.2:</b> Countries implement policies that reward the conservation value and ecosystem services of farming, reduce perverse public incentives for unsustainable practices, and uphold the rights of farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessment of costs and benefits of the transition to sustainable agriculture</li> <li>- Legal review of sustainable agriculture policy (ELC)</li> <li>- RLE assessment, ecosystem typology and ecosystem accounting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Redirection of public investment in agriculture – specific goals for BD conservation, mainstreaming criteria for BD, e.g. GCF project Guatemala, including EbA actions in restoration</li> <li>- Develop work on international trade and cross-regional relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Target 1.3:</b> Farmers’ organisations, including women farmers, youth and indigenous peoples, are enabled and empowered to influence public policy in favour of sustainably managing their agricultural landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trees on Farms</li> <li>- Inclusion of farmer organisations in international dialogues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop project partnerships with farmers’ organisations</li> <li>- Training packages on agroecology / regenerative farming designed for farmers (IUCN academy)</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<b>Result 2: Land area under sustainable agriculture practices is increased, with improved soil biodiversity and ecosystem function</b>		
<b>Target 2.1:</b> IUCN projects use farmer-led processes to promote validated agroecological and regenerative farming approaches that restore biodiversity in agricultural soil and on the farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agricultural landscape restoration projects in 10(?) countries</li> <li>- ORMACC: LINKING Landscapes</li> <li>- ORMACC: Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador (Food security)</li> <li>- SUSTAIN: projects in Mozambique and Tanzania. Natural resources in agricultural corridors. Land health and sustainable agriculture. Conservation in agricultural landscapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Double the number of agricultural landscapes IUCN is working in and ensure coverage in all regions</li> </ul>

	- Development of guidelines for agriculture NbS projects	
<b>Target 2.2:</b> Landscape planning mechanisms are developed to ensure that sustainable agriculture projects are equitably scaled-up and contribute to enhancing agroecosystem services	- Green list and world heritage agriculture sustainability criteria	- Landscape planning mechanisms should be included in all IUCN agriculture projects and in projects on landscape restoration and watershed management (to be confirmed)
<b>Target 2.3:</b> Land tenure and resource management rights are strengthened to enable farmers to manage their resources sustainably	- Component of some IUCN field projects (confirm number)	- Develop guidance on strengthening land tenure for sustainable agriculture (link to NRGF)
<b>Target 2.4:</b> IUCN projects are monitored to fully account for the positive and negative impact of agriculture on biodiversity and to assure measurable improvements in social and economic indicators, including positive impact on women and youth	- Development and testing of the and health monitoring tool - IUCN Med: Safeguard (How many people engage and the impact on families (women, youth) + affected by actions)	- Develop redlist of threatened soil biodiversity -
<b>Result 3: Policies, practices and responsible investments in food and agriculture supply chains incentivize sustainable land management</b>		
<b>Target 3.1:</b> IUCN projects deliver innovative investment solutions to incentivise sustainable agriculture (e.g. blended finance, payments for ecosystem services)	- Soilguard: catalysis of resources private and blended funding to support sustainable agriculture - FLRchain a blockchain application for incentivising sustainable land use - SUSTAIN initiative incentivising sustainable agriculture	5 landscapes (transboundary). Conservation of BD on protected areas and connecting them. Restoration actions (forest, improvement of land use, agroforestry, pastoral systems, good agriculture practices, cultural). Restoration actions. Link to practices contributing to BD.
<b>Target 3.2:</b> Private agribusinesses and local MSMEs are enabled to improve sustainability in their supply chains	- Resupply project development of business cases for restoration in supply chain - Sustainable livelihood in Guatemala - Ecosystem based Adaptation -sustainable agriculture in dryland Kenya - Transition flood based agriculture/Vietnam	



<b>Target 3.3:</b> Companies adopt sustainability guidelines and report their full impact on biodiversity (Nature Positive Agriculture), including reduced deforestation and increased on-farm conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Hazelnuts project with Ferrero</li><li>- Nespresso GEF</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Pernod-Ricard project</li></ul>
<b>Target 3.4:</b> Consumer groups raise public demand for sustainable agriculture		