

Summary of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry: 22-26 July 2024

Innovation was the buzzword at twenty-seventh session of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Committee on Forestry (COFO 27). Not only was it the theme of this year's State of the World's Forests 2024 Report (SOFO 24), it was also the theme of the meeting itself: "Accelerating Forest Solutions through Innovation."

SOFO 24 underscored why innovation is critical if the Global Forest Goal (GFG) of halting and reversing deforestation by 2030 is to be met. Forests are experiencing ever-increasing pressures, including deforestation and degradation, and from industries such as agriculture and mining, urbanization, consumption, and illegal logging. At the same time, forests play a significant and irreplaceable role in feeding the world's population, mitigating climate change, reducing the risk of natural disasters, and supplying freshwater, not to mention the benefits of wood products across sectors. In other words, countries and relevant actors across the forestry sector are waking up to the fact that they must draw on technological, social, policy, institutional, and financial innovations to, as one delegate said, do "more with less."

At COFO 27, innovation met the expansion of the forest canopy in more ways than one. First, SOFO 2024 reported signs that forest cover is increasing in some areas. Second, delegates broadened the discussion on forests to encompass the need to engage in more cross-sectoral and cross-committee work to ensure forests' role in tackling climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and water management, and the role it could play in a bioeconomy.

COFO 27's outcomes included approval of SOFO 2024 and endorsement of the FAO Forestry Roadmap 2024-2031 that will guide FAO's forestry work under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. Delegates also approved recommendations covering further implementation of FAO's work on:

- urban forestry and its contribution to urban agrifood systems transformation;
- a forest-based bioeconomy;
- forestry's contribution to FAO's work on climate change and integrated water management;
- scaling up actions on agriculture and forestry linkages; and
- integrated wildfire management.

COFO 27 was held in hybrid format from 22-26 July 2024, with the in-person segment held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. Approximately 1,000 people, including 16 Ministers and Vice

Ministers, participated in person, representing 120 Member States and 30 observer organizations, with another 5,000 following the proceedings online. Alongside COFO, the 9th World Forest Week convened, featuring a series of special events to discuss pressing forestry issues, including three high-level dialogues and one special event on Green Cities. Over the week, the FAO Forestry Division also launched two reports: [Restoring the Mediterranean Region: status and challenges](#); and [Bridging Nature and Climate through Protection of Primary Forests with High Ecological Integrity](#).

A Brief History of the Committee on Forestry

COFO is the highest of the FAO Forestry Statutory Bodies, which include the Regional Forestry Commissions, the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions, the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries, and the International Poplar

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Commission. COFO's biennial sessions bring together heads of forest services and other senior government officials to identify emerging policy and technical issues, to seek solutions, and to advise the FAO and others on appropriate action. Membership in COFO is open to all FAO Member States wishing to participate in its work. Membership now includes 122 countries.

Recent Highlights

COFO 23: COFO 23 convened in July 2016 to address how forests and sustainable forest management (SFM) can contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly regarding livelihoods, food security, jobs, and gender equality, as well as the Paris Agreement goals on climate change.

COFO 24: Meeting in July 2018, COFO 24 discussed:

- the contributions that forests can make to achieving the SDGs and other internationally agreed goals;
- ways and means to accelerate progress, in particular, towards SDG 15 (life on land);
- actions for implementing the FAO's Committee on World Food Security's policy recommendations regarding the contributions of forests to food security and nutrition;
- opportunities and challenges for urban and peri-urban forestry; and
- implementation of FAO's climate change strategy and specific tasks related to forest resilience and health, and forest fires.

COFO 25: COFO 25 convened virtually in October 2020 to review the State of the World's Forests 2020 and the Global Forest Resource Assessment 2020, and discuss, among other things:

- the impacts of COVID-19 on the forest sector and how to respond;
- the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors;
- forests as a nature-based solution for climate change;
- the role of forests in transforming food systems;
- contributions to the UN Decades on Family Farming and on Ecosystem Restoration; and
- preparations for the fifteenth World Forestry Congress (WFC XV).

COFO 26: Meeting in October 2022, COFO 26 celebrated its 50th anniversary and its first in-person meeting post-COVID-19. It discussed the findings of the State of the World's Forests 2022, WFC XV, and among other things:

- linkages between agriculture and forestry;
- forest solutions for combating climate change;
- preparations for the 2025 edition of the Global Forest Resources Assessment; and
- forest products and value chains.

COFO 27 Report

COFO 27 Chair Günter Walkner (Austria) opened the meeting on Monday morning, 22 July 2024. FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu underscored the importance of forests for agrifood systems, protecting biodiversity, ensuring food security, combating climate change and improving resilience. He said COFO 27's outcomes would support collective efforts to achieve the Global Forest Goals and the SDGs and transform agrifood systems.

Carlos Nobre, University of São Paulo, Brazil, warned that Amazonia is close to a tipping point where by 2050 it could become a very degraded forest ecosystem and switch from being a source of

carbon storage to a source of emissions. He urged development of a sustainable socio-bioeconomy of healthy, standing tropical forests and flowing rivers.

Youth representative Louise Mabulo, Founder, The Cacao Project, Philippines, said her project seeks to improve food production and local livelihoods through sustainable cocoa agroforestry systems that address her country's vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events. She urged building intergenerational bridges to engage youth in forestry and agroforestry.

Organizational Matters: Chair Walkner announced that the Regional Forestry Commissions had nominated their Chairs as COFO Vice-Chairs. COFO approved the nominations of: Dos Santos Silayo (Tanzania), Keiran Andrusko (Australia), Keith Anderson (Switzerland), Ana Gabriela Saavedra López (Ecuador), Mohammad Al Hyari (Jordan), and Randy Moore (US).

Walkner noted the Steering Committee's recommendations for COFO 27's work methods ([COFO/2024/INF/3](#)), which delegates endorsed. The plenary then adopted the provisional agenda ([COFO/2024/1](#)) and approved the provisional timetable ([COFO/2024/INF/1](#)).

Delegates elected Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, India, Japan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, and the Russian Federation as members of the Drafting Committee.

State of the World's Forests 2024: Forest-sector Innovations Towards a More Sustainable Future

On Monday, Zhimin Wu, Director, FAO Forestry Division, introduced the introductory note ([COFO/2024/2](#)) on the 2024 State of the World's Forests ([SOFO 2024](#)), which presents key findings on: some significant deforestation-rate reductions; increasing climate-related forest vulnerability to stressors; and record global wood production. He called for social, technological, financial, institutional, and policy innovation.

Several countries recounted their use of innovative approaches to conserve their forests. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION described use of artificial intelligence (AI) to combat certain deforestation pressures, including illegal logging. ECUADOR spoke of using open-source satellite images and radar to identify forest threats in real time, allowing them to deploy teams to tackle deforestation. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted his country's use of innovative technologies, including AI, remote sensing, and drones.

COLOMBIA said their work to incentivize communities to conserve their forests has significantly reduced deforestation across the country. URUGUAY highlighted its sustainability- and climate-related sovereign bonds as an innovative tool joining investors with the financial sector through institutional innovations.

CHINA explained their use of remote sensing and AI for monitoring forest resources and an intelligent bird monitoring system. INDONESIA highlighted ambitious climate goals, reduced emissions, a national capacity target, a legally binding national implementation plan, and forest monitoring systems.

Congo, for the AFRICAN GROUP, emphasized: projects restoring degraded land; use of nature-based solutions; transformation of agrifood systems; integrated wildlife management; the One Health approach; carbon trading; the forest products trade; and an agriculture value chain. He noted Africa's blamelessness for climate change, stating, with VENEZUELA, that common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) necessitate support for ensuring ecosystem services for humankind.

CABO VERDE bemoaned pressure on forests for wood and from urbanization. She said climate change makes new forest planting and land management methods urgent and requested more examples of good practices in African small island developing states.

TÜRKIYE requested FAO support on biodiversity preservation and agroforestry, emphasizing forest sector innovations for sustainable economic development, including using green technologies instead of non-renewable resources.

INDIA recommended agroforestry to combat land degradation and biodiversity loss, alongside collaboration to control threats to biodiversity from fire and land use changes.

El Salvador, for the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP, called for prioritizing innovation in conservation, sustainable use, and eradication of food insecurity. She called for new and additional financial resources consistent with CBDR, as well as equitable financing, including microfinancing for smallholders and Indigenous Peoples. PERU specifically called for tools to help countries adopt socially and culturally appropriate forest policies.

UKRAINE noted her country's efforts to replant and restore its forests and decried the impacts of Russian aggression on Ukrainian forests. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION called for SOFO to provide reliable data on the consequences of the ongoing conflict on the forest industry in Ukraine, saying Russia has data on deliberate destruction of the Ukrainian forest industry before 2022.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA encouraged more countries and research institutions to take note of SOFO 2024 content.

NEW ZEALAND, noting the projected significant increases in wood demand, stressed that "we need to make more from less." She also encouraged Members to consider the importance of going beyond technological innovations alone.

CONGO highlighted that the Congo Basin is the planet's second green lung. Noting that 27% of its territory is already under conservation, she underscored the many pressures and challenges facing them, including land degradation, drought, deforestation, wildlife, and famine.

IRAQ noted that climate change, with its higher temperatures, lower precipitation, and a rise in sand and dust storms, threatens their forest resources significantly.

Hungary, for the EUROPEAN UNION (EU), urged FAO to continue facilitating discussions between countries to enhance innovative approaches and contribute to the circular bioeconomy framework. He also noted that SOFO 2024 is silent on conflicts in wooded areas and urged FAO to closely monitor the impacts of such conflicts and include them in future COFO reports.

Taking note of the discussions on bioeconomy, Brazil, on behalf of the parties to the AMAZON COOPERATION TREATY, underscored the importance of taking into account the diversity of worldviews and respecting the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. She stressed the importance of adopting a holistic, just, and ethical approach.

MOROCCO called for more international cooperation for forest-related innovation, including intelligent management and use of water. MEXICO called for support in knowledge exchange, new technologies, and innovation and for expanding inclusiveness in developing a forestry sector bioeconomy.

ZAMBIA urged development partners to support his country in reducing pressures on forests. BURUNDI called for international support for its "Greening Burundi" reforestation project to protect

medicinal plants, improve effective forest resource management and develop a forest sector protection strategy. MALAYSIA stressed the need to develop technologies that consider the needs of developing countries.

PANAMA highlighted its carbon-negative status, and its support for sustainable rural livelihoods, green value chains, responsible use of wood and non-wood forest products (NWFPs), and geographic information system (GIS) technology for forest mapping and monitoring. VENEZUELA said the triple planetary crisis is caused by the capitalist production and consumption model, noting that despite unilateral measures against it, Venezuela is conserving forest wealth.

FINLAND stressed cross-sectoral collaboration and timber production to address climate change, sustainable forest management, and livelihoods. She called for monitoring wood origin, noting local decisions on forest management are most effective.

The UN FORUM ON FORESTS (UNFF) pointed out language relevant to innovation in the UNFF19 High-level Declaration and omnibus resolution. The INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY STUDENT ASSOCIATION asked Members to commit to SFM and cutting-edge technologies to manage and monitor forests and to bear in mind the role of young people in such innovations. The CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD) welcomed the contribution of SOFO 2024 data and analysis to implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Zhimin Wu thanked Members for their support of SOFO 2024. He said addressing the many challenges facing forests by 2030 will require ever more innovative action and expressed FAO's readiness to work closely with Members to promote innovation.

Chair Walkner introduced draft COFO summary language consisting of two paragraphs, one inviting Members to take advantage of, promote, and further elaborate responsible and inclusive innovations for optimizing forest-based solutions to global challenges, the other recommending that FAO facilitate knowledge exchange and policy dialogue with Members on best practices and ways to enhance and apply forest-sector innovations.

In ensuing consideration of the draft summary of the discussion, delegates debated:

- whether to retain the "responsible" modifier for innovations, and/or refer to "responsible, sustainable, and inclusive" innovations;
- whether and how to refer to national context, capacities, and priorities;
- how to refer to relevant international commitments and obligations;
- how best to add references to FAO facilitation of technology transfer and mobilization of financial resources and investments; and
- whether to reference innovations relevant to either "all types of forests" or "all types of biomes."

CAMEROON, with numerous Members' support, proposed an additional paragraph on FAO supporting Members' efforts, on request, to increase forest sector innovation capabilities and knowledge towards a more sustainable future and to seize opportunities offered by NWFPs.

UKRAINE, supported by FRANCE and the EU but opposed by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, proposed an additional paragraph "stressing the important technical role of FAO in assessing and addressing the impact of all ongoing armed conflicts, including

the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, on the regional and global forest sector, including on the livelihoods of forest-dependent people.”

INDIA, supported by NICARAGUA, noting there are also other conflicts in the world, proposed an alternative wording reflecting previously-agreed language from FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI), which emphasized that FAO operate within its mandate to assess and address the impact of global conflicts on global forests, while noting Members' interventions on the matter. The EU proposed merging the two texts.

INDONESIA questioned the appropriateness of discussing armed conflicts under this agenda item. Unable to reach agreement, Chair Walkner invited Members to reach a compromise through informal discussions.

On Thursday, following a proposed compromise by a Friends of the Chair group to add “including armed ones” in reference to conflicts, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION stated that they could not accept the wording. She said wording only referring to “conflict” would be acceptable, or, alternatively, so would CONGO's recommendation to delete the entire paragraph. Chair Walkner proposed that the RUSSIAN FEDERATION disassociate themselves from the statement through an annex, as proposed by the Friends of the Chair group, but this was not accepted.

SWITZERLAND, supported by the EU and UK, opposed CONGO's proposal, explaining that conflicts have increased since COFO 26, with growing impacts on forests, and that COFO should send a clear signal that this makes the work of FAO extremely difficult. KUWAIT suggested leaving it to the FAO Council to address the issue.

INDIA suggested compromised text referring to “all conflicts.” Delegates, through a “vote by applause” approved this suggestion.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee:

- took note of the key findings of SOFO 2024;
- invited Members to take advantage of, promote and further elaborate responsible, sustainable and inclusive innovations relevant for forests for optimizing forest-based actions to address global challenges within their national context, capacities, and in line with relevant international commitments and obligations;
- recommended that FAO support Members by facilitating knowledge exchange, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and their efforts to mobilize financial resources and investments, and policy dialogue with Members and partners on best practices and ways to enhance and apply forest-sector innovations in supporting sustainable forest management, including forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use;
- stressed the important technical role of FAO in assessing and addressing, within its mandate, the impact of all ongoing conflicts on the forest sector, while noting Members' interventions on this matter; and
- recommended FAO support Members' efforts, upon request, to increase forest sector innovation capabilities and knowledge towards a more sustainable future, including opportunities offered by NWFPs.

Scaling up Actions on Agriculture and Forestry Linkages

On Monday, Julie Emond, Chair, FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG), introduced FAO work in this area with a video statement, stressing the importance of cross-sectoral and cross-committee collaboration to address synergies.

Tiina Vähänen, Deputy Director, Forestry Division, FAO, introduced the document ([COFO/2024/3](#)), which presents three priority areas proposed by FAO, namely: the promotion of agroforestry as a sustainable production system; improving agroforestry monitoring methodologies and tools; and supporting national agroforestry policy and strategy development.

In the ensuing discussion, the AFRICAN GROUP, with the EU, welcomed the increased recognition of these linkages, and expressed appreciation for the growing evidence of coordinated efforts that benefit both forestry and agriculture. He supported a reference to the FAO conducting a global agroforestry monitoring assessment as part of the Global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA). The EU noted that agroforestry has not yet received sufficient attention from various sectors, which he noted will pose a challenge to scaling it up, and urged Members to advance policies, strategies, and programmes that incentivize work to benefit these linkages.

JORDAN highlighted ongoing national efforts to scale up agroforestry, including putting in place 36 agricultural reserves on some 75,000 hectares. INDIA noted their increasing agroforestry thanks to their National Agroforestry Policy and their wood certification scheme.

BRAZIL highlighted its implementation of integrated landscape management, saying there is no “one-size-fits-all” policy for agriculture-forestry linkages. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA reported achievement of economic growth alongside forest restoration, with small-scale projects preserving forests while enhancing livelihoods. He said the Green Belt project, with Mongolia, for forest system restoration contributes to peace building.

CABO VERDE made reference to sharing good practices on policymaking. With the US, she called for work prioritizing sustainable food systems and food security. CHINA recommended expanding the scope of “forest food” to include livestock feed as “indirect” food. He cautioned against unilateral trade barriers that stress production method rather than product type, and against limiting efforts to secure market access for smallholder commodity producers. KENYA called for intensifying sustainable food production, recognizing traditional knowledge on agrifood systems, and capacity building for cross-sectoral land use planning.

MEXICO called for FAO to: strengthen the positive links between land management and sustainable value chains and encourage private financing for this purpose; foster dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and local communities on agrifood systems; and provide knowledge and tools for capacity building.

AUSTRALIA urged integrating Indigenous and traditional knowledge and engaging more smallholders in agroforestry. He noted Australia's development of a market for biodiversity credits alongside carbon markets and called for flexibility on trial testing due diligence measures, noting that positive outcomes from trade are possible.

JAPAN called for incorporating the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Initiative into FAO's strategy and action plan on biodiversity while improving livelihoods and promoting local agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.

PERU emphasized guaranteeing market access to small-scale family farmers and enhancing their crop yields without deforestation. SWITZERLAND noted traditional agroforestry systems, augmented by a strategy enabling agroforestry payments to producers, with private organizations providing extension services.

FRANCE noted its adaptation, biodiversity and carbon mapping tool (“ABC-map”) and urged ambition on maintaining resilience and long-term reconciliation of forest and livestock activities. ECUADOR said agroforestry upscaling must integrate fire management, land titles, sustainable technology, and effective implementation, and promote traditional and Indigenous knowledge. CONGO encouraged integrating trees into farming systems, requiring industrial plantations to allocate some access for communities, and investigating the threat conflicts pose to forest populations and food security.

INDONESIA reported on its work to enhance public access to forests, accelerate social forestry management through collaboration, and support for local community utilization of forest resources and replanting of degraded areas. LEBANON noted its collaboration with FAO to pilot an agrosilvopastoral mechanism and its new law covering forest and rangeland, which innovates through traditional knowledge and allows shepherding in the forest. NEW ZEALAND emphasized FAO’s role in monitoring and global dialogue, requesting guidance on, *inter alia*, cost-benefit analysis in different regions, scaling up work linking smallholders to supply chains, capacity building on finance, and data on silvopastoral landscapes.

ARGENTINA called for FAO support for access to financial resources for SFM under the CBDR principle. She noted unbalanced reference to international trade and forest activities, calling for language ensuring that measures are effective and not unnecessary obstacles to trade. MALAYSIA reported incentivizing state governments to increase protected areas and awarding “Forest Conservation Certificates” for private financing for forest restoration where resources are otherwise insufficient. He urged FAO to assist in developing value chains. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC) requested effective financial support and technology transfer to emplace sustainable systems.

The ASIAN FOREST COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (AFoCO) spoke about their work integrating trees into agricultural landscapes and promoting learning and capacity building programmes.

Deputy Director Vähänen noted the views expressed. Regarding due diligence policies, responsible supply chains, and securing smallholder commodity producers’ market access where targeted by regulatory measures for avoiding deforestation, she said FAO provides information upon formal request from Members based on expressed need in one of the areas mentioned. Vähänen noted increasing demand for FAO support to facilitate data generation.

Chair Walkner introduced draft COFO summary language consisting of three paragraphs: encouraging Members to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration and promote relevant policies, strategies and programmes to strengthen agriculture and forestry linkages, including to mitigate trade-offs; recommending that FAO support Members to improve their capacity for integrated land-use planning and monitoring; and recommending that FAO support Members in their actions to scale up agroforestry.

BRAZIL, supported by ARGENTINA, made several text proposals. The first proposal, opposed by INDIA and the EU, included reference to contributing to the “efficiency and productivity of production systems” and global food security. The second asked Members to refrain from adopting measures that would impose “arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restrictions on international trade.” CAMEROON sought clarification on what is meant by “efficiency and productivity.”

On the second proposal, CAMEROON, INDONESIA, INDIA, the EU, NEW ZEALAND and others opposed the inclusion of the reference to trade in the paragraph, with CAMEROON underlining that the paragraph pertained to trade-offs, not trade. BRAZIL explained that some measures addressing trade-offs have an impact on trade, and in some cases disproportionately impact smallholders. He viewed the text as unbalanced, putting too much emphasis on the trade-offs affecting biodiversity loss and too little on the negative impacts that trade restrictions can have on efficiency and productivity of sectors.

After a lengthy back-and-forth, including many iterations of alternative wording, Chair Walkner proposed compromise text with elements from various proposals, which was agreed.

CAMEROON proposed a new paragraph seeking updates from an internal FAO working group on its planned activities, which include a global agroforestry monitoring assessment as part of the FRA, a series of guidance materials developing business cases for agroforestry, and a facilitation guide to apply the Farmer Field Schools approach to agroforestry. Delegates agreed to the addition.

Delegates could not reach consensus on a draft recommendation regarding FAO support for improving Member capacity for integrated land use planning and monitoring during Tuesday’s plenary. The EU, supported by AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, and SWITZERLAND, favored adding a reference to the text on halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation lifted from the UNFF19 Declaration. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION opposed referring to forest degradation, saying there is no internationally agreed definition of the term. PERU suggested adding a reference to forest restoration. BRAZIL, supported by the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, sought a reference to sustainable use and management of forests.

The paragraph was sent to an informal Friends of the Chair group to find a compromise. On Wednesday, the group reported a compromise formula had been reached that borrowed language from both UNFF19 and COFO 26.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee:

- took note of the working group created internally within FAO and looked forward to receiving updates on the implementation of their 2024-2025 joint work plan in the appropriate governing bodies sessions;
- encouraged Members to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration and promote policies, strategies and programmes to strengthen food security, agriculture and forestry linkages in land management and throughout relevant value chains, to mitigate deforestation and biodiversity loss, “to not create unnecessary barriers to trade” and to benefit the situation of small-scale producers who are key for global food production;
- recommended that FAO support Members, upon request, to improve their capacity, including through the voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research, and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, for integrating land-use planning and monitoring to achieve sustainable agriculture and forestry, addressing threats to forests as well as significant drivers of deforestation and forest degradation by, *inter alia*, promoting sustainable practices across economic activities and sustainable patterns of consumption and production, reforestation, restoration, and the conservation and sustainable management of forests, taking into consideration the relevant commitments

to halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation and preventing land degradation by 2030, while achieving sustainable development, keeping in mind the necessity of poverty eradication and fighting hunger, and the needs of developing countries in terms of financial assistance and capacity building; and

- recommended that FAO support Members, upon request, in their actions to scale up agroforestry through projects, knowledge products, tools and capacity development.

Enhancing the Contribution of Forestry to Bioeconomy – Opportunities and Challenges

On Tuesday, the Secretariat introduced the document (COFO/2024/4), noting the pressure on forests is greater than ever, with an ongoing increase of material use and a still greater increase needed for the 10 billion people that will populate the Earth by 2050. They noted that forests “must be prepared to increase biomass” for fuel, food, feed, and fiber and must therefore be integrated into a bioeconomy framework, balancing economic value and sustainability.

In the ensuing discussion, several delegates pointed to the importance of the wood and timber industry for the bioeconomy. Some explicitly focused on comparing the bioeconomy to the circular economy, which includes reuse and utilization of waste. Others focused on potential benefits of the bioeconomy for local communities.

BRAZIL pointed to its leadership and innovation on bioeconomy, including hosting a recent conference on the subject. Supported by MEXICO, he submitted a proposal to establish an *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Principles of Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy as a COFO subsidiary body to study the subject and recommend draft principles of sustainable forest-based bioeconomy for food and agriculture.

INDONESIA highlighted its forest-based bioeconomy and circular economy programme, which recognizes the role of local communities and knowledge of genetic resources.

Noting that the EU is implementing a sustainable and circular bioeconomy, the EU called for reference to that rather than just “sustainable bioeconomy.” He called for a circular value chain promoting use of local resources and deforestation-free production, using innovative approaches such as agroecology.

INDIA said its bioeconomy advances resource saving and participatory processes at the local level but called for more collaboration and partnerships among a wide array of stakeholders, and for increased scientific research. SWITZERLAND noted its circular forest and wood bioeconomy, saying minimization of raw materials use has been pursued for decades in Switzerland. He called for innovation and strengthening wood value chains.

PERU noted that lack of support for local initiatives risks undermining their scaling up and proposed further supporting the bioeconomy through implementation of technological solutions and innovations, including providing technical support for pilot projects. MALAYSIA highlighted the importance of small- and medium-sized enterprises and the contributions of local communities for providing access to sustainably sourced forest goods, also stressing that communities must be one of the beneficiaries of the bioeconomy. SENEGAL noted the bioeconomy can help mitigate environmental challenges, highlighting the role of biofuels to reduce his country’s reliance on fossil fuels.

ECUADOR, noting their national bioeconomy roadmap and the challenges they face in developing a bioeconomy, called for FAO support and technical assistance to help strengthen their normative framework. NORWAY said a sustainable bioeconomy can increase the value of forests but noted challenges including: the possibility that demand for wood might exceed the supply; the need to create new industries; and untested technologies and regulatory instruments.

Noting that bioeconomy is related to almost every industry, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA highlighted his country’s work to incorporate it across sectors, including construction. TÜRKIYE drew attention to the need for integrated policies that bring together sectors to ensure holistic approaches to rolling out the bioeconomy. AUSTRIA noted the economic importance of forestry and wood, calling for data, capacity building, and incentives to facilitate cooperation and innovation.

Saying bioeconomy offers much promise, CANADA stressed the importance of collaboration moving forward, to ensure transparent, consistent, and fair approaches to norms and regulations. She underscored that everyone, including smallholders, producers, and Indigenous communities, should benefit. The US, while offering general support for the draft Committee recommendations, cautioned against speaking about a single global bioeconomy, stressing there is no single definition, nor is there a one-size-fits-all approach to how it is rolled out.

AUSTRALIA called for the removal of incentives that lead to unsustainable use of forest resources. She stressed the need for international collaboration to ensure wood fiber security in the face of rising demand.

The ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST-BASED INDUSTRIES (ACSFI) called on FAO to strengthen partnerships with private sector partners to advance the bioeconomy.

AFOCO highlighted their new strategy that places emphasis on developing a sustainable bioeconomy, aligning with FAO goals in enhancing resource efficiency and building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economies.

In discussion on proposals for the COFO recommendations on bioeconomy, delegates debated:

- whether and where to insert references to a “circular” bioeconomy in various paragraphs, as sought by the EU, supported by NORWAY and SWITZERLAND, but opposed by BRAZIL, INDIA, CAMEROON, and the DRC, or instead refer to “sustainable patterns of consumption and production”;
- an EU proposal to include UNFF language on sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches; and
- the precise mandate for an FAO conference on the contribution of the forest sector to sustainable bioeconomy, and which FAO bodies would receive the report of the conference results.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee:

- encouraged Members, and invited FAO, to scale up technical support, capacity building, sharing of knowledge and practices, research, and technology transfer to support formulating national, regional, and global sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches, strategies, and action plans fully incorporating SFM;
- invited Members to support sustainable practices, market development and investments in forest-based value chains and invited FAO to provide technical assistance to Members, upon

request, in developing and fostering value-added innovation and material efficiency in the forest sector;

- encouraged FAO to improve its knowledge base and data collection, analysis, and sharing, promote policy coherence and scale up technical support and capacity building to advance sustainable bioeconomy practices across agrifood systems and forestry, and initiate a global bioeconomy partnership;
- invited FAO to convene, subject to the availability of extra-budgetary resources, an international conference on the role of the forest sector in the bioeconomy, and report on its results to COFO 28 and the appropriate sessions of the FAO Council and Conference; and
- noted the Brazilian proposal to start the discussion on the possibility of establishing an *ad hoc* working group for the negotiation of principles of sustainable forest-based bioeconomy for food and agriculture.

The FAO Forestry Roadmap – From Vision to Action 2024-2031 and FAO’s Work on Forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31

On Wednesday morning Chair Walkner introduced the agenda item. Zhimin Wu introduced the document ([COFO/2024/5.1](#)), whose annex contains the finalized Roadmap. The Roadmap sets out forest-related contributions to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and its “four betters” (better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life) and to the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) and its six Global Forest Goals (GFGs).

Ewald Rametsteiner, Deputy Director, FAO Forestry Division, introduced the document ([COFO/2024/5.2](#)), reporting on FAO’s achievements in forestry during its 2022-2023 biennium across its four priority areas: halting deforestation and enhancing resilience; mainstreaming biodiversity and restoring forest ecosystems; enhancing sustainable production, use and livelihoods; and data statistics and analysis.

Many Members, including JAPAN, the AFRICAN GROUP and PERU, expressed appreciation for FAO’s work in elaborating the Forest Roadmap. AUSTRALIA, the US, MALAYSIA, CHINA, SWITZERLAND, and NEW ZEALAND supported endorsement of the Roadmap, while COSTA RICA, the NEAR EAST REGION, the DRC, and SURINAME preferred “welcoming” it.

The AFRICAN GROUP underscored that forests and trees play an important role in their response to multiple environmental and social issues. He called for better linkages between technical and operational work, forestry partnerships, and strengthening FAO responsiveness to Members’ needs. INDIA asked for better reporting and information dissemination so that learning can be used to scale up actions in the forestry sector.

INDONESIA, supported by BRAZIL, underscored there is no one-size-fits-all approach to scale up efforts to implement good practices. He also requested FAO to increase its normative and technical support to Members and facilitate and build legal and institutional capacity. While agreeing there is no one-size-fits-all, the EU expressed regret at the Roadmap’s mention of “preventing trade restrictions and distortions, eliminating and not creating unnecessary and unjustified barriers to trade.” Opposed by BRAZIL, he proposed a footnote to reflect the EU position that the appropriate reference should be “in conformity with international trade rules.” SWITZERLAND pointed out that COFO is being asked to endorse

the Roadmap, not adopt it. She suggested that disagreements raised in delegates’ interventions could be noted in the COFO 27 meeting report.

MEXICO highlighted the need for FAO actions to: improve data assistance and analysis, research, and training; pursue innovative financial solutions; and create platforms to involve both the private sector and civil society. AUSTRALIA expressed appreciation for inclusion of fiber security and activities involving Indigenous Peoples in the Roadmap. The US, with the NETHERLANDS and CANADA, urged FAO to recognize that agricultural expansion is the biggest driver of deforestation.

MALAYSIA called for implementation of regional and national programmes that support the Roadmap’s objectives. The DRC stressed the importance of how the Roadmap will be implemented, especially in countries experiencing armed conflict. CHINA suggested a clearer Roadmap definition of “agrifood systems” and urged aligning Roadmap implementation with regional and Member conditions and needs.

The NETHERLANDS called for looking at themes within the FAO’s mandate in a more holistic way. NEW ZEALAND welcomed the Roadmap’s linkage to the GFGs and SDGs and suggested communication tools that could help its implementation.

COSTA RICA stressed the Roadmap’s implementation must take into account small- and medium-scale producers and how helping them can protect forested lands. CANADA noted concern about the Roadmap’s language on rights of local communities.

The NEAR EAST REGION stressed the importance of sustainable agrifood systems and silvopastoral systems to guarantee forest restoration. SURINAME stressed the Roadmap’s success will depend on sustainable international cooperation in its implementation. He also urged action to combat timber smuggling.

ARGENTINA said the Roadmap uses terms that do not have agreed definitions, such as “sustainable bioeconomy” and “green livelihoods.” She also emphasized greater mobilization of resources to support SFM in developing countries and the need to address trade distortions.

Chair Walkner proposed draft COFO summary text that would welcome the FAO’s 2022-2023 achievements in forestry, welcome and endorse the Roadmap, recommend that FAO implement the Roadmap through partnerships, programmes, and projects, and endorse the priorities for FAO’s 2024-2025 work in forestry, as updated to reflect the Roadmap.

CAMEROON, supported by the EU, asked to “take note of” rather than “welcome” the 2022-2023 achievements.

BRAZIL opposed Committee endorsement of the Roadmap and suggested “welcomed the development of the new” Roadmap. CAMEROON, supported by INDONESIA, TANZANIA, and SWITZERLAND, supported welcoming the Roadmap itself, rather than its development.

INDONESIA proposed additional text requesting, *inter alia*, that FAO increase its normative and technical support to Members towards strengthening legal frameworks for forestry and help build legal and institutional capacity. The EU, opposed by INDONESIA, CAMEROON, BRAZIL, and AUSTRALIA, proposed adding reference to “deforestation-free” frameworks. CAMEROON, supported by BRAZIL and AUSTRALIA, proposed clarifying that the text referred to “national” legal frameworks. NORWAY suggested replacing “forestry” with “sustainable forest management.”

The EU sought insertion of a footnote explaining its reservation on Roadmap language about trade restrictions and distortions. BRAZIL and CHINA opposed including footnotes on reservations. The US proposed a footnote referencing a report annex containing all Member concerns about the Roadmap. AUSTRALIA expressed hesitancy about both the EU and US approaches, explaining this would give the impression that those not submitting “concerns” will be seen as accepting the document as a whole. INDIA suggested noting any Member concerns in the meeting report rather than in summary footnotes.

Discussions continued after lunch following a report back from the FAO Legal Office confirming that statements with minority views are permitted but not limiting the format for expressing such views. CAMEROON strongly opposed the proposed footnote, arguing that it would detract from the single voice of the Committee about the strategic direction of FAO forestry work. He explained that an annex should only include initial Member interventions during the debate, not ones raised during negotiations of the summary. The UK asked for clarification on the process for including text in an annex.

Noting that no progress was being made, Chair Walkner invited Members to consult informally to resolve matters. On Thursday morning, after another unsuccessful attempt to find agreement, the Chair again called for relevant delegates to confer informally. The text was adopted Thursday afternoon based on a compromise allowing a footnote referencing an annex to the Committee report that notes the EU’s intervention about trade.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee:

- welcomed with appreciation the achievements of FAO’s work in forestry during the 2022-23 biennium;
- endorsed the FAO Forestry Roadmap and encouraged FAO to take into account in its implementation the discussions and different views expressed by the Members with regard to the Roadmap;
- recommended that FAO implement the FAO Forestry Roadmap through the Programme Priority Areas under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, impactful partnerships, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), and relevant programmes and projects;
- endorsed the updated priorities for the FAO’s work in forestry in 2024-2025 within the Programme of Work and Budget 2024-25 and the Medium Term Plan 2022-25 and encouraged FAO to take into account the views expressed by Members during COFO 27; and
- requested FAO to increase its normative and technical support to Members, upon request, to facilitate and build national legal and institutional capacity for sustainable forest management in line with the FAO Forestry Roadmap.

A footnote, leading to an Annex A of the meeting report, notes an intervention by the EU on appropriate language to denote that action should be done “in conformity with international trade rules.”

Progress in Implementation

FAO’s Work on Urban Forestry and its Contribution to Urban Agrifood Systems Transformation: Chair Walkner introduced discussion on this sub-item on Wednesday afternoon, noting that 57% of the world’s population lives in cities, with this figure expected to rise to 68% by 2050.

Simone Borelli, Forestry Officer, FAO, introduced the document ([COFO/2024/6.1](#)), noting that cities occupy 2% of the earth’s surface but use 75% of its natural resources, producing 50% of the waste. He highlighted that urban and peri-urban forests and trees are the main component of cities’ “green infrastructure” and underscored the FAO’s Green Cities Initiative.

The EU said cities must mimic natural processes, increase resilience, and improve food security. He stressed that green infrastructure includes structural timber.

SWITZERLAND urged reference to collaboration with other international organizations addressing green cities, including the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), European Forest Institute (EFI), and—given that some city forests contain wetlands—the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

MALAYSIA cautioned that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, calling for effective urban foresting strategies. He noted the health benefits of urban greening and ensuring a cooler city. The AFRICAN GROUP said increasing urbanization requires adequate governance, planning, and management, commending FAO’s assistance. He noted cities participating in the FAO’s Green Cities programme are three times healthier than others and called for linking forests to land use, timber, food security, and urban agrifood systems.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA said 96% of its population is in cities, underlining the need for investment in urban initiatives to address air pollution and climate change caused by urban growth.

MEXICO called for international cooperation on institutional capacity building and technical assistance on urban and peri-urban forests, to transform cities to drivers of green growth.

The US noted a USD 1.5 billion budget for urban forests included in recent national legislation and establishment of a first-of-its-kind urban “food forest.” He requested reference to “forest-based bioeconomy approaches” rather than “bioeconomy.”

CHINA reported that its national forest law has established norms and improved management of urban forests and urban ecology, saying China serves as a model for urban forest development. KENYA highlighted laws supporting urban agriculture and its commitment to inclusive, resilient urban food production systems, noting these supply a large portion of Nairobi’s food. PORTUGAL stressed integrated fire management systems using various approaches such as networks of fire breaks and fuel breaks, safe havens for fire refugees, and risk management.

BRAZIL highlighted the work of the Amazon Cities Forum and the large urban forests in many Brazilian cities. The NEAR EAST REGION noted urban forestry plans in his region, such as Green Riyadh, and Jordan’s efforts to expand the Green Cities Initiative. INDONESIA underscored efforts to include urban forest and green areas in its new capital city, Nusantara. CAMEROON emphasized the importance of FAO’s Green Cities Initiative in Africa.

Borelli assured Members that FAO actively cooperates with many international bodies on urban forestry, welcoming the suggestion to reach out to the Ramsar Convention. Borelli urged countries to join the Green Cities Network to share knowledge and promote city-to-city cooperation.

Chair Walkner introduced the draft COFO recommendations, which urged FAO Members to integrate sustainably managed urban and peri-urban forests and trees into urban planning and to join FAO’s Green Cities Initiative. The draft also recommended that FAO develop related capacity-building programmes, tools, and technical assistance.

On urban planning, BRAZIL proposed adding reference to contributing to climate change and adaptation and wording that planning should address the needs of people in vulnerable situations and promote access to adequate, inclusive and quality public services. CAMEROON suggested including peri-urban areas in the paragraph and changing “access to” to public services to “delivery of.” SWITZERLAND proposed referencing biodiversity conservation. AUSTRALIA proposed referencing sustainable forest products. INDONESIA suggested referencing ecosystem services.

After debating whether to address the paragraph to Members or countries or nations, delegates settled on “FAO Members.” Upon BRAZIL’s objection to a reference to “transformation of agrifood systems,” delegates agreed to use FAO Conference language approving the FAO Strategic Framework calling for “contributing to the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems.”

Delegates also debated a proposal from SWITZERLAND for a new paragraph recommending FAO to continue collaboration and cooperation with the UNECE, EFI’s Biocities Facility, and others, and, with CHINA, initiate new cooperation with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. CAMEROON said the Swiss proposal was focused too much on one region. The US suggested referring to cooperation generally with regional and international initiatives and to “explore” rather than “initiate” new cooperation.

Outcome: In the COFO 27 report (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee:

- encouraged FAO Members to integrate sustainably managed urban and peri-urban forests and trees into urban planning, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and to the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems in urban and peri-urban areas, providing sustainable forest products and ecosystem services, and ensuring people’s health and wellbeing, addressing the needs of people in vulnerable situations and promoting delivery of adequate, inclusive and quality public services to city dwellers;
- invited Members to join the FAO Green Cities Initiative, and to promote knowledge transfer through active participation in regional technical networks;
- recommended FAO, through the Green Cities Initiative and other ongoing programmes and projects, to develop capacity-building programmes and tools and to provide technical assistance for increasing resilience, health and wellbeing of urban and peri-urban dwellers, improving the sustainability of agrifood systems, and supporting sustainable urban development; and
- recommended that FAO continue its collaboration and cooperation with relevant regional and international organizations and initiatives and explore new cooperation.

Contribution for Forestry to FAO’s Work on Climate Change and Integrated Water Management: Amy Duchelle, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO, presented the document ([COFO/2024/6.2](#)), which highlights the inextricable link between forests, climate, and water, bringing to light how FAO’s workstreams connect to this nexus.

MALAYSIA, the EU, URUGUAY, and CHINA underscored the important role that forests play in mitigating and reducing the impacts of climate change and forests’ provision of crucial ecosystem services related to the water cycle. The US said forests maintain water cycles for agricultural production and that

agricultural encroachment on forested lands ultimately decreases agricultural production. He noted the huge economic value of forests to water and urged FAO to work with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

The AFRICAN GROUP asked FAO to intensify its efforts to combat climate change by working with the forestry sector. He also stressed the importance of capacity building with local communities and small-scale producers to ensure their fair participation and ability to benefit from sustainable forest management. NEW ZEALAND highlighted its Forest Flows Research Programme, which shows the effectiveness of forests in protecting downstream communities from the impacts of flooding from cyclones.

URUGUAY brought attention to his country’s recent experience of drought, which impacted several food producers as well as the public’s access to drinking water. He viewed this as one of the most serious examples of climate change impacts, which would cost his country billions of dollars. BRAZIL, with ARGENTINA, noted a lack of an agreed definition of the “forest-water-food-climate nexus.”

SWITZERLAND brought attention to the work of the Convention on Transboundary Watercourses and Lakes (Water Convention), which has a task force on the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus. PERU said restoration of degraded landscapes requires, *inter alia*, adequate legal frameworks, sufficient and predictable financial resources, human resources and capacity, and a multisectoral approach. SLOVAKIA said specific forest management approaches under specific conditions can provide stable carbon sequestration, wood-based products that store carbon, and well adapted and resilient water retention.

MEXICO highlighted its implementation of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ to receive Green Climate Fund results-based funding. She requested FAO support for science and technology research, and mobilizing more resources for Indigenous Peoples and local forest-owning communities. PANAMA requested FAO technical assistance on ecosystem services pertaining to forest, climate, and water.

JORDAN said it is one of the world’s poorest countries in terms of water per capita and faces challenges from both water scarcity and climate change. He stressed water recycling, rainwater harvesting, and extraction to enhance pastoralist communities’ capacity to face climate change. GUINEA said 64% of its population is employed in agriculture, which, with mining, aggravates deforestation. He requested that FAO help develop robust climate policies that assist farmers in adopting sustainable practices.

INDONESIA said its nationally determined contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement includes rehabilitation of up to 24% of its forest land, with active community participation. She noted that riparian forests improve water quality and called for an ecosystem approach to protect riverbanks. ARGENTINA asked whether actions to promote sustainable agrifood systems include regenerative agriculture and livestock farming. She noted that forest plantations account for 95% of the primary material used in the industry and are covered by certification programmes. CHILE reported progress on sustainable forest work, landscape restoration, water issues, and a national climate change strategy to fight land degradation, desertification, droughts, fires, and other impacts.

The Chair introduced draft COFO summary language. Changes offered by delegates included adding reference to conserving forests, halting “and reversing” deforestation “and forest degradation,”

and “promoting afforestation, reforestation and sustainable forest management, and restoring forest landscapes.” With these edits the text was adopted.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee recommended that FAO support Members, upon request, to strengthen their efforts, including integrated solutions, to enhance the contributions of forests for climate and water services by, among others, conserving forests, and halting and reversing deforestation. It also recommended that FAO support Members, upon request, to:

- enhance the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 through increasing forestry-related activities; and
- implement FAO’s Conceptual Framework for Integrated Land and Water Resources Management and contribute to the implementation of FAO’s 2024-25 biennial theme “Water resources management for the four betters: better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 and Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Forestry: Chair Walkner introduced the agenda item and document ([COFO/2024/6.3](#)), noting that it had been addressed through the written correspondence procedure. Walkner introduced draft COFO summary language that would:

- welcome FAO’s achievements as co-lead of the Decade;
- welcome progress made in implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity Across Agricultural Sectors, and stress its importance for the forest sector;
- recommend FAO continue collaborating with CBD and CPF in advancing mainstreaming;
- invite FAO to collect and disseminate evidence-based practices related to sustainable management and use of wild species; and
- recommend FAO continue to collaborate with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management and through the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme, to strengthen country capacity to address human-wildlife conflict and achieve sustainable wildlife management in alignment with the GBF.

Delegates considered, but decided against, adding a reference to the GBF in the paragraph on the Strategy on Mainstreaming.

CAMEROON, supported by CONGO, requested adding a new paragraph supporting the African proposal for a Decade of Afforestation and Reforestation that will be presented to the 2024 session of the UN General Assembly. NEW ZEALAND suggested “noting” the proposal, which was accepted.

Regarding the paragraph on wildlife management, CONGO proposed a change to ask FAO to support country capacity to assess the impact of human-wildlife conflict on food security. This was accepted with a modification by CAMEROON, conditioning it as “within FAO’s mandate.”

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee:

- welcomed FAO’s achievements in supporting the UN Decade as its co-lead, and encourages FAO to continue their support for its implementation and enhancing ecosystem restoration implementation and monitoring efforts, including by using the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring platform, as appropriate;

- welcomed progress made in implementation of the FAO Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity Across Agricultural Sectors and took note of the alignment of the 2024-2027 Action Plan with the GBF;
- stressed the importance of the Strategy for the implementation of activities through which FAO supports countries’ efforts to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity, including in the forest sector;
- recommended that FAO continue its collaboration with the CBD and CPF in advancing mainstreaming of biodiversity in forestry, including on data and monitoring;
- invited FAO to collect and disseminate evidence-based practices related to sustainable management and use of wild species that provide social, economic and environmental benefits, including products and services that enhance biodiversity and support livelihoods of people, especially those in vulnerable situations, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities;
- recommended that FAO continue to collaborate with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management and through the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme, to strengthen country capacity to assess human-wildlife conflict on food security within FAO’s mandate and achieve sustainable wildlife management; and
- noted the African proposal for a Decade of Afforestation and Reforestation.

FAO’s Work on Integrated Wildfire Management: On Thursday, the Chair introduced the documents ([COFO/2024/6.4](#)) and ([COFO/2024/INF/8](#)). He also introduced the COFO draft recommendations.

The EU proposed an additional paragraph recommending that FAO work on the interlinkages among climate change, land use change, land abandonment, and human activities in landscape fires that are driving biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

BRAZIL, supported by AUSTRALIA, opposed the EU proposal. Explaining that in some regions fires are used to encourage ecosystem regeneration, he believed singling out certain practices would not be in keeping with a holistic approach to integrated fire management (IFM).

AUSTRALIA proposed that FAO draw on, as well as protect and respect, traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use practices related to IFM.

Outcome: In the COFO 27 report (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee:

- encouraged Members to consider implementation of the principles and strategic actions for IFM as outlined in the updated FAO Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines and the Landscape Fire Governance Framework, taking into account different regional and national priorities;
- recommended that FAO continue working with partners, including international partners and regional initiatives, to lead the paradigm shift from a focus on fire suppression to IFM’s holistic approach, recognizing the need to draw on, protect and respect traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use practices related to IFM; and
- invited FAO to continue to support Members on IFM, including through the Global Fire Management Hub, with a focus on capacity building and technical exchange.

Dialogue with Statutory Bodies in Forestry: Chair Walkner introduced this document on Thursday ([COFO/2024/6.5](#)), presenting progress reports on the activities of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions – *Silva Mediterranea*, the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries, the International Commission on Poplars and Other Fast-Growing Trees Sustaining People and the Environment (IPC), the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems, and the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs).

The Chair also introduced the draft COFO summary elements on this agenda item.

In relation to the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries, a short discussion ensued on whether to refer to the Paris Agreement “as adopted under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change” (UNFCCC), with BRAZIL and NORWAY highlighting that countries have different positions on this. The US noted this caused several issues at UNFF19, and with AUSTRALIA suggested replacing the explicit reference to agreements with “other international forest-related commitments and goals.”

In listing what the RFCs will aim to achieve, BRAZIL asked to add reference to the UNSPF, delete a reference to the Paris Agreement, and instead state “and other international forest-related commitments and goals.”

Outcome: In the COFO 27 report (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee, *inter alia*:

- encouraged members of *Silva Mediterranea* to actively participate in the 25th Session of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions – *Silva Mediterranea* and the 8th Mediterranean Forest Week, which will be held from 4-8 November 2024 in Barcelona, Spain;
- encouraged members of *Silva Mediterranea* to contribute to the development of activities related to the Flagship Restoring Mediterranean Forests initiative under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030;
- encouraged FAO and its Members to continue taking note of key findings of the State of Mediterranean Forests reports and *Unasylva*, as key information sources on forests in the Mediterranean region;
- acknowledged the ACSFI’s key messages and engagement to further catalyze strategic partnerships as a way to implement its strategic priorities according to its Strategic Framework 2020-2030;
- encouraged the ACSFI to continue fostering strategic actions and facilitating partnerships between FAO, the private sector, and other stakeholders, to promote forest-based bioeconomy approaches and productive ecosystems, while leveraging technology and innovation for SFM, to achieve the SDGs, and other international forest-related commitments and goals;
- invited FAO to play a stronger role in forecasting supply and demand of forest products into the future to help guide policy dialogue;
- acknowledged the increased focus of the IPC on the role of sustainably managed fast-growing trees, and resilient and diverse planted forests in combating forest cover loss and enhancing forest benefits in rural and urban contexts;
- encouraged FAO Members to engage with the IPC for knowledge exchange, technical collaboration and policy dialogue, while also considering the benefits of becoming a member of the IPC;

- underlined the importance of enhancing coordinated responses to Members’ needs for integrated and multidisciplinary dryland management approaches, as well as the potential of agroforestry for sustainable agriculture and landscape restoration in dryland forests;
- reiterated the importance of strengthening collaboration with the UNCCD, including by sharing knowledge products and reports related to land degradation and agriculture, and other relevant processes;
- requested the Working Group to continue strengthening the collaboration with the COAG Sub-Committee on Livestock, including through the Grazing with Trees global initiative, and inform both the COAG and the COFO on progress made;
- invited FAO to further enhance the role of the RFCs for better integration of important regional forest-related matters; and
- encouraged the RFCs to continue to consider ways to further improve their efficiency, impact in the regional context, and broader policy relevance as well-established mechanisms for cross-sectoral policy dialogue and exchange, and to strengthen coordination and collaborative action across sectors and stakeholders in order to achieve the SDGs, the UNSPF, and GFGs and other international forest-related commitments and goals.

Decisions and Recommendations of FAO Bodies of Interest to the Committee: On Thursday, Chair Walkner introduced the agenda item and the document ([COFO/2024/6.6](#)) summarizing relevant decisions of the FAO Council and its committees, COAG,

the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the RFCs, as well as information on the Global Framework for the Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions 2023-2027 and work on a voluntary code of conduct for the sustainable use and management of plastics in agriculture. The Chair noted this agenda item had been subject to the written correspondence procedure and proposed a single line in the summary acknowledging the decisions and recommendations.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee acknowledged the decisions and recommendations noted in the document.

Other Matters

Multi-year Programme of Work (MYPOW) of the Committee on Forestry 2024-2027: On Tuesday afternoon, Chair Walkner opened discussion on the document on the MYPOW ([COFO/2024/7.1](#)), which presents the Committee’s approach and working method to achieve its objectives in 2024-2027 and informs the Committee on progress in implementing the 2020-2023 MYPOW.

The DRC requested a reference to promoting “the mainstreaming of biodiversity in the relevant sectors” in a recommendation for collaboration between COFO and COAG.

CAMEROON, supported by CONGO, suggested referring only to adoption of MYPOW, “including items agreed as priority areas during COFO 27,” following the model of similar language agreed at COFI, and removing references to collaboration between the COAG and COFO and to the RFCs. Several delegates objected, saying those particular issues need underlining. On Thursday morning, the Chair proposed compromise language, which was agreed by the delegates.

BRAZIL, supported by INDONESIA, proposed text for establishing an *ad hoc* working group for developing principles on sustainable forest-based bioeconomy for food and agriculture. Several delegates agreed that further work on bioeconomy is needed but expressed reservations. CAMEROON, supported by the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, queried the procedure for establishing subsidiary bodies under COFO. He also cautioned this would require re-working the MYPOW, asking whether this discussion should instead feature under another agenda item. SWITZERLAND, the EU, NORWAY, the US, and NEW ZEALAND said this proposal should have been brought forward before COFO 27, noting it would require lengthy consultations among several ministries back home.

Chair Walkner, supported by delegates, proposed removing this proposal from the agenda item, instead including a reference of the discussion under the COFO recommendations on bioeconomy.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee underlined the importance of COFO's input to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) promoting the multiple contributions of forests in achieving the SDGs. The Committee also recommended that FAO continue facilitating work between COFO and COAG, strengthen the work of the RFCs, and seek ways to improve the efficiency of COFO's work.

Strengthening FAO's Contribution to the International Arrangements on Forests (IAF), including the CPF and the implementation of the UNSPF 2017-2030: On Tuesday, Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, Director, UNFF Secretariat, introduced the document (COFO/2024/7.2), presenting some key results of UNFF19, including calls for the CPF to enhance collaboration and coordination for developing its workplan and focusing on supporting implementation of the UNSPF.

In discussion on proposals for the COFO recommendations, delegates moved swiftly through the text with only minor edits.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee:

- invited FAO to further align the UNSPF and the GFGs in its programmes of work on forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, and regularly report on progress at COFO sessions;
- invited FAO to enhance cooperation and collaboration with relevant regional intergovernmental organizations with a view to supporting countries in the implementation of the UNSPF;
- invited FAO to continue leading the CPF and to implement, within its mandate, the agreed outcomes of the Mid-term Review of the IAF.

The Committee also encouraged FAO, among other things, to:

- continue facilitating the development of the CPF workplan, and joint initiatives with other CPF members, to support the implementation of the UNSPF and the achievement of its GFGs, as well as other multilaterally agreed forest-related goals and objectives;
- continue, in collaboration with other CPF members, working on the Global Core Set of forest-related indicators to streamline reporting and data sharing, and explore ways to use the Global Core Set of indicators in review and assessment processes;
- continue contributing expertise, data and knowledge products to the policy and technical discussions of the UNFF and to its next GFGs Report; and
- support the assessment of options to strengthen collaboration within the CPF.

Hosting of the XVI World Forestry Congress: On Thursday, Chair Walkner opened this item. COFO Secretary Buszko-Briggs introduced the document (COFO/2024/7.3), explaining the background and history of the WFC, and noting two bids for hosting had been submitted by Germany and Peru (COFO/2024/INF/10). GERMANY and PERU introduced their bids, along with videos narrated by the German Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture Cem Özdemir and the President of Peru's Council of Ministers Gustavo Adrianzén Olaya, respectively.

The EU, NEW ZEALAND, SWITZERLAND, and NORWAY supported Germany's submission. ECUADOR, PANAMA, BRAZIL, the DRC, ARGENTINA, VENEZUELA, CHILE, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, INDONESIA, and SURINAME supported Peru's submission, and KUWAIT called for all Group of 77 countries to back Peru. Noting the late submission of the offers and the possible need for additional information, the US, UK, and AUSTRALIA requested more time before deciding which to support.

The Chair asked the two countries offering to host to consult with each other and proposed that COFO forward the two bids to the FAO Council for decision at its next meeting, to be held 2-6 December 2024.

Outcome: In the report of COFO 27 (COFO/2024/REP), the Committee acknowledged with appreciation the offers from Germany and Peru and recommended they be considered by the Council for a decision.

Election of Officers

On Thursday, Pierre Taty (Congo) was elected by acclamation as Chair for COFO 28.

In his acceptance speech, Taty thanked everyone for accepting him as the new Chair and said solutions to the challenges "piling up" today must be urgent, requiring innovation, good will, and collaboration by everyone.

Date and Place of the Next Session

On Thursday, this question was forwarded to the FAO Council for decision.

Adoption of the Report and Closing Session

Chair Walkner opened the final session on Friday. Anthony Muriithi (Kenya), Chair, Drafting Committee, introduced the draft COFO 27 report (COFO/2024/REP) and noted that the Committee approved it *en bloc*. Delegates adopted the report by acclamation.

While recognizing the FAO Forestry Roadmap is not a negotiated text, the UK nonetheless registered for the meeting report its disagreement with the Roadmap's characterization of the Paris Agreement, observing that the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement are two separate agreements and should be reflected as such.

The US also registered for the meeting report its disagreement with the Roadmap framing of the Paris Agreement, as well as the framing of the GBF. She also noted disagreement with references to technology transfer that did not include the modifiers "voluntary and on mutually agreed terms," and added nothing said about trade in COFO would influence US trade policy in conformity with World Trade Organization rules.

CONGO thanked COFO Members for selecting a Congolese as the next Committee Chair, thus "recognizing the voice of Congo and Africa" on forestry matters.

In closing remarks, FAO Deputy Director-General Maurizio Martina noted the achievements of COFO 27 and the ninth World Forestry Week, including:

- the endorsement of the FAO Forestry Roadmap, which will guide FAO forestry work through 2031;
- the launch of SOFO 2024, which explores how Members can scale up responsible, inclusive innovation and optimize forest-based solutions;
- examination of cross-sectoral relations with agriculture, and enhancing linkages between forests, climate change, and water management; and
- recognition of FAO's role in advancing a forest-based bioeconomy.

Chair Walkner congratulated Members for a successful COFO 27, praising them for working in a “professional and friendly atmosphere” toward consensus. He thanked the Vice-Chairs, the Steering Committee, COFO Secretary Buszko-Briggs, the FAO staff, and others who made the Committee function smoothly. He said, as a professional forester from a family with several generations of foresters, being COFO Chair was the highlight of his career.

He declared COFO 27 closed at 2:29 pm.

A Brief Analysis of COFO 27

In the midst of yet another record heat wave in Europe, with delegates to the 27th meeting of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) complaining about scorching temperatures in Rome, the temperature of debate at FAO Headquarters rarely rose above cool, both literally and figuratively. With the closing of the session ahead of schedule, several delegates let out a sigh of relief, fearing a repeat of the last COFO session, where stalemates threatened to completely derail the meeting.

The Committee held fruitful discussions about how innovation can help meet the Global Forest Goal (GFG) of halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030, and COFO considered and delivered guidance for FAO's ongoing work to restore forests, improve forest-dependent people's lives, and support countries in managing their forests sustainably. Members even remained relatively measured when discussing politically-sensitive issues such as the agriculture-forestry interface, linkages between forestry and climate change, and the role of forests in a bioeconomy.

The theme of the week of both COFO and the parallel World Forest Week events was “Accelerating Forest Solutions through Innovation.” However, “Spreading the forest canopy” could have been another theme, given the positive news that, although we are still losing ten million hectares of forest every year, the rate of deforestation has significantly slowed in many countries, and forest cover is in fact expanding in some areas. Furthermore, COFO 27's discussions reflected the significance of forests in achieving many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), since they play an absolutely crucial and irreplaceable role in tackling and mitigating climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and water management. These two themes of innovation and expansion reverberated in the room, inspiring a positive outcome and even enabling COFO to finish its substantive work early.

This brief analysis will consider and reflect on the achievements of COFO 27, along with the significance of its expanding cross-sectoral and cross-committee work.

Innovating and Spreading the Forest Canopy

The guiding concept for the official theme was that innovation in all aspects of forestry—from social aspects, to monitoring, financing, policy, and practice—is needed if the GFG of halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation and the SDGs are to be achieved in the next six years.

Halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation, a stated aim of FAO's forestry work, is critically important because of the many functions forests perform for humanity and for the planet, including reducing the risk of flooding and other natural disasters, mitigating climate change, helping supply 75% of freshwater worldwide, and providing home to more than 80% of terrestrial species, as well as providing livelihoods for 1.6 billion people. It is also urgent, as progress remains frustratingly slow toward achieving the forest-related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Ideas on innovation ranged over social, technical, technological, financial, institutional, and policy frameworks. Delegates gave particular attention to forest-relevant technological developments such as artificial intelligence (AI), monitoring through remote sensing and the use of drones, and digital innovation in Brazil on mapping forest benefits. In the area of social and financial innovation, delegates discussed transformational ways to incentivize communities to conserve and restore forests, such as through green value chains and urban agrifood systems. Many delegates expressed appreciation for the exchange of experiences and knowledge about the innovative ways to tackle forest-related issues as a positive and satisfying feature of COFO 27, noting this may be a potential sign that human ingenuity can still enable these important targets to be met.

While increasing forest cover may be the ultimate goal, it was clear at COFO 27 that expansion beyond the forestry silo is also needed to achieve this goal. “Spreading the forest canopy” embodies many of the innovative ideas and new practices that were reported and discussed at the meeting. It not only encompasses such well-known practices as physically planting trees in long-deforested areas to promote afforestation, reforestation, and forest restoration, but also introducing trees and forests into new areas, including agricultural land, through agroforestry; grazing land, through silvopasture; and cities, through urban greening. This expansion of the definition of “forest-related work” is crucial, and reflects recent global trends in acknowledging the importance of breaking down silos and encouraging more cross-sectoral and cross-committee work at both international and national levels.

Increasing forest cover also requires institutional innovation, which FAO is clearly demonstrating to the world. For instance, COFO 27's agenda drew upon the work of other FAO entities such as its Committee on Agriculture in discussing agroforestry and FAO's Committee on Food Security in addressing the links between forests and agrifood systems. FAO's work addressing climate change, biodiversity, poverty reduction and rural development, and natural resource management in general also featured throughout the week. In discussing FAO's Conceptual Framework for Integrated Land and Water Resources Management, COFO Members underscored and acted on an important and often forgotten link between the two: apart from supplying 75% of freshwater worldwide, forests help regulate water quantity, quality, and provide protecting functions against, for instance, soil and coastal erosion, flooding and avalanches.

COFO 27 did not limit itself to addressing FAO's own work, however, but recognized FAO's forestry links to other entities. The most significant of these is the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), which FAO chairs, established a quarter-century ago as part of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) in recognition of the need to integrate the work of all international organizations addressing forest issues. COFO 27 invited FAO to lead the CPF in implementing the results of the Mid-term Review (MTR) of the IAF concluded at the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) in May 2024. The COFO invitation provides the go-ahead for FAO to lead CPF actions requested in the MTR, including focusing the CPF workplan on implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and achieving the GFGs with clear priorities and actions, and to regularly assess completed CPF joint initiatives to identify challenges, successes, lessons learned, and the initiatives' contributions to the GFGs.

Innovative expansion of forests and work in forestry was also seen at COFO 27 in other areas. For example, FAO was invited to work closely with the Convention on Biological Diversity on mainstreaming biodiversity in forestry and to align the FAO Action Plan on mainstreaming biodiversity to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. COFO also called on FAO to collaborate with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management, which should strengthen cross-agency cooperation on wildlife management and spur assessments of the impacts of human-wildlife conflict on food security. COFO 27's discussion on urban forestry, and FAO's launch of the Green Cities Network, is likely to spur closer cooperation with other international agencies working on greening cities, including the UN Economic Commission for Europe, and new cooperation on urban wetlands together with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Another new development is conceptualizing forests as part of the overall "bioeconomy." While COFO's discussions on bioeconomy hail back 10 years, the concept appears to be picking up steam. The COFO 27 talks echoed those at UNFF19 in May 2024, with a lively debate whether to frame work as "forest in the bioeconomy," "forest-related bioeconomy" or as "circular and sustainable economy," with plenty of confusion over what it meant in each case. Some delegates appear leery about how far to take this discussion, and whether it is meant to dilute focus on forestry into broader economic, industry, market development, and trade contexts. COFO 27 by no means put a coda to the bioeconomy debate: it promises to return, with FAO invited to host an international conference on the contribution of the forest sector to sustainable bioeconomy in 2025 and report back to COFO in 2026. It remains to be seen what happens with Brazil's proposal, which will be addressed by the FAO Council in December, to create an *ad hoc* working group within FAO to develop international principles of sustainable forest-based bioeconomy for food and agriculture.

Not Losing the Forest for the Trees

Despite the enthusiasm COFO demonstrated for innovation and expansion of the forestry agenda, a potential challenge arose from lack of a sharp and narrow focus on technical aspects of forestry, which had been the norm. The real world beyond FAO's walls is, to say the least, messy: countries are geographically, socially, politically, culturally and economically distinct, and thus experience different challenges and hold divergent interests. This was particularly noticeable in the debate on the ambitious FAO Forestry Roadmap that will strategically guide FAO forestry work

through 2031. FAO finalized the Roadmap internally after long consultations with all interested parties and the document was not up for negotiation.

The issue arose in relation to text that was inserted prior to COFO, during consultations on the drafting of the Roadmap, at the request of some countries, referring to, for instance not creating unnecessary and unjustified barriers to trade. This boils down to certain countries wanting to address agriculture as the biggest driving force behind deforestation. An approach by some is to adopt measures seeking to incentivize sustainable production by restricting trade in certain products connected to deforestation. Some delegates at COFO27, mainly those exporting agricultural goods, argued that these risks undermine the efficiency and productivity of food production, thus threatening food security and efforts towards eliminating hunger and poverty.

This shows how, when doing cross-sectoral and cross-committee work, governments and international organizations are sometimes confronted with conflicting priorities and differing trade-offs. Although this makes for challenging work, it also ensures that efforts across sectors can be informed by these challenges, and can open up space for innovative ways forward.

Across international negotiations, it is also common practice that when discussing challenging topics, delegates often prefer to fall back on established and agreed-on language from other fora. While this sometimes saves time and avoids the repetition of lengthy debates, some delegates opined that it is not always relevant, nor helpful, but rather risks detracting from opportunities to discuss new ideas, principles, and ways forward. At COFO27 this emerged on a number of occasions, including on whether and how delegates would refer to the impact of conflicts on forests globally. Following the proposal to use language agreed at the FAO Committee on Fisheries, a delegate pointed out that the impact of conflicts on forestry versus fisheries is very different, especially for people whose food sources are in forests where a conflict is taking place.

Marking the Trail Through the Woods

In contrast to the last COFO session's tense negotiations, this one saw Members turning down the heat and engaging in COFO's underlying mandate: to allow countries to have a say in what FAO does on forestry-related issues and help guide FAO's work going forward. In this instance, it is clear that COFO and its Members are ready to begin work in breaking down the artificial silos of different areas of work such as forestry, agriculture, water management, and urban development, and instead recognize upfront and address the intricate linkages between these silos, to ensure that there is collaboration and ongoing dialogue moving forward.

COFO also provides a space for countries to present and draw attention to their own forest-related activities. Member countries' innovations in research, policy, and on-the-ground implementation may well be influenced or guided by FAO. Yet, perhaps even more crucially, their experience can enhance the global outcomes of FAO's work through the sharing of lessons learned. To the extent that the innovations and linkages discussed at COFO 27 sharpens the focus of FAO forestry work, contribute to a more effective CPF, and can help bring the world closer to achieving the GFGs and SDGs by 2030, COFO 27 will have created wins for FAO, its Members, forests, and the people and ecosystems depending on them.

Upcoming Meetings

9th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference: FOREST EUROPE ministers and heads of observer organizations will discuss SFM, resilience, and youth involvement with the aim of making decisions to strengthen future cooperation on forests in Europe and share the latest findings and developments in SFM across the pan-European region. **dates:** 1-2 October 2024 **location:** Petersberg, Germany **www:** foresteurope.org/event/9th-forest-europe-ministerial-conference

UN Biodiversity Conference 2024 (CBD COP 16): The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing will convene for the first time since the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. **dates:** 21 October - 1 November 2024 **location:** Cali, Colombia **www:** cbd.int/conferences/2024

8th Mediterranean Forest Week: This event gathers researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders to address key issues facing Mediterranean forests, including wildfire prevention, biodiversity, and climate change adaptation. **dates:** 4-8 November 2024 **location:** Barcelona, Spain **www:** efi.int/events/8th-mediterranean-forest-week-2024-11-04

2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29): This event will include the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 29), the 19th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 19), and the sixth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 6) that will convene to complete the first enhanced transparency framework and the new collective quantified goal on finance, among other matters. The 61st sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 61) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 61) will also meet. **dates:** 11-22 November 2024 **location:** Baku, Azerbaijan **www:** unfccc.int/cop29

ITWG-FGR 8: The Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (ITWG-FGR) reviews the situation and issues related to biodiversity in the area of forest genetic resources and advises and makes recommendations to the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) on these matters. **dates:** 26-28 November 2024 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** fao.org/forest-genetic-resources/working-group/intergovernmental-technical-working-group-on-forest-genetic-resources/en

ITTC-60: The 60th session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-60) and sessions of the Associated Committees will continue the work of the International Tropical Timber Organization. **dates:** 1-6 December 2024 **location:** Yokohama, Japan **www:** itto.int

UNCCD COP16: This meeting of the Conference of the Parties to UN Convention to Combat Desertification will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the UNCCD and review global progress made toward land degradation neutrality and confront pressing issues including enhancing drought resilience, promoting women's land rights, and combating sand and dust storms. **dates:** 2-13 December 2024 **location:** Riyadh, Saudi Arabia **www:** unccd.int/events/governing-bodies-meetings/unccd-conference-parties-16th-session-cop16

FAO Council: The 176th meeting of the FAO Council will determine the dates of next meeting of COFO, review the COFO report, among other agenda items. **dates:** 2-6 December 2025 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** fao.org/governing-bodies/council

IPBES 11: The eleventh meeting of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services will consider the assessment on interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food, and health, and the transformative change assessment. **dates:** 10-16 December 2024 **location:** Windhoek, Namibia **www:** ipbes.net/events/ipbes-11

CGRFA 20: The CGRFA is the only permanent intergovernmental body that specifically deals with all components of biodiversity for food and agriculture, including plants, animals, aquatic resources, forests, micro-organisms, and invertebrates. The Commission initiates, oversees, and guides the preparation of global cross-sectoral and sector assessments of genetic resources for food and agriculture. Based on these assessments, the Commission may decide on policy responses, such as initiating Global Plans of Action. Among other things, it will consider the recommendations of ITWG-FGR 8. **dates:** 24-28 March 2025 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** fao.org/cgrfa/meetings/commission/en

UNFF20: The UN Forum on Forests will review progress in implementation of the UNSPF, progress in implementing mid-term review outcomes, UNFF20 inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and other international forest-related developments. **dates:** 5-9 May 2025 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/esa/forests

COFO 28: The dates of the next COFO biennial meeting will be determined by the FAO Council. **dates:** TBC **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** fao.org/forestry/committee-on-forestry/en

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

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| ACSFI | Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-Based Industries |
| AFoCO | Asian Forest Cooperation Organization |
| COAG | FAO Committee on Agriculture |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CBDR | Common but differentiated responsibilities |
| COFI | FAO Committee on Fisheries |
| COFO | FAO Committee on Forestry |
| CPF | Collaborative Partnership on Forests |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| EFI | European Forest Institute |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN |
| FRA | Global Forest Resource Assessment |
| GBF | Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework |
| GFGs | Global Forest Goals |
| NWFPs | Non-wood forest products |
| RFCs | FAO Regional Forestry Commission |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SFM | Sustainable forest management |
| SOFO | State of the World's Forests |
| UNCCD | UN Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNECE | UN Economic Commission for Europe |
| UNFF | UN Forum on Forests |
| UNSPF | UN Strategic Plan for Forests |
| WFC | World Forestry Congress |