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Youth
ASSEMBLY

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Youth Policy Brief for agrifood systems within NBSAPs

Introduction

The transformation of agrifood systems is central to achieving the targets of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(KMGBF\)](#) and will be a defining focus leading into the Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Yerevan, Armenia in October 2026.

Agrifood systems are both a major driver of biodiversity loss and an essential part of the solution to reversing it. While unsustainable practices place pressure on biodiversity and disproportionately affect vulnerable groups including women, youth and Indigenous Peoples, sustainably managed agrifood systems can contribute to biodiversity conservation and restoration, the sustainable use of biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services.

As Member States move towards implementing their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), agrifood systems are emerging as a critical, cross-cutting pathway for achieving the KMGBF. The analysis done by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) of 78 NBSAPs found that agrifood-related national targets and actions collectively contribute to all 23 KMGBF targets, from reducing threats to biodiversity, to supporting sustainable use and benefit-sharing and enabling effective implementation and mainstreaming .

Youth advocates, agrifood system innovators, Indigenous youth, researchers and local communities have already demonstrated strong leadership in global biodiversity and climate arenas. Yet their expertise is still underutilized in national planning and COP processes.

The objective of this Youth Policy Brief is to present collective youth priorities and recommendations for CBD COP17 and to explore how young people can meaningfully participate in and support governments throughout the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of NBSAPs, with a particular focus on agrifood systems and the enabling conditions required for effective implementation.

Methodology

The World Food Forum (WFF)'s [Youth Assembly](#), through its [Youth Policy Board](#) (YPB), [WFF Educators](#) and [WFF Young Scientist Group](#) in collaboration with the [Global Youth Biodiversity Network](#) (GYBN), [Agroecology Coalition](#), [Biovision](#), [Alliance Bioversity & CIAT](#) and with technical support from FAO's Office of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment (OCB), hosted two consultations that brought together over 600 young people, representing farmers, agronomists, ecologists, environmentalists, students and youth organizations from all regions.

1. **Agrifood systems within National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)**
2. **Biodiversity, Agroecology and Food Systems: shaping youth priorities for CBD COP17**

The consultations had the following objectives:

- Strengthen youth understanding of the role of agrifood systems, agrobiodiversity and agroecology in the implementation of the KMGBF;
- Examine mechanisms for integrating agrifood systems within NBSAPs;
- Identify policy entry points for youth engagement in CBD processes; and
- Collect youth priorities, recommendations and cases to feed into a joint youth recommendations document for the CBD COP17.

Young people engaged in a participatory process to identify and co-develop **youth-driven priorities and recommendations** for integrating agrifood systems into NBSAPs and strengthening meaningful youth participation in their planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

Both consultations were structured as **interactive capacity-development and knowledge-strengthening dialogues**, blending technical presentations, youth-led experiences, interactive tools and a focused breakout group discussions.

The **core of the first consultative process** was the breakout discussions, structured around regions to exchange experiences from the Global North and the Global South on integrating agrifood systems into biodiversity strategies. The groups exchanged views on: (i) the biggest challenges in various agrifood systems that affect nature and biodiversity; (ii) the actions that governments and policymakers could include in their NBSAPs to make agrifood systems more sustainable; and (iii) key youth priorities to contribute to national and global biodiversity dialogues.

The **core of the second consultative process** was also the breakout groups that focused on: (i) agrobiodiversity and agroecology; (ii) youth governance and participation; and (iii) solutions and cases for KMGBF implementation.

Summary of the consultations

First consultative process

Discussions with youth consistently reflected the interconnectedness of agrifood systems, biodiversity and human well-being. Youth highlighted that the most pressing challenges stem from unsustainable agricultural practices, such as excessive use of agrochemicals, monocultures, land degradation and water mismanagement, compounded by climate change, weak governance and loss of traditional ecological knowledge.

Many also pointed to structural issues like limited access to land, markets, finance and education, which prevent young producers and local communities from adopting biodiversity-friendly practices. A participant from Colombia explicitly mentioned the need to recover traditional knowledge and for governments to support farmers and youth so that locally produced foods can have competitive prices compared to imported foods.

Participants consistently called for a systemic shift toward agroecology, emphasizing policy coherence, capacity development and fair incentives for farmers. They urged governments to integrate agroecological principles into NBSAPs, promote organic and regenerative farming, support community seed systems and value Indigenous and local knowledge. Youth envisioned their own role as catalysts for transformation, advocating for education, innovation, inclusion and awareness as key priorities.

Finally, their policy messages converged around three core directions: sustainability, inclusion and regeneration. Youth called for policies that protect ecosystems while creating viable livelihoods, combining traditional knowledge with modern innovations. To support this, young people from Europe urged governments to strengthen extension and education services that raise awareness of biodiversity.

Second consultative process

Youth contributions showed that agroecology is not only a set of practices, but also a policy pathway for sustainably using biodiversity, strengthening resilience, sustaining rural livelihoods and enabling agrifood systems transformation.

The most prominent policy messages converged around four areas:

- Direct investment in youth-led agroecology;
- Institutionalized youth participation in CBD and NBSAP processes;
- Protection and scaling of community seed systems, Indigenous knowledge and diversified farming; and
- Practical education that allows young people to learn by doing.

Participants consistently emphasized that equitable access to land, finance, training and networks, together with meaningful involvement in decision-making processes, would provide an enabling environment for youth to contribute effectively to NBSAP implementation and, in turn, to the achievement of the KMGBF goals and targets.

The consultation also highlighted the need to connect global biodiversity targets with local realities. Cases from Africa, Asia and Pacific, Latin America and Europe highlighted a range of agrifood solutions, including community-led seed systems, agroforestry, water harvesting, pollinator strips, home gardens, family farming, traditional cropping systems and youth-led agrifood entrepreneurship that can support the implementation of national biodiversity commitments and objectives. In turn, this contributes to the achievement of the goals and targets of the KMGBF.

A successful example comes from Kenya with the establishment of community seed banks with farmer-managed systems conserving Indigenous crop varieties such as sorghum, millet and local vegetables, many of which were at risk of extinction. This has significantly increased on-farm biodiversity while strengthening farmers' resilience to climate change.

However, participants stressed that scaling these solutions requires policy coherence, finance, inclusive governance and respect for local and Indigenous knowledge holders. Communities, and more broadly countries, need support to build capacity on the development and implementation of such programmes for agrifood systems.

A testimony from Rwanda mentioned that in order to scale up agroecology, youth should develop businesses rather than treat agroecology only as a practice and they need financial literacy to start this type of business, engage in participatory governance with the farmers and train themselves and other farmers following a learning-by-doing approach.

Overall, youth priorities for CBD COP17 call for policies and plans that recognize young people and knowledge holders as meaningful participants in NBSAP planning and as implementation partners; value their knowledge and contributions; and provide communities, producers and youth-led initiatives with the institutional, technical and financial support needed to advance the implementation of national biodiversity commitments and actions, thereby contributing to the achievement of global biodiversity goals.

Youth recommendations

The recommendations presented in this paper emerged through two complementary consultations. While the first consultation identified the key challenges and needs faced by youth, the second consultation built on these discussions by exploring potential solutions and successful cases around the world. Together, the two consultations informed and shaped the recommendations, identifying key areas of action to advance the implementation of the KMGBF targets.

Meeting youth's needs through sustainable use of biodiversity and benefit-sharing

1. **Redirect agricultural subsidies toward sustainable farming practices and biodiversity-friendly farming systems** that focus on crop diversification, soil regeneration and pollination support, phasing out incentives that encourage the excessive or inappropriate use of agrochemical inputs and unsustainable monocropping practices.
2. **Encourage the inclusion of agroecological approaches within NBSAPs** and national policies as a means to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, sustainable agrifood systems, equity and climate resilience, while strengthening coherence across national commitments under the three Rio Conventions.
3. **Promote Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems** to protect and revitalize local, climate-resilient agriculture through community seed banks, participatory programmes, the conservation and sustainable use of neglected and underutilized species, diversified cropping systems and agroforestry, as practical tools for KMGBF implementation that strengthen agrobiodiversity and food sovereignty.
4. **Recognize agroecology, agrobiodiversity and family farming as livelihood pathways for young people**, linking biodiversity conservation with dignified employment, rural revitalization and food sovereignty through targeted agrifood systems-related actions in NBSAPs, that contribute to national biodiversity objectives and relevant KMGBF goals and targets.

Tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming

5. **Ensure meaningful youth participation in decision-making**, rather than ad hoc consultation, by institutionalizing youth representation in biodiversity and agrifood governance, including relevant CBD processes and COP meetings and establishing clear and appropriate roles in NBSAP planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

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6. **Integrate Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' knowledge into NBSAPs and KMGBF** implementation with free, prior and informed consent, intergenerational exchange and respect for knowledge holders.
 7. **Invest in education, mentorship, training, practical extension and peer-to-peer learning** with and for youth and support their participation in co-developing knowledge and solutions for biodiversity-friendly agrifood systems through approaches, including living labs, farmer field schools and digital tools.
 8. **Strengthen efforts to ensure equitable access to land, finance, tools, markets and post-harvest infrastructure** enabling young producers, technicians and rural entrepreneurs to sustain livelihoods while protecting ecosystems and biodiversity.
 9. **Support youth-led initiatives and enterprises** to scale up the use of agroecology and agrobiodiversity through accessible grants, finance and risk-sharing mechanisms tailored to grassroots action, helping to regenerate ecosystems, promote sustainable consumption and provide dignified employment opportunities that will revitalize rural areas.
 10. **Create platforms and networks that connect youth, farmers, researchers, policymakers and the private sector** to exchange knowledge, mobilize resources and support actions on the ground.

Call to action

Transforming agrifood systems for biodiversity requires more than commitments. It requires coordinated action, investment and meaningful participation across generations and sectors. The consultative process showed that young people are already contributing knowledge, solutions and leadership to this transformation. What is needed now is to create the conditions for these contributions to shape policies, investments and implementation at all levels.

Governments and policymakers

Youth call on governments and policymakers to advance actions related to agrifood national targets, considering the following:

- Integrate agrifood systems across national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), aligning national targets with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). This should extend beyond Target 10 to all relevant targets, recognizing the contribution of agrifood systems to reducing biodiversity threats, meeting human needs sustainably and mainstreaming biodiversity.

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- Institutionalize youth participation in policy design, implementation and monitoring processes, recognizing youth as current knowledge holders and future decision-makers, moving beyond ad hoc consultations towards permanent youth advisory or co-governance mechanisms.
 - Recognize and support Indigenous and local youth as part of the intergenerational continuity of agrifood systems, knowledge and biodiversity stewardship, ensuring that their participation is grounded in the rights, knowledge systems and priorities of their communities.
 - Create enabling conditions for youth-led action by promoting equitable access to land and natural resources, finance, education and capacity development, markets, technology and decent employment, particularly for young producers, rural entrepreneurs, researchers, community leaders and other young agrifood actors.
 - Encourage public support and investment in biodiversity-friendly agrifood systems, including diversified farming, community seed systems, agroforestry, regenerative practices and other locally appropriate approaches that strengthen both ecosystems and livelihoods.
 - In order to strengthen synergy between the three Rio Conventions, we urge parties to Align Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets around three common indicators: soil health, agrobiodiversity, and resilient food systems.
 - We call on Parties to report on agriculture implementation through a single simplified template covering climate, biodiversity and land to reduce the reporting burden and increase transparency.

Civil society, academia and research institutions

Youth urge civil society organizations, academia and research institutions to:

- Strengthen their respective roles in translating national biodiversity commitments into action before, during and beyond CBD COP17 by advancing interdisciplinary research, generating and harmonizing evidence and data across agrifood system sectors and making this knowledge accessible to policymakers, practitioners and communities;
- Support youth to generate, document and communicate knowledge, and ensure that their roles extend beyond their participation in research and dialogue;
- Support youth-led initiatives and early-career researchers actively, creating spaces for co-creation, mentorship and participation in decision-making related to biodiversity.

Private sector and businesses

Youth call on the private sector and businesses to:

- Identify and reduce harmful production and sourcing practices and adopt practices that reduce pressures on biodiversity, conserve agrobiodiversity and support the sustainable use and restoration of biodiversity across agrifood systems.
- Understand that as youth are part of the workforce across the entire agrifood system and that their meaningful integration and support through decent employment opportunities can also contribute to rural revitalization, a key global societal goal.
- Recognize that investing in biodiversity and youth is not only an environmental responsibility, but also an opportunity to build more resilient, diverse and sustainable agrifood systems for the future.
- Develop equitable partnerships that enable young producers and rural entrepreneurs to access markets, appropriate finance, technology, infrastructure and knowledge, contributing to the revitalization of rural areas.

Youth worldwide

Youth are already part of the transformation we are calling for. Every young person can contribute to biodiversity and sustainable agrifood systems in ways that respond to their own context, knowledge, capacities and communities. Youth worldwide are encouraged to:

- Engage in actions related to biodiversity, especially those related to education and entrepreneurship, advocacy and social media mobilization.
- Actively participate in consultations, policy spaces and processes at local, national and global levels.
- Call on governments to recognize, support and engage young people as both beneficiaries and actors in the planning and implementation of agrifood solutions that contribute to the achievement of national biodiversity commitments.
- Ensure that youth engagement does not stop at being invited to a consultation. Young people should be supported to bring their experiences and solutions to the table, influence decisions and contribute to the implementation and monitoring of biodiversity plans and policies.

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