



Affiliated Session – 26 July 2021 | 19:30-20:20 CEST

Agrobiodiversity for a sustainable future

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Concept note

Agrobiodiversity is the foundation of our food systems. The wealth and variety of plants, animals and microorganisms that habit our ecosystems make food production possible. By using natural elements and their interactions, agrobiodiversity allows us to produce nutritious food with less external inputs, minimizing waste and pollution, helping to restore soil and protecting biodiversity. Diversifying production on the field reduces risks of losses due to climate change, pests and diseases and stabilizes farmers' income. When used and conserved, agrobiodiversity provides options to breeders and farmers to enhance resilience and ensure the sustainability of their livelihoods in the face of climate change.

Today, agrobiodiversity is threatened by unsustainable production practices. Excessive use of synthetic inputs, fertilizers and extensive farming of high-yielding varieties are reducing the availability of this diversity on farm and consequently on our plates. Agricultural production and markets have become increasingly uniform in the past decades, leading to an erosion of diversity from production systems and the homogenization of diets. Of the thousands of plants and animals used for food in the past, less than 200 currently contribute to global food supplies and only 9 account for almost 70% of total crop production. Many species are considered neglected and underutilized. Traditional knowledge about husbandry and use of diverse foods is also disappearing. Losing this diversity reduces the resilience of our production system, lowers the nutritional quality of our food, and contributes to climate change and natural resource degradation.

In a world facing climate, environmental, health and biodiversity crises, agrobiodiversity is an essential part of the solution. This genetic diversity is the foundation of tomorrow's agriculture, allowing farmers and professional breeders to develop the new crop varieties that agriculture needs to adapt to changing conditions. The development of new varieties will be necessary for successful adaptation to climate change, and thus to secure the world's food supply in the future. The maintenance of agrobiodiversity in situ, i.e. in nature and in agricultural practice, remains indispensable and is a task for protected areas and on-farm conservation efforts. However, given the risks associated with this strategy, a second approach must be pursued consistently in parallel: the conservation of agrobiodiversity ex situ in genebanks.

While the ongoing efforts to conserve biodiversity have not succeeded in fully stemming the tide of these losses, there is still a chance to safeguard what is left of our world's agrobiodiversity. This session aims to highlight the crucial role that agrobiodiversity can play in shifting towards sustainable, equitable and resilient food systems. Agrobiodiversity has already emerged as a game-changing solution within the preparation process of the UN Food System Summit. Based on this, Action Track 3 on *Boosting nature-positive production* has set up a solution cluster focusing on *Increasing agrobiodiversity for production*. This event will discuss the challenges and opportunities for increasing the use and conservation of agrobiodiversity as a means to transform food systems into sustainable, equitable and resilient ones. As part of the discussion, representatives from the UNFSS solution clusters on agrobiodiversity will present the ideas and propositions generated as part of the preparation process to the Summit and gather feedback from the audience. The session will be fundamental to expand our Coalition of Actors in support of agrobiodiversity and socialize and gather feedback on the cluster's proposal on this topic.



Convention on
Biological Diversity

