Target 10: Agriculture and forestry

Elements to be replaced

- "Ecosystem services" by "Ecosystem functions"

Ecosystem functions are well defined under the CBD. The word services is a market term, suggesting that ecosystems' primary function is to serve human requirements.

- "Agro-biodiversity" with "agricultural biodiversity"

This is the correct term, as defined in the CBD.

Elements that should be part of the target

- Protecting pollinators

Pollinators are vital for agriculture and biodiversity but are often highly endangered. Their disappearance would have devastating impacts.

- Local seed systems and in situ conservation

These are essential to protect local varieties and related knowledge, ever more vital because of climate change and biodiversity loss. Community seed banks, often run by women, are essential to such protection and conservation. There may also be a role for regional or territorial seed banks serving as a backup to local community seed banks.

- Soil biodiversity

This is fundamental to biodiversity and food production, yet many industrial agriculture practices progressively destroy the soil.

- Ensuring that at least 25 per cent of agricultural land is managed under agro-ecological or other biodiversity-friendly practices

To ensure that agricultural biodiversity is sustained and enhanced in all areas, for the reasons given above, the IPC for food sovereignty has argued that the area used for genetically uniform production should be halved by 2030 and be increasingly replaced by biodiverse agroecological systems developed in the framework of food sovereignty. 25% should therefore be the minimum, and we should aim for 50%.

- Transform food systems

Urgent food systems transformation towards biodiverse agroecology is essential. Industrial production systems, propped up by agrochemicals, not only lack inherent resilience and are very vulnerable to climate change but also drastically reduce agricultural biodiversity through their genetically uniform production systems and their use of biocides.

- Sustainable use based on agro-ecology, ecosystem approaches and environmental principles-

To be sustainable, all use must be based on these principles, which are also essential to the CBD itself. Indigenous food systems have consistently proven to sustain yields over time while conserving, sustainably using and enhancing biodiversity, providing a basis for adequate nutrition and secure farm livelihoods, especially for small producers. Agroecology also provides farmers with the means to spread risks during adverse and extreme weather

events, adapt to climate change and build climate resilience. Such food systems are also favourable for biodiversity and climate.

- In close cooperation with custodians of biodiversity, in particular smallholder farmers, indigenous food systems and women

These are the people with the cultures, knowledge and skills that feed most of us and with whom we should cooperate, learn from and support.

- Ensure that all areas under agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry and other productive uses are managed sustainably

IPBES has identified these sectors as the ones which most impact biodiversity. Their combined land use has a more extensive land occupancy than any other use. Thus their sustainability is crucial for global environmental sustainability. It also should be ensured that there is no regression from Sustainable Development Goal 15 and its target to halt all deforestation and forest degradation by 2020.

- Phasing out all unsustainable forms of production,

According to the IPBES, unsustainable agricultural production methods are the leading cause of biodiversity loss and worsen climate change impacts. Monoculture production is linked to the loss of biodiversity, especially agricultural biodiversity, and the use of agrochemicals which are devastating for biodiversity, ecosystems and human health. Clearcutting practices have been shown to be a highly destructive form of forestry and should be banned.

- Reducing nutrients lost to the environment, including by abolishing synthetic fertilisers

Excessive use of manure and other organic and synthetic fertilisers leads to pollution levels that destroy soil fertility, sensitive plants and animals. This affects water bodies and terrestrial ecosystems such as meadows and forests. The GBF should call for the abolition of synthetic fertilisers altogether.

- Support for farmers' seed systems

Seed diversity is essential for agricultural biodiversity. Small-scale producers, particularly indigenous peoples and local communities, women, pastoralists and fishers, ensure the preservation and enhancement of biodiverse seed systems. These should be protected through in situ and on-farm conservation, ensuring their secure land, water and sea tenure.
Elements that should NOT be part of the target

- Sustainable intensification

Sustainable intensification focuses on productivity, technology and capital-intensive production rather than on a structural transformation of food systems via ecological, economic, social and political change. Some practices include reducing tillage through GM crops or trees or reducing the carbon intensity of industrial livestock. However, many of those techniques have severe impacts on biodiversity.
Sustainable intensification is often proposed as a way to 'spare' land for biodiversity protection, but it actually implies industrial monoculture agriculture with large applications of agrochemicals damaging to biodiversity and human health. We need land sharing, not land sparing.

- Increased productivity

In many cases, productivity is contrary to biodiversity concerns, so including it could lead to further loss of biodiversity.

Productivity is the competence of the FAO; the CBD has to ensure that those productive methods are compatible with biodiversity conservation.

- innovation

Innovation implies the application of new technologies whose future impacts we do not yet understand and which could be highly detrimental

- Beneficial biotechnology applications for agricultural productivity

Biotechnology applications can imply new genetic engineering techniques such as genome editing or gene drives to address e.g. invasive alien species. Its impacts are not well understood. However, we already know that current GM crops have helped build monoculture agriculture, causing small farmers to be driven off their land and destroying forests/biodiversity.

- Efficiency

The word signals industrial monoculture agriculture, often promoted based on its large scale, mechanisation and little need for human intervention.

- Climate resilient crops

The context in which this text appears makes it clear that it indicates the use of innovation, developing, for example, gene-edited crops that are marketed as climate resilient. However, there are varieties grown by IPLCs with properties that have not been adequately assessed for their climate resilience and which risk being lost as local communities are driven off their land.

- Extraction

Intensive monoculture agriculture and forestry is a form of extraction as damaging as mining. Agriculture is not about extraction and cultivation; forests should not be subject to extractivism.

- Agricultural productivity

The aim of an agriculture target in the CBD is to ensure that agriculture is not damaging to biodiversity. Productivity is a concern of other spaces, such as the FAO.
Productivity should not be the primary aim of agriculture but rather support for biodiverse crop and soil systems without the application of agrotoxics and artificial fertilisers.
Productivity is the primary aim of industrial agriculture that takes precedence over all other values, to the detriment of biodiversity, ecosystems and people.

Further reading on target

Sustainable intensification: Green-washing conventional intensive agriculture, ECO, March 2022 *https://eco2022cbdalliance.blogspot.com/2022/03/sustainable-intensification-green.html*

Replanting Agricultural Biodiversity in the CBD, Friends of the Earth International, 2022, https://www.foei.org/publication/replanting-agricultural-biodiversity-in-the-cbd/

What's at Steak? Impacts of the industrial livestock and feedstock sector on forests, biodiversity, farmers and communities, Global Forest Coalition, 2016 https://globalforestcoalition.org/whats-steak-impacts-industrial-livestock-feedstock-sector-forests-biodiversity-farmers-communities/