



Slow Food®

GOOD, CLEAN AND FAIR FOOD FOR ALL

POLICY BRIEF ON BIODIVERSITY

The UNCBD and national governments must increase efforts to promote biodiversity for food and agriculture

SLOW FOOD CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITIES TO:

- 1. Acknowledge biodiversity for food and agriculture** is indispensable to food security, sustainable development and the supply of many vital ecosystem services
- 2. Recognize and promote agroecological food systems** as the solution to reverse the collapse of biodiversity and face the climate and health crises
- 3. Secure public money for agroecological food systems:** only agroecological farming systems producing food for human and animal consumption and contributing to the socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of their farms and regions should receive financial support
- 4. Grant institutional and political recognition to agroecological farmers and support farmers in the transition** towards agroecology through improved advisory services, training opportunities and exchanges between farmers, **and financial assistance where possible**
- 5. Adopt a Human Rights Based Approach, including the recognition of the key role of IPLCs** in area-based conservation and restoration, based upon equitable, gender-just governance and respect for their rights to free, prior and informed consent.

Our dependence on biodiversity is increasing

The planet is currently undergoing what scientists are calling the sixth mass extinction. This tragic loss of biodiversity is largely caused by human activity through, amongst others, land use change, climate change, pollution, overexploitation and invasive alien species.

Ever-growing scientific evidence shows that biodiversity, i.e. the diversity of all life, from individual genes to species up to the most complex levels -- ecosystems, is fundamental to humanity's capacity to survive.

Yet, production systems worldwide are becoming ever less diverse in terms of the ecosystems, species and within-species genetic resources (FAO 2019).

The narrow focus of the food industry on a handful of vegetable varieties and animal breeds leaves our global community more vulnerable to climate breakdown, future pandemics, widespread malnutrition and hunger, while continuing to concentrate the market power in the hands of a few multinationals. Today, four corporations control more than 50% of the world's seeds and dominate the global food supply.

Climate change will increasingly put pressure on food production and access, especially in vulnerable regions, undermining food security and nutrition (IPCC, 2022). If no action is taken to curtail the combined biodiversity and climate crises, food production losses will be devastating. Yet, a biodiversity-rich nature provides a simple way to adapt to different climates: genetic diversity.

In this context, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity will adopt in 2022 the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The framework provides a global roadmap for the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems for the next decade and aims to facilitate implementation, which will primarily take place through activities at the national level, with supporting action at the subnational, regional and global levels.

The right to food depends on biodiversity

Biodiversity is critical for safeguarding global food security, fulfilling the right to food, underpinning healthy and nutritious diets, improving livelihoods, and enhancing the resilience of people and communities.

Biodiversity enables agricultural systems to resist and prevent environmental shocks, climate change and pandemics. It provides essential ecosystem services (crop pollination, air quality, regulation of water cycles). It is a key resource in efforts to achieving the 2030 agenda while limiting negative impacts on the environment.

Broad action is needed

We call on governments and international authorities to implement policies that defend biodiversity in all areas and at all levels:

	FACTS	DEMANDS
In the soil	Soil is the world's greatest source of biodiversity.	Promote agroecological practices, as they preserve and regenerate soil fertility by avoiding deep plowing, limiting the use of synthetic chemicals, adopting rotations and green manure.
In the seas	Seas are fundamental in carbon dioxide capture and generate two thirds of the oxygen in the planet's atmosphere (more than forests).	In order to improve the environmental status of seas, the use of synthetic chemicals in agriculture must be drastically reduced by embracing agroecological practices. Moreover, it is fundamental to improve the purification of sewage and wastewater drained into rivers and seas.
In food	Naturally fermented food products form the base of diets of all the world's civilizations. Fermentation raises the nutrient content of foods, enriches them with probiotic microbial flora, and gives them unique sensory characteristics.	To protect microbial biodiversity, promote natural products such as cheeses without industrial enzymes, naturally leavened bread, additive- and preservative-free charcuterie, wines and beers with native yeasts.

FACTS

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In the human body

The microbiota of the human gut is an ecosystem of a trillion cells which plays a decisive role in human health.

To preserve the microbial richness of the gut, promote healthy eating habits, the consumption of fermented foods, foods rich in fibers, and minimally processed foods from farms that maintain or regenerate soil fertility.

In flowers

40% of agricultural production depends on pollinators. Declining bee and insect populations pose a threat to global food security and nutrition.

Support green infrastructure, especially hedges, stable meadows and areas given over to nectariferous plants, and device policies to significantly reduce the use of pesticides.

Cultivated biodiversity

Rural communities have selected, preserved and reproduced seeds over time, thus improving the yield, taste and nutritional value of a large number of vegetables, legumes and cereals.

- keep conventional breeding of plants and animals free from patent claims and impose a ban on the plant breeders' rights for traditional varieties, accessions and ecotype
- respect the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
- safeguard diversity through the voluntary and free registration of seeds
- guarantee the health and traceability of commercialized traditional seeds, by introducing requirements that are appropriate for different agricultural and seed production models and do not harm small-scale farmers
- do not limit the freedom to exchange traditional seeds, but promote the responsibility of those who handle seeds
- guarantee the freedom of choice to farmers and consumers through transparent labeling

FACTS

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Farm biodiversity

Rural communities have selected thousands of animal breeds that have adapted to different climates, including hostile, inaccessible habitats and marginal areas. Traditional breeds are hardier and more fertile. In well-tended pastures, animals stir the soil with their hooves and help drainage, rainwater absorption and oxygen diffusion. Small ruminants eliminate shrubs and help reduce the risk of wildfires.

Support a livestock farming model based on the diversity of local breeds and promote the transition to pasture-based farming.

Aquaculture

50% of the fish and seafood consumed in the world come from aquaculture, which is now the most rapidly-growing sector of the food industry.

Aquaculture should not replicate the mistakes of industrial meat production. The need and environmental impact of aquaculture operations should be assessed carefully. They should be promoted only when focusing on herbivorous species and extensive, in situ farming techniques that are integrated with nature, envisaging low fish densities and minimum human intervention.

Fish

Fish is our main wild source of animal protein. There are 30,000 species of fish and each one of them establishes complex interdependencies with other species in the food chain. Small-scale fishers possess in-depth knowledge of marine ecosystems.

Consider ecosystems in all their complexity, further develop and support ecosystem-based fisheries management, promote selective forms of fishing, the protection of natural habitats and mindful consumption.

Edible Wild Plants

Wild plants are often richer in vitamins, minerals and/ or macronutrients than industrially cultivated plants. Their biodiversity depends on the health of threatened natural habitats, above all forests. Good management depends on community knowledge, like that of disappearing indigenous populations.

Promote in situ conservation of wild species as a prerequisite to using and developing regional varieties that are adapted to climate change.

FACTS

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Biodiversity and knowledge

Farming and fishing communities have developed and passed down tens of thousands of techniques through generations. These can be ways of adapting to different terrains and climates, or ways of preserving fresh food, transforming raw materials into artisanal products. At the origin of these traditional food products is the knowledge of a community, often passed on orally.

The cultural and gastronomic heritage of food products falls fully within the category of biodiversity to be protected. Food products must be artisanal and closely linked to their place of origin. Preserving intact this biodiversity does not mean turning our back on modernity or technology, but ensuring that these do not alter the link a product has with its place of origin.

Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, practices and innovations relating to biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of genetic resources make an essential contribution to biodiversity.

Techniques based on knowledge handed down orally must be identified and saved. Conditions for passing it on to younger generations must be provided.

Biodiversity and diets

Malnutrition in all its forms and the deterioration of environmental resources are closely connected. The production systems responsible for biodiversity loss also underpin inadequate lifestyles based on overconsumption of animal-origin and ultra-processed foods rich in sugars, fats, salt and preservatives. Unhealthy diets are responsible for many non-communicable diseases with huge economic costs (McKinsey, 2014).

Promote the consumption of more plant-based foods and a lower consumption of foods of animal origin.

Biodiversity and pandemics

Forests and other natural habitats are rich sources of biodiversity. The destruction of natural habitats and the consequent loss of biodiversity creates conditions conducive to the spread of zoonotic diseases and increases the risk of epidemics as a result of spillover.

Curb human activities like habitat upheaval and deforestation, while protecting biodiversity with sustainable agricultural and livestock farming practices.

Save biodiversity to save our right to food!

Slow Food urges governments and international authorities to **acknowledge the crucial role of biodiversity for food and agriculture as a prerequisite to fulfill the right to food and to promptly initiate the urgent transition to agroecological food systems.**

The fulfilment of the right to food depends on thriving biodiversity.

States and international organizations have obligations and responsibilities under both international environmental law and international human rights law to: address biodiversity and habitat loss, prevent its negative impacts on human rights, and ensure that actions to address biodiversity loss are equitable, non-retrogressive, non-discriminatory and sustainable (UNEP 2021).

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[Slow Food](#) is a global movement acting together to ensure good, clean and fair food for all. We cultivate a global network of local communities who defend cultural and biological diversity, promote food education and advocate for more just and equitable food policy. Slow Food has grown to involve millions of people in more than 160 countries worldwide.

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