Action Track Discussion Starter

Action Track 3 – Boost Nature-Positive Food Production at Scale

1. Our Context

Today, neither people nor the planet are healthy. Food production is the single biggest threat to nature: it has caused 70 per cent of biodiversity loss, 75 per cent of deforestation, uses 69 per cent of all the planet's water and 34 per cent of all land, and is responsible for approximately one quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions. This happens while 1/3 of all food produced is never eaten, while more than 700 million people go hungry every day, and while nearly 2 billion are overweight or obese. Great inequality exists in access to and control over natural and productive resources as well as decision making spaces, particularly for women and indigenous peoples. These hidden environmental, health and inclusion costs are estimated at almost $12 trillion a year and are expected to rise to $16 trillion a year by 20501. At the same time, enough food is already produced to feed the estimated population in 2050 and in many places socio-technological innovations (e.g. based on the principles and practices of regenerative agriculture, agroecology, conservation agriculture, among others) are being developed that can sustainably improve sustainability, access and efficiency across the food system, thus nourishing more people while reducing pressure on planetary boundaries. The challenge ahead therefore is to improve our food production systems without exceeding the carrying capacity of ecosystems and the planet to meet the food and nutrition needs of the current and future generations and to deliver other essential ecosystem services.

Food systems find their most prominent expression at the landscape level. Agricultural mosaic landscapes can also play an integral role in supporting biodiversity conservation with producers acting as stewards of the land and ecosystem services for sustainable production of food, water, fiber, fuel, and forest products. Landscapes can therefore be considered the key scale for interventions to boost nature-positive production. As such, a landscape approach, broadly defined as a framework for integrating policy and practice for multiple land uses within a given geographic area, can help to balance interests of multiple stakeholders, across different timescales. If we don´t transform food production systems from nature-negative to nature-positive, we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals or the biodiversity and climate targets as laid down in the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Paris Agreement respectively. Implementing much-needed food system change to boost nature-positive production can make a significant contribution towards realizing a future in which people live and prosper in dignity and in harmony with nature, today and in generations to come.

2. Our Goal

The goal of Action Track 3 is to boost nature-positive production systems at scale to globally meet the fundamental human right to healthy and nutritious food while operating within planetary

boundaries. Boosting nature-positive production will be fundamental to put us on a pathway to a more resilient future and the sustainable well-being of society. Food, feed and fiber production must regain their ability to support biodiversity, rebuild fertile soils, protect freshwater supplies, store carbon, create employment, nourish the globe, provide rural and indigenous peoples with rights and decent livelihoods and enhance climate resilience and social stability. To be able to do that, we will focus on primary production (from land, river and sea), but will also work to develop integrated solutions along the entire food system.

3. Ways of engagement[1]

The best way for stakeholders to engage with AT3 is through participation in our Areas of Collective Action & Innovation (ACAI). These multi-stakeholder platforms will unwrap challenges and identify existing or new game-changing solutions to boost nature-positive production. Each ACAI will have a lead facilitator to ensure that all voices are heard and considered and that collective propositions are delivered. We propose three ACAIs below, but others can be set up as needed.

4. Areas of Collective Action and Innovation (ACAIs)

The proposed workstreams for AT3 reflect three necessary conditions to boost nature-positive production at scale, within a landscape approach:
1. **Protect** natural ecosystems against new conversions for food and feed production;
2. **Manage** sustainably existing food production systems to the benefit of both nature and people;
3. **Restore** and rehabilitate degraded ecosystems and soil function for sustainable food production.

These conditions are organized in three Areas of Collective Action and Innovation (ACAIs), each of which will curate multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms to analyze challenges and identify game-changing solutions – existing and new.

4a. ACAI 1: Protection
This ACAI is designed to reaffirm the need for protection of natural ecosystems (from land, freshwater and marine) and ensure that they are not converted or degraded for food production. We cannot do this without system actors recognizing the true value of natural ecosystems and factoring that into their decision making. Social safeguards, the development of (new) legislation and governance mechanisms and working with indigenous and local communities to secure their rights, notably access to land, water and genetic resources, and with special regard for rural women, need to be fundamental principles in this work. Suggested (non-exhaustive) actions for platform discussions are found in the Annex.

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[1] With the following as key milestones for the Summit and this action track: February 2021 UNEA 5 Act For Nature, May 2021 - Kunming CBD COP and adoption of the post 2020 framework and then just Post-Summit CC COP Glasgow in November 2021

4b. ACAI 2: Sustainable Management

Food producing lands and waters need to be sustainably managed to increase input efficiencies, minimize externalities, and optimize yields while maximizing biodiversity and ecosystem functions and enhancing resilience to climate change. Improving the management of existing food production systems will be the single most important action to nourish people, enhance climate resilience and reduce pressure and continued degradation. Since human and social values are fundamental principles that will underpin our work, the management of nature-positive production systems should protect rights and improve livelihoods, promote equity, justice, and social well-being. The balance of regional markets and global trade is another element that can support locally relevant and globally significant solutions for food security through nature-positive food production. Since there is not a one-size-fits all technology, we will explore all existing and emerging approaches that deliver nature-positive solutions at scale relying on principles and practices which includes regenerative agriculture, agroecology, conservation agriculture, precision agriculture, among others. Suggested (non-exhaustive) actions for platform discussions are found in the Annex.

4c. ACAI 3: Restoration

In addition to the 500 million hectares of abandoned agricultural land, more than half of our current farmland is considered to be degraded and thus underperforming as both an economic and environmental asset. Rehabilitating these lands specifically for new or more sustainable food production would serve to reduce the need to convert new lands. At the same time, innovations are taking place all over the world that need greater support and an enabling policy environment in order to scale up. We need to develop and identify innovative and appropriate governance mechanisms, financing models and instruments where system actors are enabled to rehabilitate existing agricultural land and thus avoid conversion of natural ecosystems. This work stream needs to assess the social, technical and financial potential to restore degraded systems at scale, i.e. how much land could be restored to become fully functional and what would be needed to make this happen. Suggested (non-exhaustive) actions for platform discussions are found in the Annex.

5. Enabling platforms

While the sum of the above conditions is deemed necessary to ensure that food production becomes nature-positive, there are other systemic aspects of the food system that need to be enabled to support the outcomes we envision. In collaboration with other Action Tracks, we aim to activate other discussion platforms that are needed to deliver nature-positive production.

One platform could explore the issue of governance, as a key area of change. Because of the localised character of nature-positive production, its scaling up would necessarily empower bottom-up governance processes. This includes 1) governance based on strengthening landscape level networks and their innovations in participatory planning, in deliberative and inclusive processes for policy making, in institutional choices, research and the creation of new knowledge, and in organising actors for democratic coordination and oversight at multiple scales. And at the same time, 2) enable national, provincial, and municipal governments to support the decentralised processes that are at key for successful scaling up of nature-positive production at the landscape level. Combined, these approaches to governance are likely to

significantly expand the possibilities and benefits of nature-positive production in today's context of increasing uncertainty and rapid change.

Another platform could link up with AT2 to discuss the creation of appropriate markets to enhance the viability of nature-positive production. This includes linking the consumer to sustainable production through premiums and other incentives (with AT2). It also refers to public purchasing arrangements and pricing policies that support a fair income for producers, such as minimum support prices; protection against dumping; marketing boards; low-cost price information systems; and competition policy. Another area of attention is investing in critical infrastructure for processing and transportation in (regional) markets that will overcome the impediments that exist in transportation and information networks, for example by building cold storage systems for fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and milk collection and appropriate processing systems. A discussion of ways to recognize and support participatory guarantee systems could be part of this platform as well as how to enable municipalities and cities to support short food chains.

Suggested (non-exhaustive) actions for platform discussions are found in the Annex.

6. Lock–ins and synergies

There are several structural lock-ins that keep the current unsustainable food production system in place. These lock-ins create a set of feedback loops that reinforce this system. Lock-ins include investments and policies that create path dependency (such as purchasing of expensive equipment or subsidies for chemical pesticides); export orientation; the expectation of cheap food; compartmentalized and sectoral, short-term thinking; certain discourses about feeding the world, focused solely on production volumes; measures of success (looking at single crops) and concentration of power (IPES Food 2016). Other typical lock-ins that reinforce the current system are the concentration of power in the food chain and institutional, agricultural research and technological lock-ins (WWF, 2016). How to address these lock-ins should be a central question to each platform.

At the same time, it is important to keep the systems approach in mind, in order to be able to identify and strengthen synergies between different areas of work. Synergies within nature-positive food production are greatest when the 10 characteristics, or elements, are included in an intervention. These characteristics include:

- Diversity: diversification is key to agroecological transitions to ensure food security and nutrition while conserving, protecting and enhancing natural resources.
- Co-creation and sharing of knowledge: agricultural innovations respond better to local challenges when they are co-created through participatory processes
- Synergies : building synergies enhances key functions across food systems, supporting production and multiple ecosystem services.
- Efficiency : innovative agroecological practices produce more using less external resources.
- Recycling : more recycling means agricultural production with lower economic and environmental costs.

- Resilience : enhanced resilience of people, communities and ecosystems is key to sustainable food and agricultural systems. Resilience is the capacity of socio-ecological systems to maintain key aspects of its biological, social and functional identity, in a context of constant internal and external change.
- Human and social values: protecting and improving rural livelihoods, equity and social well-being is essential for sustainable food and agricultural systems.
- Culture and food traditions : by supporting healthy, diversified and culturally appropriate diets, agroecology contributes to food security and nutrition while maintaining the health of ecosystems.
- Responsible governance : sustainable food and agriculture requires responsible and effective governance mechanisms at different scales – from local to national to global.
- Circular and solidarity economy : circular and solidarity economies that reconnect producers and consumers provide innovative solutions for living within our planetary boundaries while ensuring the social foundation for inclusive and sustainable development.

These ten elements can provide guidance when planning, managing and evaluating interventions for nature-positive production. Concretely, such interventions must be based on three pillars of activity described above: protect, manage and restore. When they are deployed together, in synergy, significant progress for nature positive production can be made.

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ANNEX
Suggested (non-exhaustive) actions for platform discussions

ACAI 1: Protect

- Building on the strong foundation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of National Food Security, as a widely-praised tool to improve tenure;
- Developing an overall agricultural policy framework that provides women with access, ownership and control of productive resources, knowledge, credit and decision making, while encouraging that men get more involved in reproductive tasks;
- Supporting local, customary, and traditional governance systems for land, water, genetic resources for food and agriculture, and other natural resources, while engaging in reflexive dialogue around where they can be strengthened or should be democratically adjusted to improve results around livelihoods, gender, and environmental concerns.
- Introducing and enforcing legislation that minimizes the conversion of natural ecosystems associated with international trade and food imports;
- Multilateral organizations committing to working with producer organisations and other stakeholders to design and implement a Codex Planetarius that establishes minimum environmental and social standards for the production of globally traded foods, while protecting and improving rights and livelihoods;
- Development of innovative and sustainable finance to overcome barriers to adoption of nature positive practices and de-risk responsible businesses and initiatives that experiment with ways to deliver more efficient, nature-positive production that avoids ecosystem conversion.

ACAI 2: Sustainably Manage

- A multi-stakeholder platform draws key insights from existing literature and groundbreaking and high promising solutions and ideates, prototypes and tests game-changing production systems (from land, freshwater, marine) to boost nature-positive food production at scale;
- Governments commit to adopting an ambitious food systems transformational agenda that recognizes the need to maintain or improve food security while regenerating and valuing the natural foundations of our food production with recognized rights for both small and large-scale producers;
- Producers receive financial and other incentives to improve or adopt production systems through innovative business models. Specifically, account for carbon benefits of nature-positive production and help create compensation systems and special credit lines for producers that are willing to transition to nature-positive systems;
- Governments re-align incentives, in particular rewarding producers for landscape and nature management and scaling back chemical input subsidies; agricultural price support and subsidies to concurrently promote food security, environmental and health goals. At the national level, governments must commit to adopting an ambitious transformation in food production systems and pro-actively implement an agenda that recognizes the need to improve food security while regenerating and valuing the natural foundations of our food production as well as recognizing the voice of both small and large-scale producer organisations. Governments must also ensure policy coherence across agriculture, health, environment, natural resources, education, fiscal and trade policies. In particular, ensure nature-positive food production systems are prominently included in revamped NDCs and that there is a new Aichi target on sustainable food systems;

- Address antimicrobial resistance and animal welfare while boosting nature-positive production at scale.
- Companies eliminate conversion of natural ecosystems from commodity supply chains. Furthermore, ensure that the input industry commits to delivering production systems where soil health, natural ecosystems, biodiversity conservation, accessibility, context-specific needs and landscape resilience are prioritized.
- Trade reform includes the creation of a Codex Planetarius that establishes minimum environmental standards for the production of globally traded foods and the protection of local markets;
- Promoting sustainable finance to overcome barriers to adoption and de-risk responsible business models that deliver nature-positive production.
- Support the work done under the Committee on World Food Security to establish Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, which includes other UN agencies such as FAO, IFAD and the WFP.
- Giving greater visibility to the high performance of agroecology and nature positive production practices for both people and the planet.

ACAI 3: Restore
- Supporting the development of innovation networks and facilitating knowledge exchange at various levels and among various actors;
- Research is conducted to (a) identify the socio-technical potential of restoring lands to grow food and (b) assess the return on investment from such endeavor, including non-monetary returns.
- Precompetitive arrangements (financial mechanisms among others) are developed to rehabilitate degraded systems to grow food.
- Innovations to build healthy living soils (including enhancing soil biodiversity, organic matter and soil carbon) are identified.
- Research, knowledge, innovation and technology, held in different knowledge systems including that of food producers, that prioritize nature-positive production at scale are unlocked.
- Creating and facilitating institutional space for experimentation (including with landscape governance models);
- Providing designated and targeted guidance and support for university research on nature positive production linked to local communities and participatory action research, including on appropriate mechanization and digital tools;
- Creating empowered spaces for sharing, learning and participatory bottom-up policy development in collaboration with parliaments and civil society.

Enabling platforms
- Reduce food loss and food waste to reduce the pressure on natural systems (with AT2)
- Ensure that nature positive food production systems deliver sufficient nutritious and healthy foods to all, especially the poor (with AT1).