

Agriculture and Land Health Initiative

Initiation Note 28/04/2021

Background

The global population is 7.8 billion people and growing. Population growth and increasing per capita wealth is driving up the demand for food, while demand for biofuel, biomaterials and other commodities place further pressure on agricultural land. Globally we produce enough food for the population of 2050 – some 9 billion people – yet one third of this is lost or wasted.

By focusing on food production goals in isolation from other considerations, agriculture has become the leading driver of global land-use change and biodiversity loss (IPBES, 2019), while also contributing malnutrition, exacerbation of inequitable land and resource rights, and other undesirable outcomes. The environmental hazards generated by agriculture threaten the viability and sustainability of production. Land degradation, pollution of water sources, decline in pollinators and other hazards are already compromising the agriculture sector, while compromising ecosystem services like water supply and climate regulation.

Sustainable agriculture boosts on-farm biodiversity, conserves off-farm biodiversity in agricultural landscapes, mitigates habitat loss due to expansion of farmland, and safeguards long-term viability and resilient productivity for farmers' natural capital. Land health is therefore an effective concept for fostering dialogue between actors in the agriculture and conservation sectors, as demonstrated by IUCN's ["Common Ground"](#) report and related Common Ground dialogues.

Unfortunately, dialogue between the conservation and the agriculture sectors is most often conflictual,

Objective

This two-year initiative will build commitments for accelerated action towards sustainable agriculture that secures land health as a Nature based Solution to address major societal challenges (food security, climate change, biodiversity loss...). The initiative recognises that the solutions for sustainable agriculture (agroecological approaches, regenerative agriculture etc.) are well known, and already practiced on a considerable scale in some countries. The initiative will strengthen awareness on sustainable agriculture and will develop tools and methodologies to support its scaling up and mainstreaming in projects and policies.

This initiative will bring together actors from historically adversarial sectors around the table to take ambitious commitments, and will provide methodological support to design action and monitor impacts. By building a common ground over the conservation benefits of sustainable farming, this initiative will also indirectly pave the way for a constructive debate on more controversial issues.

Components

Outcome 1: International commitments to sustainable agriculture are put forward and monitored through dialogue between conservation and agriculture actors

- x Convene and mediate in "Common ground dialogues" between conservation and agriculture actors (farmers, private landowners, etc.)