

**Submission by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
in relation to Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme in
accordance with the Decision 4/CMA.4, para 8 and 11**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) welcomes the opportunity to share views on the subject of the fifth global dialogue on enabling mitigation solutions in the forest sector, drawing on national and regional experience, which will take place on 19-20 May 2025, in Panama City, Panama, in accordance with the Decision 4/CMA.4, para 8 and 11.

Agrifood systems, including forests, are a major yet often overlooked contributor to climate change and are also vulnerable to its impacts. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, 22 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions come from the agriculture, forestry and other land-use (AFOLU) sector. At the same time, AFOLU measures play a central role in all IPCC pathways to limit global warming to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.¹ For example, halting deforestation and increasing forest cover are cost-effective solutions to mitigate climate change, as this would cut emissions by over five gigatonnes (Gt) of CO₂ equivalent each year. Forest and landscape restoration can build long-term carbon sinks to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere. Furthermore, protected, restored and sustainably managed forests help stabilize local and regional climate through rainfall regulation and cooling benefits, and provide a host of biodiversity benefits and other ecosystem services that help enhance the adaptive capacity and resilience of people and ecosystems. The importance of 'enhanced efforts towards halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030' is explicitly recognized in the first global stocktake of the Paris Agreement.²

FAO is dedicated to climate action in agrifood systems, including forests, aiming to reduce emissions while addressing rural poverty, eliminate hunger, and achieve food security for all. as outlined in FAO Strategic Framework³ and FAO Strategy on Climate Change⁴. This commitment also focuses on enhancing the productivity, resilience, and sustainability of agrifood systems to make them less vulnerable to climate change. Integrated landscape approaches and innovative solutions can help manage land use trade-offs and promote the essential ecosystem services provided by forests for agriculture and food security.

This submission presents FAO's perspectives on the fifth global dialogue's topic, format, and structure, potential speakers, and highlight FAO's expertise and priorities in advancing climate action and promoting the role of forests in agrifood system transformation. The submission aims to ensure that the dialogue is effectively

¹ IPCC. 2023. *Climate Change 2022 - Mitigation of Climate Change: Working Group III Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, R. Slade, A. Al Khourdajie, R. van Diemen, D. McCollum, M. Pathak *et al.*, eds. Cambridge, UK and New York, Cambridge University Press.

² UNFCCC. 2023. Outcome of the First Global Stocktake. Decision 1/CMA.5. In: UNFCCC [online]. Bonn. [Cited 11 April 2025]. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/1_CMA.5.pdf

³ FAO. 2021. FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. Rome. Available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/29404c26-c71d-4982-a899-77bdb2937eef/content>

⁴ FAO. 2022. FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031. Rome.

designed to foster understanding, cooperation, and promote the integration of forest solutions for climate action into national policies and plans.

1. Views on the workshop subject

The updating of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0) presents a crucial opportunity to enhance the role of forests in achieving global climate objectives. The UNFCCC Outcome of the First Global Stocktake underlines the importance of '*conserving, protecting, and restoring nature and ecosystems towards achieving the Paris Agreement temperature goal, including through enhanced efforts towards halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030*'.⁵ The decision also notes the need for enhanced support and investment, including through financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building to reach this goal.

To reinforce mitigation solutions in the forest sector, several key issues must be addressed. Firstly, there is a need to understand and tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Coherent policies across agriculture and forestry can help advance food security while maintaining healthy forest ecosystems. As countries strive to increase food production sustainably, coherent policy approaches will be essential to balance increased food production with sustainable forest management. Secondly, strengthening reporting mechanisms and enhancing forest finance are key to translating commitments into action. Transparent and comprehensive forest-related reporting under the Enhanced Transparency Framework will be vital to tracking progress and informing future climate strategies. Additionally, agreed collaboration frameworks such as REDD+ remain critical in incentivizing forest conservation, sustainable management, and restoration efforts. However, scaling up finance for forests—through both public and private investments—is necessary to close existing funding gaps. Finally, there is a need to support and reward the Indigenous Peoples and rural communities who protect and sustainably manage forests, including in the context of fostering a Just Transition.

The key objectives for the dialogue should be:

- a. Build a shared understanding of the importance of forest-based climate change mitigation solutions, including through forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use.
- b. Identify key challenges, opportunities, and strategies for enabling and scaling up forest-based mitigation, including addressing the need to promote synergies and manage trade-offs between land uses.
- c. Foster cooperation among stakeholders, including policymakers, Indigenous Peoples, rural communities and smallholders, researchers, private sector actors, and civil society.
- d. Develop actionable recommendations and strategies and policies for governments to upscale implementation, including in the context of NDC 3.0.

2. Views on the format and recommended speakers

The dialogue could consist of a combination of presentations, breakout group work, interactive exercises, and strategy-building sessions to maximize engagement and the sharing of perspectives among all participants. FAO recommends structuring the workshop in five parts as presented below, embedding reflections and perspectives from representatives of Indigenous Peoples and rural communities throughout.

Part I of the dialogue could be structured as a series of expert presentations, followed by discussions with workshop participants. Presentations could include a framing presentation from FAO on the state of global forests, followed by presentations from a lead author from IPCC AR6 to highlight forest-based mitigation options, an Indigenous Peoples' representative to discuss the key role of land tenure and rights in forest-based climate

⁵ UNFCCC. 2023. Outcome of the First Global Stocktake. Decision 1/CMA.5.In: UNFCCC [online]. Bonn. [Cited 11 April 2025]. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/1_CMA.5.pdf

action, and a representative from a country that successfully reduced deforestation through targeted policy and finance interventions.

Part II of the dialogue could focus on mapping examples of systemic and holistic approaches to implementing forest-based mitigation action. This interactive segment would aim to deepen participants' understanding of how integrated strategies can drive transformational change. A World Café-style format is recommended for this session, as it fosters open dialogue, cross-pollination of ideas, and collaborative learning in an informal setting. Participants will rotate among thematic discussion tables, sharing insights, challenges and best practices from their respective countries. This approach encourages diverse perspectives and helps identify common priorities and innovative solutions.

The overarching question for the World Café could be “What are the essential ingredients needed to turn forest mitigation potential into reality in your context?” Thematic areas for discussion could include:

a) Rights-based approaches

Ensuring forest-based mitigation efforts are grounded in the rights and agency of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and other forest stewards is critical for legitimacy, effectiveness, and equity.

Trigger questions:

- What rights (land, use, participation, Free Prior Informed Consent, benefit-sharing) are under-recognized or poorly enforced?
- What is missing or under-leveraged in current rights-based approaches?
- How can forest-based mitigation efforts better align with justice, recognition, and local leadership?

b) Incentives and finance

Effective and equitable finance is central to enabling forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use. Incentives must reach local levels and be predictable, inclusive, and aligned with mitigation goals.

Trigger questions:

- What types of incentives can shift land-use decisions in favor of forests?
- How can finance be scaled while ensuring accountability and access for local actors?
- What is needed from climate finance to deliver transformative impacts on the ground?

c) Agriculture-forestry linkages (including value chains)

Unsustainable agriculture remains a key driver of deforestation, but there is significant potential for integrating forests into broader agrifood systems transformation. This involves making value chains, from production to consumption, more sustainable, as they shape land use dynamics and incentives.

Trigger questions:

- What is needed to enhance the visibility/consideration of forests goods and services?
- What opportunities exist to align value chains with mitigation outcomes?
- How can landscape-level approaches address competing land use pressures?

d) Land governance

Effective land governance, including tenure clarity, land-use planning, and conflict resolution, is foundational to deliver lasting forest-based mitigation outcomes.

Trigger questions:

- What institutional or legal gaps block large-scale implementation of forest mitigation?
- Where are reforms most needed — and politically viable?
- How can tenure reform and participatory land-use planning be accelerated?

Part III can begin with reporting from the World Café discussions and then transition into presentations from regions or countries, showcasing success stories, best practices, and innovative solutions that have been effectively implemented. These presentations will highlight how systematic and holistic approaches have been tailored to address unique local and regional challenges. The presentations will be followed by an interactive discussion, allowing participants to reflect on the lessons learned, compare experiences, and identify commonalities and differences across contexts. Tentative speakers could include government authorities from countries that have made substantial advances on REDD+ from different regions, along with those that are leading in forest and landscape restoration efforts, such as those leading Africa's Great Green Wall initiative. Representatives of rural communities and Indigenous Peoples could share success stories on enhancing local livelihoods through sustainable forest management.

Part IV of the dialogue could focus on designing actionable strategies for forest-based climate action with a focus on enhanced ambition in NDCs 3.0. Participants would be divided into breakout groups, each tasked with developing actionable strategies for enhancing forestry ambition in climate policies and plans. Each of the breakout groups should have neutral facilitators with knowledge of the breakout group theme. It could be a representative from UNFCCC Secretariat, UN Agencies, Parties or observer organizations.

Part V of the dialogue will conclude with reflections from the breakout groups. Key stakeholders could outline next steps, discuss opportunities for continued engagement, and emphasize the importance of institutional innovation and multi-stakeholder cooperation in achieving forest-based climate change mitigation. This session could be facilitated by the UNFCCC Secretariat.

Conclusion

FAO remains committed to collaborating with the UNFCCC and partners at all levels to accelerate mitigation solutions in agrifood systems, including forestry. As the lead UN technical agency on forestry, FAO supports countries in strengthening policies, building institutional and community capacity, and delivering context-specific solutions.

We express our full commitment to supporting the upcoming dialogue on enabling mitigation solutions in the forest sector, drawing on national and regional experience. We are dedicated to working with all stakeholders to create an inclusive platform that translates evidence into actionable strategies, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue to address challenges and unlock opportunities to advance forest solutions in climate action.