

Foreword

As the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011–2020) reaches its mid-point, the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition has just begun (2016–2025). This five-year overlap of global action offers a rare opportunity to bring together biodiversity and nutrition in novel ways for positive benefits to both. When people think of good nutrition, and about the diverse food groups that should be in a balanced diet, they rarely think about where those foods come from. By the same token, when people think about biological diversity, they may think about our animals, plants and birds in the wild, but they may not make the link to the amazing diversity that contributes to our food systems – the awe-inspiring diversity of species and varieties of cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables, animals and fish – which have been developed by farmers over millennia and which are adapted to local customs and to different environments. Those links between production and consumption are important to sustainable food systems in order to have the richest possible food diversity on plates, sustainably sourced from the biological diversity that underpins agricultural systems.

The Convention on Biological Diversity – with partners including Bioversity International – has spearheaded for ten years a Cross-cutting Initiative on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition. Much progress has been made in bridging agricultural biodiversity and nutrition in these ten years, but more can be done to integrate these two agendas. Silo thinking still prevails in many cases, leaving nutrition practitioners and agricultural practitioners blind to the benefits of agricultural biodiversity to healthy, year-round diets and to resilient, adapted farming systems.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide a renewed impetus for a focus on using biodiversity for food and nutrition and linking that to the sustainability of farming systems. Mainstreaming biodiversity in sustainable food systems is vital if we are to achieve those Goals by 2030. Using biodiversity for sustainable farming systems that produce diverse, nutritious foods will contribute to the conservation of these precious resources; conserving biodiversity resources will make them available for future climate scenarios and today's nutrient needs.

For this reason, the creation of an Agrobiodiversity Index, which can help bring production and consumption together for sustainable biodiversity-based solutions could go a long way to raise awareness about the multiple links between biodiversity, healthy nutrition and sustainable food production and, thereby, help promote the multiple aspects of sustainable food systems.

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