



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



UNCCD
COP17
ULAANBAATAR 2026

Food Systems and Soil Health

27

AUG
2026

COP17 Blue zone
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



Food Systems and Soil Health Day in Short

Sustainable and resilient food systems are at the core of the land, climate and biodiversity nexus, playing a critical role in achieving land degradation neutrality, food security and sustainable development, while contributing to stability and security and to the prevention of displacement.

Recognizing these interlinked challenges, **UNCCD COP16 marked an important step forward with the adoption of Decision 19/COP.16**, which calls for strengthened efforts to avoid, reduce and reverse land and soil degradation in agricultural lands.

Farmers, including smallholders and pastoralists, are key stewards of the land and essential agents of change in the transition toward land-positive food systems. Their capacity to implement sustainable and regenerative land management depends on enabling conditions such as secured and equitable land tenure, access to finance, knowledge and innovation, and supportive policy frameworks that recognize and reward their role as custodians of living soils, biodiversity and functioning ecosystems.

Healthy soils **lie at the foundation of resilient, nature-positive agrifood systems and generate co-benefits across environmental, social and economic dimensions**. Beyond its environmental benefits, soil health should increasingly be recognized as a productive and strategic economic asset.

This approach **reinforces synergies across the Rio Conventions** and contributes directly to achieving land degradation neutrality and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Food Systems and Soil Health Thematic Day will build on COP16 outcomes and existing partnerships to promote land-positive agrifood systems, strengthen collaboration, and accelerate action in support of the UNCCD 2030 objectives.

- **The Day will pursue four objectives:** advancing political commitment to soil health, mobilizing investment for sustainable food systems, placing people at the center of land stewardship, and strengthening knowledge-sharing and policy coherence across the Rio Conventions.
- **Discussions will focus on five themes:** soil health as the foundation of resilient food systems; soil health assessment, monitoring and evidence systems; people-centered, inclusive value chains; mobilizing finance and investment for soil health and food systems transformation; and policy coherence and interministerial coordination.

09:00 – 10:30

**ACTION
DOME**

Living soils, productive lands: from Policies to implementation

This session will address how COP decisions can be translated into concrete guidance for in-the-ground implementation. The sessions will serve as a platform to present the UNCCD-FAO guidelines requested by the Decision 19 of the last COP16, as well as introduce the land mapping tool of the RAIZ flagship project, showcasing two pilot countries (Brazil and Mongolia), supporting the effort of agricultural land restoration at scale.

09:00 – 10:30

MET22

Private sector & Investment partners Roundtable: Mobilizing Finance for Soil Health and Food Systems Transformation

This session will convene private sector representatives and investment partners to address the enabling environment supporting private sector engagement in agricultural restoration industry, to advance private sector initiatives on metrics identification and reporting mechanisms, as well as financial models and financial contributions into the land restoration industry. The session will be opened by the launch of the WEF/UNCCD white paper developed under the Global Future Council of Soil.

09:00 – 10:30

MET23

Restoring Grasslands and Rangelands for improved food security, climate resilience and soil health

This session aims to showcase how science-based and nature-based solutions, including climate-smart forages and sustainable feed systems, can be practical solutions for restoring degraded lands, improving soil health, strengthening resilience, attracting climate finance, and supporting sustainable livestock production systems in low- and middle-income countries.

09:00 – 10:30

MET24

Connecting Food and Soil Health Breakthroughs: Towards Shared Metrics

This session will focus on relevant agricultural land and soil health metrics, contributing to the definition of a common framework for measuring progress on soil health, regenerative agriculture and agroecological practices, as well as showcasing tools that strengthen evidence-based decision-making



10:30 – 11:30

**ACTION
DOME**

Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security

This session will present the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security, highlighting its vision, objectives, and strategic approach to strengthening food security through science, innovation, and partnerships.

11:00 – 12:30

MET 22

Business4Land Public-Private Dialogue on Agriculture

Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality cannot be achieved without private sector contributions. This in-depth dialogue between Parties and land-dependent businesses will zero in on the enabling environment that is needed to scale such private sector contributions in agricultural and adjacent landscapes. The dialogue will revolve around the business-led recommendations on agriculture, coordinated by WBCSD and developed with inputs from over 50 businesses and network partners.

11:00 – 12:30

MET23

The Power of Data-Driven Innovation for Agricultural Lands, Soil and Rangeland Restoration

This session opens with a fair of tools that sets the scene, then moves to address what is required to translate restoration commitments into practical decisions and action on the ground, asking what is needed to make existing tools genuinely interoperable. It highlights the latest innovations, digital tools and decision-support systems helping stakeholders plan, implement, monitor, and scale landscape restoration.

11:00 – 12:30

MET24

Food systems transformation in Motion: Agroecology in principle, in policy and in practice

This session will cover the core framework of agroecology as an approach that mimics natural processes while building on local community knowledge, that adheres to foundational environmental and social benchmarks, and that is anchored on set of principles and elements. It will also tackle structural drivers, given the growing political and policy momentum on agroecology from global to regional, to national and sub-national territorial levels, supported both by governments and non-state actors. It will likewise feature on-the-ground action illustrated by examples at the farm level and short value chains.

11:30 – 13:00

**ACTION
DOME**

Scaling innovative financing solutions to accelerate investments

This session will focus on scaling innovative financing solutions to accelerate investments in soil health, land restoration and nature-positive agrifood systems. It will showcase practical investment frameworks and blended finance approaches that connect conservation and restoration objectives with investable financial structures.

13:00 – 15:00

**ACTION
DOME**

High-Level Dialogue on Food Systems and Soil Health

This high-level dialogue will explore how healthy soils can serve as a foundation for resilient, productive and sustainable agrifood systems. Building on Decision 19/COP.16, discussions will focus on financing mechanisms, policy coherence and institutional coordination needed to accelerate implementation and support integrated action across the Rio Conventions ahead of COP30.

13:00 – 14:30

MET22

Agroecology as a Tool for Territorial Resilience to Crisis Events

Adverse climate events and multifaceted crises increasingly challenge territorial planning, development and recovery. While extreme events are becoming more frequent and intense, their impacts are strongly influenced by human decisions related to vulnerability and exposure. Reducing these risks requires a shift from disaster response to prevention, recognizing the recurrent and interconnected nature of climatic, social, economic, health-related and geopolitical crises.

13:00 – 14:30

MET24

Advancing National Food Systems Pathways through Convergence for Soil Health and Land Restoration

This event is designed not to position soil health as the domain of a single convention, organization or initiative, but to demonstrate how complementary mandates and capacities can reinforce one another. By connecting national policy processes, restoration frameworks, financing mechanisms, implementation capacity and measurable soil-health outcomes, the event can contribute to a shared soil-health agenda that supports UNCCD implementation while strengthening coherence with national food systems pathways and related climate, biodiversity and sustainable development processes.

15:30 – 17:00

**ACTION
DOME**

Scaling Soil Health and Land Restoration for Food Systems Resilience and Socio-Economic Prosperity

This high-level side event will explore how land restoration can drive sustainable livelihoods, strengthen food security, and enhance resilience for rural and native communities. Through ministerial and expert dialogue, it will showcase policy, financing, and community-led approaches that maximize the social and economic benefits of restoration.



15:00 – 17:00

Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) Partners Strategy Session (closed)

MET22

The VACS implementing organizations — FAO, CGIAR/CIMMYT, IFAD, and the Crop Trust — convene to define a shared two-year operational roadmap and collective deliverables, strengthen joint approaches to resource mobilization, and position VACS within the broader movement for healthy soils and resilient food systems.

15:00 – 17:30

Special session on inclusive, sustainable and resilient food value chains for land restoration and soil health

MET23

This session will focus on sustainable and inclusive value-chains approaches can contribute to effectively transform food systems, such as seabuckthorn restoration and value chains (including cosmetic products, oil production and Codex-related standardization efforts - first codex in seabuckthorn); Sheep wool-based organic fertilizer and circular bioeconomy solutions; and Camel milk production and value addition.- Unique and only beginning business to Mongolia, as well as many others globally.

15:00 – 17:00

Youth4Soil Manifesto & Celebration of International Year of Women Farmers

MET24

This session will highlight women and youth as the key drivers of land and soil health restoration, while celebrating the International Year of Women Farmers. It will feature the launch of the Youth4Soil Manifesto Implementation Guide, offering practical pathways to translate youth commitments into action in support of Decision 5/COP.15 and the UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy. This session will also feature the launch of the World Food Forum National Youth Chapter – Mongolia and showcase youth-led innovations in food systems and soil health. This is a new initiative and the "launch" can be done at the thematic session.



15:30 – 17:00

MET21

Restoring Land, Redirecting Finance: Repurposing Public Support for a Just Rural Transition

This session makes the explicit argument that soil health cannot be restored at scale without redirecting current public support that drives degradation. The high-level panel brings together voices from finance, agriculture and climate to model the "cohesive narrative" Voices4JRT is trying to create. It will demonstrate the concrete link between agricultural subsidy reform, soil health, and food system resilience, using evidence from Voices4JRT focal countries (and Mongolia's rangeland context). It will also elevate farmer and civil society priorities from the ground for policy design, generate specific, actionable asks directed at the governments and financial institutions present at COP17, contribute to the Riyadh–Ulaanbaatar Action Agenda with commitments on redirecting agricultural public finance, and link/feed into the Special Ministerial and High-Level dialogue on food systems and soil health, as well as supporting the synergies across the Rio conventions.

17:30 – 19:00

ACTION
DOME

Action Agenda closing and way forward

As food systems and soil health day marks the last day of the thematic days, it is a great opportunity to wrap-up and celebrate the main takeaways of the UNCCD COP17 Action Agenda, as well as paving the way forward to advance the UNCCD Action Agenda into the multilateral space.

17:00 – 19:00

MET22

Turning Vision into Action for Adapted Crops and Soils: Accelerating Progress, Attracting Investments

The Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) promotes nutrient-dense, climate-adapted opportunity crops grown in healthy soils, securing a sustainable food supply in the face of climate change. These crops stabilize land, restore soils, promote biodiversity, and reverse desertification — contributing to a larger global movement that recognizes healthy soils as essential to feeding a healthy population. This session focuses on how to harness the momentum of VACS to accelerate progress and broaden investments in agricultural practices that support better human and planetary health.



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MORNING TIMETABLE · Times and rooms are subject to change. Please consult the COP17 programme or UNCCD App for the latest information.

TIME	PLENARY/MAIN COMMITTEE	ACTION DOME	MET22	MET23	MET24	MET21 (180 PAX)
8-9						
9-9:30						
9:30-10		Living soils, productive lands: from Policies to Implementation	Private sector & Investment partners Roundtable: Mobilizing Finance for Soil Health and Food Systems Transformation	Restoring Grasslands and Rangelands for improved food security, climate resilience and soil health	Connecting Food and Soil Health Breakthroughs: Towards shared metrics	
10-10:30						
10:30-11		Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security				
11-11:30	COW CRIC		Business4Land Public-Private Dialogue on Agriculture			
11:30-12				The Power of Data-Driven Innovation for Agricultural Lands, soil and Rangelands Restoration	Food Systems transformation in motion: Agroecology in principles, in policy and in practice	
12-12:30		Scaling innovative financing solutions to accelerate investments				
12:30-13						
13-13:30		HL Event Dialogue Action Dome - tbc	Italy Event (tbc) [Event 410] Agroecology as a Tool for Territorial Resilience to Crisis Events		FAO Food system Hub [Event 145] Advancing National Food Systems Pathways through Convergence for Soil Health and Land Restoration	

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AFTERNOON TIMETABLE · Times and rooms are subject to change. Please consult the COP17 programme or UNCCD App for the latest information.

TIME	PLENARY/MAIN COMMITTEE	ACTION DOME	MET22	MET23	MET24	MET21 (180 PAX)
13:30-14			Italy Event (tbc) [Event 410]		FAO Food system Hub [Event 145]	
14-14:30		HL Event Dialogue Action Dome - tbc	Agroecology as a Tool for Territorial Resilience to Crisis Events		Advancing National Food Systems Pathways through Convergence for Soil Health and Land Restoration	
14:30-15						
15-15:30	HL Event Dialogue Main Committee Room - tbc (until 16:00)					
15:30-16			Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) Partners Strategy Session (closed session)		Youth4Soil Manifesto & Celebration of International Year of Women Farmers	
16-16:30		From Policy to Practice: Scaling Soil Health and Land Restoration for Food Systems Resilience and Socio- Economic Prosperity (MGI)		Special session on inclusive, sustainable and resilient food value-chains for land restoration and soil health		Restoring Land, Redirecting Finance: Repurposing Public Support for a Just Rural Transition
16:30-17						
17-17:30						
17:30-18			Turning Vision into Action for Adapted Crops and Soils: Accelerating Progress, Attracting Investments			
18-18:30		Action Agenda closing and way forward Reception				
18:30-19						
19-19:30						
19:30-20						



Times and room allocations are subject to change, please check the website (<https://www.unccd.int/cop17/programme>) or the UNCCD App for the latest information.

