



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



UNCCD
COP17
ULAANBAATAR 2026



Food Systems and Soil Health Day Agenda



27 AUG
2026



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.





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Food Systems and Soil Health Day High Level Events

Living soils, productive lands: from Policies to implementation

09:00 – 10:30 [Action Dome]

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.

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

09:00 – 10:30 [MET 22]

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.

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

09:00 – 10:30 [MET 23]

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.

Connecting Food and Soil Health Breakthroughs: Towards Shared Metrics

09:00 – 10:30 [MET 24]

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

Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security

10:30 – 11:30 [Action Dome]

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.

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

11:00 – 12:30 [MET 22]

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.



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

11:00 – 12:30 [MET 23]

This session will highlight the most recent innovative tools supporting the scale up and acceleration of the agricultural restoration industry.

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

11:00 – 12:30 [MET 24]

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 (e.g., multicropping, agroforestry, and use of local seeds and opportunity crops to drastically reduce reliance on chemical inputs) and short value chains (e.g., direct networks between farmers and consumers, returning fair profit margins to smallholders while improving food access). Finally, it will feature some tools and mechanisms that can be used in capturing agroecological transitions impacts and showcase IFAD's approach in this regard.

Scaling innovative financing solutions to accelerate investments

11:30 – 13:00 [Action Dome]

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.

High-Level Dialogue on Food Systems and Soil Health

13:00 – 15:00 [Action Dome]

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.

Transforming Food Systems for Drought Resilience in Asia: Integrated Landscape Approaches for Climate-Smart Agriculture and Land Restoration

13:00 – 14:30 [MET 23]

This session will explore Transforming Food Systems for Drought Resilience in Asia. The agenda is currently under development,.

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

13:00 – 14:30 [MET 24]

This session will explore Advancing National Food Systems Pathways through Convergence for Soil Health and Land Restoration. The agenda is currently under development,.

Middle East Green Initiative

15:30 – 17:00 [Action Dome]

This session will be dedicated to the Middle East Green Initiative. The agenda is currently under development,.



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VACS Workshop

15:00 – 19:00 [MET 22]

The Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS), a partnership between IFAD, FAO, CGIAR/CIMMYT and CropTrust has begun during the past year, and this Strategy Workshop is bringing together VACS implementing organizations and Advisory Committee members to move from strategic alignment to operational coordination. Three operational questions structure the session: how do we coordinate and mobilize resources across countries and workstreams; with whom do we need to go further to close gaps in the ToC; and what do we commit to, and how do we know we are getting there? The session will begin with a closed-door session dedicated to planning and will end with a public event that includes the voices of country partners sharing their vision and experiences on VACS and how diversity in our food systems improves personal nutrition, planetary health and the livelihoods of smallholders everywhere.

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

15:00 – 17:30 [MET 23]

This session will highlight the most recent innovative tools supporting the scale up and acceleration of the agricultural restoration industry. 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.

Youth4Soil Manifesto & Celebration of International Year of Women Farmers

15:30 – 17:00 [MET 24]

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.

Action Agenda closing and way forward

17:30 – 19:00 [Action Dome]

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.

Time Table

Time	Plenary/Main Committee	Action Dome	MET22 (U-shape – 120 pax)	MET23 (Classroom 100 pax)	MET24 (U-shape – 120 pax)
8-9					
9-9:30		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 Health Breakthroughs: Towards shared metrics
9:30-10					
10-10:30	COW CRIC	Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security			
10:30-11					
11-11:30		Restoring Land, Redirecting Finance: Repurposing Public Support for a Just Rural Transition	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	
11:30-12					
12-12:30		Scaling innovative financing solutions to accelerate investments			
12:30-13					
13-13:30		HL Ministerial Dialogue <i>Action Dome - tbc</i>		ADB event [event 530] Transforming Food Systems for Drought Resilience in Asia: Integrated Landscape Approaches for Climate-Smart Agriculture and Land Restoration	FAO Food system Hub [Event 145] Advancing National Food Systems Pathways through Convergence for Soil Health and Land Restoration
13:30-14					
14-14:30	HL Ministerial Dialogue <i>Main Committee Room - tbc (until 16:00)</i>				
14:30-15					
15-15:30			VACS workshop tbc	Special session on inclusive, sustainable and resilient food value-chains for land restoration and soil health	Youth4Soil Manifesto & Celebration of International Year of Women Farmers
15:30-16					
16-16:30	Middle East Green Initiative				
16:30-17					
17-17:30	COP				
17:30-18		Action Agenda closing and way forward Reception			
18-18:30					
18:30-19					
19-19:30					
19:30-20					