



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultant to produce a GLO working paper and policy brief on food system resilience and land restoration

Consultancy reference number: CCD/20/ERPA/22

Background

Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. The mandate of the Convention and its 197 Parties is to support “a future that avoids, minimizes, and reverses desertification/land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought in affected areas at all levels – and to achieve a land degradation-neutral world consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The Global Land Outlook (GLO), the UNCCD’s flagship publication released every 4 years, is a state-of-the-art strategic communications product providing a transformative vision and framework for land management practice, policy and planning at global, regional and national scales.

The UNCCD is now commissioning a small number of working papers, of which this is one, for the second edition of the GLO (GLO2). The UNCCD, as with normal United Nations practice, will hold the copyright of the working paper. The publication of working papers in this format does not prevent authors from publishing them elsewhere, especially in peer-reviewed journals provided that UNCCD is properly acknowledged. Wider dissemination of the work done by working paper authors is encouraged, taking advantage of social media, public presentations and other venues. Each working paper will be published on the GLO digital platform and is expected to provide essential background and inputs for the GLO2 production team. All published GLO products can be found at: <https://knowledge.unccd.int/glo/global-land-outlook-glo>

GLO2 will primarily aim to support the effective implementation of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, being led by FAO and UNEP (<https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>). It will showcase implementation pathways for meeting the objectives of the Decade, including achieving targets on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). GLO2 will build upon the key findings in GLO1 and the GLO regional thematic reports as well as those in recent peer-reviewed literature, scientific assessments, and reports published by the UN, international organizations, institutes and think tanks. GLO2 will focus on terrestrial ecosystems and will not directly address the coastal and marine. The human face of land and ecosystem restoration projects and programmes will be highlighted throughout GLO2. A positive narrative and future scenarios will stress the potential and opportunities afforded by a continuum of land management and restoration activities.

Restoration continuum: A wide range of activities and interventions that improve environmental conditions (e.g. ecological productivity) by avoiding, minimizing and reversing land and ecosystem degradation. These activities can often be designed to deliver multiple benefits (i.e. goods and services) that contribute to the current and future sustainability of communities and the planet.

In addition to providing substantive content and diverse policy perspectives for GLO2, working papers are expected to compile innovative case studies, on-the-ground examples and good practices



from a wide variety of sources and countries. GLO2 will be launched at the UNCCD's 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held in September or October 2021.

Thematic Content of the Working Paper and Policy brief

Food systems are comprised of diverse stakeholders and institutions operating within overlapping social, economic and environmental dimensions. They determine how food is produced, processed, distributed, retailed and consumed which in turn has varying impacts on land and ecosystem health and resilience. Food systems are complex, involving multiple actors, processes and value chains, and due to their internal degree of uncertainty can adversely impact a wide range of other stakeholders, such as the rural and urban poor, women and children, and other sectors, such as energy, fiber and tourism. Covid-19 has had a major impact on these diverse stakeholders, institutions and sectors.

There is a wide range of food systems with different types of stakeholders and institutions. According to IFAD, there are 500 million smallholder farms world-wide. They produce 80 percent of the food consumed in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Two billion people rely on them for their livelihoods, including as producers and in value addition. According to FAO, women are critically important in food systems as they produce more than half of all food grown, and this rises to 60-80 percent in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. Europe (50%), Japan (92%), USA (33%) and China (25%) displace their land consumption, part of which is for food, to other countries. This makes for long food supply chains and complex value chains that can involve a number of countries. According to the FAO, urban dwellers consume 70% of food supplies, even in countries with large rural populations. The rural-urban linkages supplying food to urban areas are global, within country from rural to urban areas, and within the urban environs themselves.

Food systems are vulnerable to sudden shocks, such as a pandemic or natural disaster, and long-term stressors, such as land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss. Globalization, poor land governance and consumption patterns, including land use intensification and the transition to processed foods and animal protein diets, also pose serious challenges to food systems. In recent decades, agricultural yields have increased significantly, however poor distribution and food quality have led to increased numbers of hungry, malnourished and obese people, in addition to the huge environmental costs.

Food system resilience is a multifaceted concept defined as the capacity over time of a food system and its units at multiple levels, to provide sufficient, adequate and accessible food to all, in the face of various and even unforeseen disturbances. It is complementary and essential to sustainability. One aspect focuses on managing uncertainty, unexpected changes, and disruptions due to sudden crises and long-term stress; this refers not only to the capacity to absorb stress and shocks as a system, but also to the capacity for self-organization and learning among system actors. Another aspect is more proactive and concerned with the ability of a food system to produce and distribute food under changing conditions in a way that is equitable and sustainable in both the short- and long-term. Resilience is an essential part of sustainability.

The current trends in global food systems -- including increasing intensification with dependence on external inputs, surpassing of planetary boundaries, use of non-renewable resources and insufficient circular nutrient recycling (e.g., phosphorus), the politics of national food sovereignty/security, aid for trade and increasing international trade -- heavily influence food system resilience. Some of the poorest parts of the world have experienced the increasing trend of large-scale land grabbing by international and national investors, also for food production. While the expansion of trade has increased food availability in many net importing countries, it has also reduced resilience through



reliance on foreign foodstuffs over which these countries have little to no agency and cannot always afford.

Unsustainable value chains and sourcing practices challenge the biophysical basis needed to allow for food systems to be resilient to shocks and have caused land and ecosystem degradation. Managing biodiversity and natural resources sustainably in agricultural systems and securing the provisioning of ecosystem services will be an important contributing factor to local and global food system resilience. By striving for and implementing sustainability standards in value chains, the biophysical and social resilience of systems can be enhanced with the potential for enriching human and social capital.

Food system resilience depends on many factors: the biophysical resources, such as land health; infrastructure and technology; national and international political economy, including sovereignty; resource-use efficiency, taking into account the carrying capacity of natural resources; and the concept of reasonable profitability, which provides incentives for scaling out good practices. Other supporting or enabling factors for food system resilience include good land governance, social networks, dialogue, transparency and trust. A range of public policies can also be enablers such as: subsidies and regulations; the management of corruption; addressing inequalities towards the poor, women, and other vulnerable groups, as well as conflict which causes displacement and undermines livelihoods and food security.

Human capital is also critical for resilience, for example, via the use of research-based knowledge combined with practical experience and producer knowledge, the capability for foresight and adaptation planning, peer-to-peer or shared learning and the labor, livelihoods and jobs associated with the food system.

Most studies on food system resilience focus on selected components of the food system like production and other stages in the value chain, while others examine adaptability and the ability to generate specific outcomes, like food security in crisis situations. Some studies focus on the system from the point of view of a particular country or region, and others from the point of view of a particular commodity. Ultimately, a whole system approach is required and building food system resilience will require transforming the concept as described above into tangible frameworks to identify strengths and weaknesses in the local, national and global system, in low, medium and high income countries, rural and urban areas, as well as leverage points and interventions to enhance resilience for long-term global sustainability.

Major building blocks of resilient food systems are: 1) sovereignty in terms of access to core resources, such as nutrients and energy linked to basic Earth system functions and ecosystem services; 2) social capital enabling entire food systems to reorganize, with different actors having different capacities and agency; 3) human capital that is able to innovate and transform when challenged; and 4) financial capital with different geographic areas and stakeholders having different access to finance. The transformation of existing food systems to develop these capacities further can take different pathways and co-designing offers a possible means to mediate the change.

Entry points to increase food system resilience are: 1) national or regional food systems, which include the role of governments and regulations and national sovereignty issues; and which comprise multiple value chains contributing to food security and other positive outcomes; 2) individual food value chains ranging from local to global levels; and 3) individual's perspective and agency in the value chain, and the specific outcomes that concern them: this includes smallholder livelihoods, women, self-sufficiency and household food security, consumer health, urban-rural linkages, etc.



This working paper will look at the ways and means to enhance food system resilience across scales, including among others, by increased resource efficiency and reduced dependency on external inputs for food production (e.g., agroecological approaches,¹ reducing fertilizer and pesticide use); creation of local and regionalized food distribution networks (e.g., clustering local food production); reduction of waste along local and national food supply chains; and linking human nutrition (human health more broadly) to agricultural production subsidies and policies; addressing national and regional political, economic and institutional barriers linked to government bureaucracy and regulations, weak governance and corruption; and poor land governance and a lack of tenure security for smallholders and women.

An equity-based approach to improving food system resilience suggests the prioritization of local communities that are most disadvantaged in terms of access to resources. Policies and programs targeting disadvantaged populations, such as the urban poor and smallholder populations, can be more cost effective than non-targeted approaches in achieving measurable human well-being outcomes. Because of women's large role globally in food production and the provision of household nutrition, strategies that address gender inequities are likely to increase both food security and food system resilience, including the ability of communities and households to adapt to change.

Consultant's tasks and deliverables

Under the overall supervision of the coordinator of the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy (ERPA) unit of the UNCCD and the direct supervision of an assigned Officer, the consultant will prepare a Working Paper and Policy Brief for GLO2. This will entail the following tasks:

- Conduct a targeted literature review, including relevant reports and best practices, that examine the ways and means to enhance food system resilience across scales, inter alia, by the 1) resource efficiency and reduced dependency on external inputs for food production (e.g., self-sufficiency and agroecological approaches, ecosystem restoration); 2) creation of local and regionalized food distribution networks (e.g., strengthening local markets); 3) reduction of waste along local and national food supply chains; 4) linking human nutrition (and health more broadly) to agricultural production subsidies and policies; 5) addressing national and regional political, economic and institutional barriers linked to government bureaucracy and regulations, weak governance and corruption; and 6) poor land governance and a lack of tenure security for smallholders and women.
- Document evidence-based tools, frameworks, models and approaches that drive policy, implementation and stakeholder engagement in activities that make food systems more resilient drawing on good practice examples and case studies from various sources.
- Compile, in annotated form, a broad range of evidence-based case studies and good practice examples, from high, medium and low-income countries, of how land governance, sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration is seen as a contributing factor to more resilient food systems.
- Use a common analytical or building block framework that can accommodate a wide range of case studies and elaborate in detail five comprehensive case studies, at least one each from Latin America, Africa and Asia identifying many of the following elements: the problem being addressed; the social, economic and biophysical context; the pathways used; outcomes for nature and nature's contribution to people; political will and entry points; if known, cost of project and financing model; the science and traditional knowledge linked to food system re-design; ecosystem services before and after; land and resource rights, land governance and

¹ Agroecological approaches seek to ensure long-term productivity through the restoration of biodiversity and the full array of ecosystem functions that support food production and human well-being.



planning before and after; the resilience of the food system; stakeholders involved; drivers of change; role of soft environmental/land law; the legal, regulatory and institutional framework used; the enabling institutional and governance environment including multi-level and jurisdiction alignment and coordination; levers of change; continuum of activities; conflict management approaches; gender and social justice; rights, rewards and responsibilities; data collection methods; whether it was mainstreamed or remains experimental/pilot; outcomes, evidence, results, impact; what we can learn about scaling and multiple scales; lessons learned for governments, civil society, business/private sector, subsistence farmers, the urban poor and other stakeholders; blockages and enablers and challenges; and an overall story about the factors affecting implementation, the process of implementation, and the results of implementation, including on how to promote replicability and large-scale use.

- Produce a 30-50 page Working Paper that presents the analysis and results from the above tasks and documentation on the continuum of land and ecosystem restoration activities that enhance food system resilience.
- Produce a 4-6 page Policy Brief that distills the key findings and messages for decision-makers and UNCCD stakeholders.

Contractual terms

The consultancy will be home-based for three months starting from 15 June 2020. The consultant will prepare an overall work plan at the beginning of the assignment, which will be discussed and agreed with the supervisors at the UNCCD.

Requirements

- A Master's or PhD degree in agri-business, natural resources management or other field relevant for the consultancy;
- Research experience and publishing with an emphasis on environmental or natural resource management;
- Experience in transdisciplinary work in food systems resilience;
- Ability to communicate effectively in English with demonstrated writing skills is required.

Submission of application

Applications should be submitted by e-mail to staffing@unccd.int together with a UN Personal History Form² and CV, specifying the position [CCD/20/ERPA/22](#) in the subject line. Please also submit a cover letter with your expectations for remuneration.

The deadline for applications is 30 May 2020. Only applications submitted by the deadline will be considered.

Due to the volume of applications received, receipt of applications cannot be acknowledged individually. Please address your application as indicated above and please do not address or copy your application to an individual at the Secretariat or Global Mechanism. Candidates who do not receive any feedback within three months of the deadline should consider their application as unsuccessful.

Date of issuance: 30 April 2020

² UNCCD P-11 form in electronic fill-in .pdf OR .docx format available: <https://www.unccd.int/about-us/secretariat/vacancies/applying-unccd>