

Report of the 7th BioTrade Congress

Global Governance for Trade and Biodiversity



25 - 26 March 2024
Geneva, Switzerland

The report and the congress were organized under the "Global BioTrade Programme: Linking trade, biodiversity and sustainable development", funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

Notes

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States. The case studies have not been formally edited.

Acknowledgments

This report of the 7th BioTrade Congress: Global Governance for Trade and Biodiversity was compiled by Lara Koritzke from the Union for Ethical BioTrade, and Lorena Jaramillo, Lika Sasaki, Ivana Padierna and Theodore Koukis from the Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC) of UNCTAD. It compiles the discussions held during the 7th BioTrade Congress and does not represent the opinions or views of the United Nations, or its officials or its member States. The report was edited by David Einhorn.

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UNCTAD gratefully acknowledges the support of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO in the organization of the 7th BioTrade Congress and the development of this report under the Global BioTrade Programme: Linking Trade, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development.

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Acronyms

ABS	Access and benefit-sharing
ABSI	ABS Capacity Development Initiative
ABSAP	African Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
BIA	BioInnovation Africa
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COP	Conference of the Parties
CTE	Committee on Trade and Environment
DITC	Division of International Trade and Commodities
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFEM	French Facility for the Global Environment
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	German development cooperation agency
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ITC	International Trade Centre
KMGBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
MER	Minimum Eligibility Requirements
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
P&C	BioTrade Principles and Criteria
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SECO	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
TESS	Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs
TraBio	UNCTAD trade and biodiversity statistical tool
UEBT	Union for Ethical BioTrade
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-WCPC	United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNFSS	United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards
UNGCP	United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection
VSS	Voluntary Sustainability Standards
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Introduction

Biodiversity is an indispensable asset for the earth that provides essential resources for the livelihood of humankind. More than half the world's population – [over 4.3 billion people](#) – depend on biodiversity for their livelihoods, and [70 per cent of the world's poor](#) and vulnerable live in rural areas that depend directly on it (CBD et al., n.d.; CBD Secretariat, n.d.).

However, up to [40 per cent of the world's land](#) is degraded, [1 million plant and animal species](#) are at risk of extinction, and biodiversity loss is projected to accelerate through 2050 (UNCCD, 2022; IPBES, 2019). Global action to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity is reflected in the goals and targets of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(KMGBF\)](#) (UNCTAD, n.d.-a), as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Trade is an indispensable component of national economies in terms not only of businesses and societies but also biodiversity. [More than half \(55 per cent\)](#) of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), equivalent to an estimated \$58 trillion, is moderately or highly dependent on nature (Evison et al., 2023). However, [while most of the world's top 500 companies have a climate target, only 5 per cent have one for biodiversity \(WEF, 2023\)](#).

When trade is sustainable, traceable and legal, it can be a positive incentive to conserve and sustain biodiversity and promote benefit-sharing among all actors in the chain. There is also a direct business rationale to protect biodiversity, as [more than half of the market capitalization listed on 19 of the world's largest stock exchanges is exposed to material nature risks](#).

The 7th BioTrade Congress: Global Governance for Trade and Biodiversity

The 7th BioTrade Congress, co-organized by UNCTAD and partners, took place in Geneva, Switzerland at the Palais des Nations (Room XVII) on 25-26 March 2024. The Congress was supported by the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO under the [Global BioTrade Facilitation Programme: Linking Trade, Biodiversity and Sustainable](#) ² (UNCTAD, n.d.-b). Since the first BioTrade Congress in 2012, the event has become a global ² landmark that convenes trade and biodiversity decisionmakers, ² experts and practitioners for a high-level exchange on key ² issues related to the trade-biodiversity nexus.

The 7th Congress put forth policy recommendations and actions from government, business and civil society on how trade and trade policy can accelerate implementation of the [KMGBF and halt and reverse biodiversity loss](#) (UNCTAD, n.d.-a). The Congress also featured exchanges and case studies on the biodiversity and socioeconomic impact generated through the trade of biodiversity-based products, including BioTrade.

The event was among the activities planned by UNCTAD and partners on the path towards the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

BioTrade refers to the collection, production, transformation and commercialization of goods and services derived from biodiversity in a way that respects people and nature.

This is done by implementing the BioTrade Principles and Criteria, a set of sustainability criteria that ensures sustainability across the value chain (see Box 1 for more information).

The capitalization of “B” and “T” in BioTrade reflects a fundamental difference from the term “biotrade,” which is sometimes used to describe trade in biological resources for use as ingredients or inputs for food, cosmetic or industrial products, regardless of whether or not these have been produced sustainably.

(COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), including its inaugural Trade Day, as well as UNCTAD's 60th anniversary and the upcoming 16th Quadrennial Ministerial Conference, planned for 2025.

The 7th Congress brought together more than 50 speakers and more than 200 participants in person and online from more than 50 countries. It provided a strategic platform for government agencies, experts and practitioners, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, biodiversity-focused companies, academia, social enterprises and others to discuss the nexus of trade, environment, biodiversity and development. Participants discussed ways in which linking trade and biodiversity could decrease biodiversity loss and build resilient futures for people, especially in the Global South. The focus was on a “whole-of-society” approach with a role for government, business, social and solidarity entities, including cooperations and associations, and civil society.

The Congress featured more than a dozen plenary and special sessions with interactive debates, and with a livestream portion for greater reach. The UNCTAD Secretary General and other high-level panelists opened the event with a renewed push for trade policies and governance to help tackle the biodiversity crisis. This was followed by eight plenary sessions organized by trade and biodiversity-related organizations, including BioTrade partners, that discussed the impact of approaches related to trade-biodiversity and BioTrade and ways to move forward. The sessions examined a range of topics, including blue BioTrade, regional achievements, business contributions, and mainstreaming biodiversity into World Trade Organization (WTO) processes, among others. In addition, several special sessions were organized to announce joint publications, projects and initiatives and to offer insights on emerging issues and relevant developments, with a focus on Africa.

Recommendations from the 7th Congress will support implementation of the KMGBF and the SDGs, as well as UNCTAD's mandate under the Bridgetown Covenant.

The 7th BioTrade Congress was organized by UNCTAD and partners with the support of the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO under the [Global BioTrade Programme: Linking Trade, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development \(UNCTAD, n.d.-b\)](#).

Box 1. The BioTrade Initiative and Its BioTrade Principles and Criteria

UNCTAD launched the BioTrade Initiative in 1996, several programmes have been launched since then including the BioTrade Programme in 2018. It aims to synchronize and leverage results from previous phases and thus contribute to realizing the potential of the BioTrade approach to conserve biodiversity and reduce poverty.

BioTrade activities support the objectives of several multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). UNCTAD works with national and international organizations to foster the development of biodiversity-based sectors. UNCTAD implements the programme in partnership with the CBD, CITES, Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT), ABS Capacity Development Initiative, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, and regional and national partners.

In its implementation role, UNCTAD steers, coordinates and facilitates joint actions of key stakeholders and partners at the national, regional and international levels and addresses key concerns limiting the sustainable trade flows of biodiversity-based products and services. UNCTAD is also responsible for monitoring, internal evaluation and reporting of BioTrade impacts, outcomes and outputs. More information on BioTrade is available at www.biotrade.org.

BioTrade Principles and Criteria

The BioTrade Principles and Criteria (P&C), developed by UNCTAD, are guidelines for businesses, governments and civil society that want to support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of benefits through trade. The P&C are now being implemented in over 80 countries in Asia, Africa, America and Europe (UNCTAD, 2020).

While the terms “BioTrade” and “biotrade” might appear to be interchangeable, the capitalization of “B” and “T” in BioTrade reflects a fundamental difference: the term “biotrade” is sometimes used to describe the trade in biological resources for use as ingredients or inputs for food, cosmetic or industrial products, regardless of whether or not these have been produced sustainably. Activities related to BioTrade, on the other hand, are characterized by respect for environmental, economic and social criteria – in particular the BioTrade P&C (UNCTAD Data Hub, n.d.).

Agenda

Monday, 25 March 2024 – Day 1

10:00 – 10:30

Welcome and Opening of the Congress

- Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary-General, UNCTAD
- H.E. Mr. Alue Dohong, Vice Minister of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia
- H. E. Mr. Gustavo Gallón, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
- Monica Rubiolo, Head, Trade Promotion, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, Switzerland
- David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (video)

Moderator: Chantal Line Carpentier, Head, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, Division of International Trade and Commodities (DITC), UNCTAD

10:30 – 11:45

Plenary Session 1: Mainstreaming Biodiversity into World Trade Organization Processes

Organized by the World Trade Organization (WTO) Secretariat and UNCTAD

Roundtable discussions:

- H.E. Mr. José Valencia, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the WTO and other international organizations in Geneva
- H.E. Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the WTO and other international organizations in Geneva
- H.E. Ms. Nella Pepe Tavita-Levy, Permanent Representative and Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- Ludivine Tamiotti, Committee on Trade and Environment Secretary, WTO Secretariat

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Chantal Line Carpentier, Head, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, DITC, UNCTAD

11: 45 – 13:00

Plenary Session 2: Impacts of BioTrade Principles and Criteria

Organized by UNCTAD

- Moderator, Introduction to the topic

Roundtable discussions:

- Khorommbi Matibe, Chief Director, Biodiversity Economy and Sustainable Use, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, South Africa (video)
- Hoang Nhan, General Director Deputy, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Viet Nam
- Alejandro Bañol, Bioeconomy and Green Business Focal Point, Green Business Office, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS), Colombia
- Thomas Deleuil, Legal Officer, Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Anu Peltola, Director, Statistics Service, UNCTAD

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Lorena Jaramillo, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, DITC, UNCTAD

15:00 – 16:15

Plenary Session 3: An Ocean of Opportunities: Building a Global Seaweed Value Chain

Organized by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Global Seaweed Coalition, Shridath Ramphal Centre, and UNCTAD

Keynote speaker: H. E. Mr. Colin Murdoch, Ambassador and Permanent Observer, Permanent Delegation of the OECS to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Moderator: Launch of the UNCTAD Oceans Economy Programme publication entitled “An Ocean of Opportunities: The Potential of Seaweed to Advance Environmental and Gender Dimensions of the SDGs”

Panel discussion:

- Nichola J. Dyer, Senior Advisor, Global Seaweed Coalition
- Pinar Karakaya, Economist, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Liaison Office with the United Nations Office in Geneva
- Jan Yves Remi, University of West Indies (video)
- Hoa Doan, Head of Impact and Sustainability, NotPla

Interactive debate:

Moderator: David Vivas Eugui, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, DITC, UNCTAD

16:45 – 18:00

Plenary Session 4: Socio-Bioeconomy and Trade: Contributions for a Just Transition

Organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC)

Keynote speaker: H.E. Mr. Alue Dohong, Vice Minister of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia

Roundtable discussions:

- Ana Margarida Castro Euler, Business Executive Director, Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA)
- Christoph Ernst, Team Lead, Investments Sectoral Strategies and Transitions, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Joyce Brandão, Researcher, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Vanessa Erogbogbo, Chief, Green and Inclusive Value Chains Section, ITC

18:00

Adjournment of Day One

Tuesday, 26 March 2024 – Day 2

10:00 – 11:15

Plenary Session 5: Regional BioTrade Achievements and the Way Forward

Organized by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

- Jos van der Zanden, Programme Manager and Market Systems Advisor, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
- Christiaan de Leeuw, Manager, Nedspice Farmers Partnership Programme
- Lisa Huyen, CEO, Vinasamex (video message)

Panel discussion:

- Jane Carter, Senior Advisor, Natural Resource Governance, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
- Peter Schmidt, Senior Advisor, Agriculture and Food, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
- Hoang Nhan, General Director Deputy, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Viet Nam
- Patrick Sieber, Programme Manager, Trade Promotion, Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Marianne Kettunen, Senior Policy Expert and Advisor, TRADE Hub, and UNCTAD Consultant

11:15 – 11:30

Special Session: Zooming in on Africa's Transition to a Greener Development

Views from H.E. Ambassador Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission

11:30 – 12:00

Special Announcements

- Maria Durleva, International Development Lawyer/Trade and Biodiversity Expert (video) and Ana Cipriano, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, DITC, UNCTAD: Launch of the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework-EU Support Project publication entitled “Empowering Change: Unleashing Policy Innovation towards Global Sustainable Consumption”
- Rupal Verma, Sustainability Standards Expert, UNCTAD: Launch of the UNCTAD-UNFSS publication, “Voluntary Sustainability Standards and BioTrade: Is There a Connection?”

Moderator: Lorena Jaramillo, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, DITC, UNCTAD

12:00 – 13:00

Plenary Session 6: The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: Accelerating Business Contributions through Biodiversity-based Supply Chains

Organized by the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) and GIZ

- Moderator, Introduction to the topic

Panel discussion:

- Xinqing Lu, Lead, Champions for Nature, World Economic Forum
- Friedrich zur Heide, BioInnovation Africa (BIA), GIZ
- Alejandro Bañol, Bioeconomy and Green Business Focal Point, Green Business Office, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS), Colombia

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Rik Kutsch Lojenga, Executive Director, Union for Ethical BioTrade

15:00 – 16:15

Plenary Session 7: Making It Real: Using Policy Instruments to Promote Biodiversity and Benefit-Sharing

Organized by the ABS Capacity Development Initiative

- Hartmut Meyer, Advisor, ABS Capacity Development Initiative, GIZ
- Prudence Galega, African CBD Negotiator's group spokesperson and coordinator
- Pierre du Plessis, Technical Advisor to the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity and the ABS Capacity Development Initiative, GIZ

Interactive debate:

Moderation: Lara Koritzke, Communications Director, Union for Ethical BioTrade

16:15 – 16:30

Special Announcements

- Balakrishna Pisupati, Head of Biodiversity, Land and Governance Programme, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): Launch of the UNEP/UNCTAD collaboration
- Nicolas Rossin, Head of Biodiversity Projects, French Facility for the Global Environment (FFEM): A New Strategy for FFEM

Moderator: Lorena Jaramillo, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD

16:30 – 17:30

Plenary Session 8: Nature-Positive Trade for Sustainable Development: Unlocking Trade-related Opportunities to Support Food Systems

Organized by the Trade, Development and the Environment Hub (TRADE Hub), UNEP, CBD, WTO, ITC and UNCTAD

- Jason Clay, Executive Director, Markets Institute, World Wildlife Fund
- Delphine Babin-Pellier, Senior Liaison Specialist Food Systems and Environment, FAO Liaison Office with the United Nations Office in Geneva
- Sandra Avérous, Economic Officer, Trade and Environment, WTO, on secondment from UNEP
- Ulla Kask, Counsellor, Agricultural and Commodities Division, WTO
- Beatriz Fernandez, Associate Programme Management Officer, Environment and TRADE Hub, UNEP
- William Speller, Programme Management Officer, The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, UNEP

Interactive debate

Moderator: Marianne Kettunen, UNCTAD Consultant, and Senior Policy Expert and Advisor, TRADE Hub, led by the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and funded by the UK Global Challenges Research Fund of the United Kingdom Research and Innovation

17:30 – 17:45

Closing Remarks

UNCTAD

- Chantal Line Carpentier, Head, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, DITC, UNCTAD
- Lorena Jaramillo, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, DITC, UNCTAD

17:45

Adjournment

HIGH-LEVEL SESSION

OPENING OF THE CONGRESS

- Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary-General, UNCTAD
- H.E. Mr. Alue Dohong, Vice Minister of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia
- H. E. Mr. Gustavo Gallón, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
- Monica Rubiolo, Head, Trade Promotion, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, Switzerland
- David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (video)

Moderator: Chantal Line Carpentier, Head, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, Division of International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD

Background

The 7th BioTrade Congress began with addresses from the UNCTAD Secretary-General and the Acting Executive Secretary of CBD (via video message). High-level officials from Indonesia, Colombia and Switzerland also participated. These are key countries leading efforts to accelerate action to address the triple planetary crisis – biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution – from both trade and development angles. The representatives of two “megadiverse” countries – Indonesia and Colombia – shared experiences and were joined by a representative from the SECO, which has been at the forefront of promoting BioTrade globally through the Global BioTrade Programme: Linking Trade, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development.

Summary of Discussions

UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan opened the event by reminding everyone that this is a multi-stakeholder dialogue, and she expressed deep appreciation for the work of the SECO and its support for BioTrade for almost two decades. She shared statistics estimating the staggering cost of inaction: [55 per cent of the world’s GDP is dependent on nature](#) (Evison et al., 2023), and according to a World Bank simulation, a collapse of the world’s natural systems such as forests and fisheries would cost \$2.7 trillion annually by 2030 and would hit low-income countries especially hard (World Bank, 2021). Trade and trade policy can be a powerful tool for biodiversity conservation when it follows an approach with core tenets such as sustainable use, fair sharing of benefits, community empowerment and legal compliance. The Secretary-General concluded by calling on all stakeholders to take action to help sustainable trade flourish and in turn nourish the biodiversity upon which trade relies.

Indonesia has adopted a concrete biodiversity strategy and action plan to promote biodiversity conservation, conserve genetic resources, and sustainably use natural resources. These actions aim to support implementation of the goals and targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).

Colombia was a pioneer in applying the BioTrade Principles and Criteria. The country's national BioTrade Programme was instrumental in promoting green businesses, the production of goods and services related to sustainable use of biodiversity, and sustainable consumption. Drawing on this success story, at the forthcoming CBD Conference of the Parties (COP16), Colombia will share the perspectives of people who live and thrive on biodiversity and foster a dialogue on "Peace with Nature."

While acknowledging the risks associated with the triple planetary crisis, Switzerland underlined the promising potential of the KMGBF, as it provides concrete targets to be reached by 2030 and a clear direction on how to achieve them. Sustainable trade, including BioTrade, can be a crucial element in achieving these goals.

In his video message to the Congress, the Acting Executive Secretary of the CBD emphasized that governance of trade is crucial to achieve the goals and targets of the KMGBF. Trade offers opportunities for a sustainable bioeconomy, creating employment opportunities and incentives for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and potentially offering efficiencies in production.

Key Conclusions

The panel discussion concluded by calling for urgent action in the following areas:

- Ensure that all future use of biodiversity is sustainable, legal and traceable, including at national and regional levels, which is in line with CBD COP16 goals for restoration, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- Scale up action by sharing successful experiences, moving from pilot projects to full implementation, and identifying innovative practices and policies across sectors.
- Strengthen economic approaches by adding value to biodiversity while respecting its integrity, providing conservation incentives, and fostering greater private sector engagement.
- Integrate trade governance into whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to implement the KMGBF, working collaboratively across sectors to address the biodiversity crisis.
- Adopt a human-rights-based approach that protects indigenous peoples' rights and ensures that country contributions to the KMGBF reflect common but differentiated responsibilities, considering national circumstances and capabilities.
- Increase funding to the KMGBF Trust Fund to support comprehensive implementation of the framework.

PLENARY SESSION 1

MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY INTO WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION PROCESSES

Organized by the World Trade Organization (WTO) Secretariat and UNCTAD

Roundtable discussions:

- H.E. Mr. José Valencia, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the WTO and other international organizations in Geneva
- H.E. Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the WTO and other international organizations in Geneva
- H.E. Ms. Nella Pepe Tavita-Levy, Permanent Representative and Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- Ludivine Tamiotti, Committee on Trade and Environment Secretary, WTO Secretariat

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Chantal Line Carpentier, Head, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, Division of International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD

Background

This session brought together the Geneva-based ambassadors from Brazil, Ecuador and Samoa, as well as the WTO Secretariat, to exchange ideas on possible ways to enhance understanding of how biodiversity can be mainstreamed into the trade discussion, particularly WTO processes. The roundtable also discussed the importance of developing coherent trade and biodiversity policy frameworks supportive of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).

While biodiversity is not at the forefront of discussions at the WTO, it is related to ongoing discussions on sustainability held by different WTO committees, fora and agreements. For example, biodiversity is important in WTO forums linked to climate, plastics (pollution), sustainable agriculture, tourism and fisheries, among others.

Summary of Discussions

The discussion highlighted the need for a more systematic approach to biodiversity at the WTO, pointing to the existing interface between trade policies and the environmental agenda, including biodiversity. Several proposed avenues relate to discussions on fisheries subsidies, fossil fuel and agricultural practices, innovation, and protection of plant and animal varieties within the framework of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights; ecotourism in the context of the General Agreement on Trade in Services; protection of plant and animal life and health in line with the Agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade; and the WTO

environmental database on environment-related notifications. Important plurilateral initiatives include the Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade and the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate. Within these WTO agreements and initiatives, thematic sessions on the bioeconomy, blue economy and BioTrade can help integrate biodiversity considerations into trade discussions.

In Brazil, deforestation rates were reduced by half during the first year of the current government compared to the previous administration, but protectionism needs to be avoided, and the WTO must be brought to full functionality as a trade dispute mechanism. In addition, harmful agricultural subsidies and fossil fuel subsidies need to end, and biofuels and other alternatives should be promoted, which is addressed in KMGBF Target 18. Indigenous peoples, local communities, and those with traditional knowledge should also have a voice in WTO processes, as should KMGBF principles that protect the interests of small and vulnerable countries.

Samoa faces a unique set of vulnerabilities and structural challenges, including geographic remoteness and recent recoveries from external shocks. However, the nation has a renewed sense of priorities, including shifting its focus toward building a diversified, sustainable economy while protecting biodiversity, particularly regarding marine ecosystems that support fish stocks and coastal communities. The country is also focused on sustainable management of agroforestry crops to safeguard forests and protect traditional and customary practices and knowledge. The WTO can support these priorities through attention to conservation and sustainable use, as well as through steps that reduce environmental harm, including preventing and reducing waste and pollution.

The WTO Secretariat highlighted the added value of the WTO database to environment-related notifications. Since 2009, this reporting tool has helped identify more than 1,800 trade measures related to biodiversity, 50 per cent of which are related to animal and plant protection and another 30 per cent to natural resource conservation. Biodiversity-related matters are often on the agenda of the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE), with further attention to their linkages with multilateral environmental agreements, particularly with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The CTE was presented as a forum for discussing various trade and environmental issues, allowing for greater freedom to develop ideas and adopt a horizontal approach to environmental matters.

Key Conclusions

- Reintegrate biodiversity as a central focus of the WTO agenda through member-driven political will and consensus, ensuring its incorporation into WTO decision-making processes during future reforms.
- Use new mechanisms for the integration of biodiversity through the G20 Initiative on Bioeconomy under Brazil's presidency, dedicated CTE thematic sessions, and WTO Trade and Environment Week events for broader stakeholder engagement.
- Strengthen the economic case for biodiversity in trade by emphasizing how environmental degradation diminishes economic returns and by integrating environmental safeguards into trade agreements.
- Develop trade mechanisms that enhance the value of products preserving original genetic resources of plants and animals.

PLENARY SESSION 2

IMPACTS OF BIOTRADE PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA

Organized by UNCTAD

Moderator: Introduction to the topic

Roundtable discussions:

- Khorommbi Matibe, Chief Director, Biodiversity Economy and Sustainable Use, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, South Africa (video)
- Hoang Nhan, General Director Deputy, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Viet Nam
- Alejandro Bañol, Bioeconomy and Green Business Focal Point, Green Business Office, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS), Colombia
- Thomas Deleuil, Legal Officer, Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Anu Peltola, Director, Statistics Service, UNCTAD

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Lorena Jaramillo, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, Division of International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD

Background

This session examined implementation of the BioTrade Principles and Criteria (P&C) in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, with speakers from governments and the CITES Secretariat. Speakers related on-the-ground experiences from the diverse applications and impact of the P&Cs across various countries, regions and ecosystems, ranging from terrestrial to marine biodiversity. The interventions covered a broad range of work in progress to develop and/or strengthen a variety of sectors, documenting the socioeconomic and environmental impacts generated and the lessons learned.

The UNCTAD presentation explained that the P&C are a set of sustainability guidelines to help governments, companies and other stakeholders ensure that their biodiversity-based practices promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity while also ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits along the value chain of actors. First published by UNCTAD in 2007 and updated in 2020, these P&C are being implemented in over 80 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe, as well as in supply chains of transnational companies and in sectors such as personal care, foods and beverages, phytopharma and sustainable tourism. The P&C guidelines ensure that biodiversity-based products and services are sourced, produced, transformed and commercialized/traded under environmental, social and economic sustainability criteria. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) recognizes BioTrade P&C under [Target 5 as a complementary indicator](#) that aims to

ensure that the use, harvesting and trade of wild species is sustainable, legal and safe for human health (CBD Secretariat, 2022). Through this alignment, BioTrade P&C provide practical guidelines for sustainable and legal trade of biodiversity-based products.

The UNCTAD presentation also stressed the importance of data to measure the trade of such products to inform decision makers, and highlighted the work on the trade and biodiversity statistical tool (TraBio) (UNCTAD Data Hub, n.d.) and with the informal Working Group on Trade and Biodiversity Statistics.

Summary of Discussions

Panelists shared their experiences with implementation of the P&C, with representatives highlighting the importance of biodiversity to their economies and societies. Viet Nam has seen a significant impact from implementation of the P&C in national laws. The P&C are being used to support companies working in biodiversity-based supply chains. BioTrade has been regarded as a successful approach to conserve biodiversity, increase income and enhance livelihoods of local communities. Consequently, the government has adopted various policies on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, benefit-sharing and biodiversity-based products and services. Notably, the National Biodiversity Strategy includes, inter alia, the promotion of BioTrade and sustainable production and consumption. Furthermore, Viet Nam's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has strengthened biodiversity conservation efforts and increased awareness. In particular, it has enhanced soil health, improved ground water levels, and reduced the use of pesticides and agrochemicals.

According to UNCTAD statistics, the global value of exports of biodiversity-based goods was \$3.4 trillion in 2021.

In practice, there are many voluntary sustainability standards applied by companies, including Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) standards that originated, and thus are closely aligned, with the BioTrade P&C. The Regional BioTrade Project in Southeast Asia, implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, has shown significant social benefits by generating additional income (particularly for women), creating new jobs, improving working conditions, and helping companies export BioTrade products

A pioneer of the BioTrade P&C, Colombia has had a BioTrade Programme in place for more than a decade, with 80 per cent of current “green and sustainable businesses” in the programme dedicated to BioTrade and 20 per cent to sustainable tourism. Ultimately, Colombia's vision is to create sustainable value chains that benefit all stakeholders, from producers to consumers, and unlock new opportunities for growth while protecting the environment.

In South Africa, the biodiversity sector recognizes the BioTrade P&C as an integrated and practical mechanism to fulfil its obligations under international treaties such as the CBD, CITES and KMGBF. The P&C are being implemented at the national level, influencing and informing the development of a voluntary BioTrade conservation and sustainable use charter. BioTrade P&C are also being implemented in South Africa through three projects: (1) ABS Compliant BioTrade in South(ern) Africa Project; (2) BioInnovation Africa Project; and (3) National UNDP/Global Environmental Facility 6 Bioprospecting Value Chains Project.

The CITES Secretariat presented the experience of implementing the BioTrade P&C in the queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) sector in Eastern Caribbean through the blue BioTrade project entitled “Seizing the Trade

and Business Potential of Blue BioTrade Products for Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods and Conservation of Marine Biodiversity.” The project is being carried out in collaboration with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and UNCTAD. The pilot project (phase 1) produced the Blue BioTrade Regional Action Plan, which promotes legal, sustainable and traceable trade of Appendix II CITES-listed species, benefiting local economies while demonstrating blue BioTrade principles in marine ecosystems. This initiative is expected to benefit the economies of the beneficiary countries (Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and serve as a model for blue BioTrade in other marine resources in the region.

To inform decision-making, UNCTAD has been working with TraBio and the informal Working Group on Trade and Biodiversity Statistics to capture the data needed to show evidence of impact, including data points on value and trends, and to monitor key indicators of trade in biodiversity-based products.

Recognizing that unsustainable economies are fundamentally fragile, UNCTAD and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are working together to empower decision makers with metrics that incorporate social and environmental progress alongside economic considerations. This includes developing open shared resources to ensure that trade drives biodiversity conservation and equitable benefit-sharing.

TraBio supports the development of policy measures to protect biodiversity – for instance, to estimate the cost of achieving biodiversity goals and targets and identify synergies and trade-offs to help governments optimize investments across different sectors to achieve biodiversity targets. TraBio also uses indicators to assess trade and economic impacts on biodiversity, while developing a deeper understanding of biodiversity-related global value chains. This includes analysing the biodiversity footprint to track the production and consumption patterns of biodiversity-based goods.

Key Conclusions

- BioTrade has substantially evolved over 20 years of implementation, and there has been a significant level of uptake in national, regional and global initiatives, as well as in practical instruments such as long-term contracts and benefit-sharing agreements. Statistical data indicate the rising value of biodiversity-based goods.
- As UN guidelines, the BioTrade P&C serve as established soft-law instruments, with potential for further strengthening and broader implementation. The documented impacts of BioTrade initiatives demonstrate the significant potential for positive change at the intersection of biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation and trade, and those impacts are well-positioned to contribute to implementation of the KMGBF (CBD Secretariat, n.d.)
- Further implementation of the BioTrade P&C requires several key actions, including mobilizing government resources and adopting enabling policies, strengthening capacity-building with additional guidance, implementing economic incentives such as tax reductions, and fostering increased private sector engagement.

PLENARY SESSION 3

AN OCEAN OF OPPORTUNITIES: BUILDING A GLOBAL SEAWEED VALUE CHAIN

Organized by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Global Seaweed Coalition, Shridath Ramphal Centre of the University of West Indies, and UNCTAD

Keynote speaker: H. E. Mr. Colin Murdoch, Ambassador and Permanent Observer, Permanent Delegation of the OECS to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Panel discussion:

- Nichola J. Dyer, Senior Advisor, Global Seaweed Coalition
- Pinar Karakaya, Economist, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Liaison Office with the United Nations Office in Geneva
- Jan Yves Remi, University of West Indies (video)
- Hoa Doan, Head of Impact and Sustainability, NotPla

Interactive debate:

Moderator: David Vivas Eugui, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, Division of International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD

Background

This session provided an up-to-date overview of the seaweed sector and its linkages with trade, food security, environmental sustainability and gender empowerment. The session featured the launch of the UNCTAD Oceans Economy and Fisheries Programme publication, “An Ocean of Opportunities: The Potential of Seaweed to Advance Environmental and Gender Dimensions of the SDGs” (UNCTAD, 2024). Panelists shared how this emerging ocean sector can be scaled globally while overcoming sectoral challenges to build such a sustainable and biodiversity-based global seaweed value chain.

The global seaweed market was valued at approximately \$17 billion in 2022 (UNCTAD, 2023a) and is expected to reach \$86 billion by 2026. Using a blue BioTrade approach, seaweed can offer sustainable solutions to common nutritional deficiencies. It also has the potential to replace fossil fuels in industries such as textiles and non-plastic materials. Seaweed farming can provide ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and nitrogen cycling, benefiting vulnerable coastal regions. It can also economically empower women, who play a significant role in seaweed production, processing and commercialization. However, much of the economic, environmental and social potential of the seaweed sector remains untapped.

Summary of Discussions

Seaweed cultivation and harvesting present significant opportunities across multiple sectors, with robust market growth observed globally. While Southeast Asia remains the dominant region for production, emerging markets in Europe, Africa and the Caribbean demonstrate increasing capacity and potential. The sector encompasses diverse applications, including biofuels, pharmaceuticals, biomaterials and bioconstruction. Notably, seaweed cultivation provides essential marine habitats and has a minimal environmental impact, while serving as a crucial food source for marine ecosystems.

Current seaweed market trends indicate substantial growth, although further research and development are essential to fully realize the sector's potential. Key areas requiring investigation include sustainable fuel production for aviation, textile industry applications to reduce synthetic dye usage, and agricultural applications such as bio-stimulants to decrease synthetic fertilizer dependence. The panel discussion emphasized the need to integrate the seaweed sector in national development and marine planning policies, and to implement projects that address fundamental environmental challenges such as algae blooms induced by agricultural runoff.

The sector presents particularly promising solutions to address marine plastic pollution. Seaweed's rapid growth rate, global availability, and non-competition with agricultural land make it an ideal candidate for sustainable development. Its potential applications include biodegradable packaging alternatives through the production of polyhydroxyalkanoates from seaweed and agricultural waste materials. In conjunction with regulatory frameworks limiting plastic usage, these innovations could facilitate a transition toward regenerative solutions while promoting a more comprehensive understanding of the societal costs of pollution from plastics.

In the Caribbean, seaweed cultivation has significant potential to enhance nutrition in coastal communities while generating economic opportunities. Caribbean nations are advancing production and export capabilities for both food and industrial applications under the Blue BioTrade Framework, supported by national governments, export promotion agencies, and United Nations entities, including UNCTAD and the UN Global Compact. This emerging sector presents opportunities for inclusive economic development, particularly through the integration of marginalized communities into sustainable value chains, while advancing circular economy principles.

Key Conclusions

- The seaweed sector presents substantial opportunities but also faces critical challenges that require comprehensive attention as its strategic importance grows. Advancing the sector's development requires coordinated action across multiple domains, including enhanced research initiatives, standardization frameworks, policy development, and regulatory mechanisms, increased private sector engagement, and expanded implementation of demonstrable best practices.
- Scaling the sector needs to be done inclusively and based on relevant socioeconomic standards, including BioTrade Principles and Criteria (UNCTAD, 2020). Attention must be paid not only to increasing seaweed production but also to ensuring responsible development across all producing regions, particularly in developing countries and coastal communities. In addition, it is crucial to

build capacity not just for production but also for research and intellectual property rights, enabling communities to benefit from the entire value chain.

- Gender will be important both in terms of protections and opportunities for women in the seaweed sector. This includes providing support for women entrepreneurs, incentivizing women's empowerment throughout the value chain, and training and protecting women workers in seaweed production.

PLENARY SESSION 4

THE SOCIO-BIOECONOMY AND TRADE: CONTRIBUTIONS FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC)

Keynote speaker: H.E. Mr. Alue Dohong, Vice Minister of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia

Roundtable discussions:

- Ana Margarida Castro Euler, Business Executive Director, Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA)
- Christoph Ernst, Team Lead, Investments, Sectoral Strategies and Transitions, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Joyce Brandão, Researcher, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Vanessa Erogbogbo, Chief, Green and Inclusive Value Chains Section, ITC

Background

This session explored the role that the socio-bioeconomy and trade can play in supporting just transition pathways. The nature crisis is a multi-level crisis impacting food security, climate change, human security, and economic development. Over half the world's total GDP is dependent on nature and its services, and, as a result, it is exposed to risks from biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. The Global South contains most of the world's biodiversity, which provides opportunities for local socioeconomic development through socio-bioeconomy models based on sustainable management and production strategies that reconcile biodiversity conservation and socioeconomic development. Particularly within developing economies and countries with significant biodiversity, the socio-bioeconomy offers a path to better livelihoods, while preserving native flora and fauna.

The discussions highlighted how transitioning towards a low-carbon and nature-positive economy will require transformative change across economies that are both environmentally and socially sustainable, and that the outcome of such a change needs to be inclusive and based on just transition principles to ensure that the associated costs do not disproportionately burden individuals or future generations that are directly or indirectly impacted.

Summary of Discussions

The session explored how trade can foster the development of a socio-bioeconomy, a concept that integrates the preservation of flora and fauna with carbon emission reduction within local development contexts.

Indonesia is strongly committed to addressing the biodiversity crisis and is looking at neglected ecosystem services and carbon mechanisms, as well as how biodiversity can be a vehicle for a green economy. This requires deeper and new forms of analysing the value of biodiversity, both through markets as well as non-market schemes. For example, how can it be recognized that orangutans are worth far more alive than as food for local consumption, or that the country's 24 million hectares of peatland serve as a crucial carbon sink, capable of storing up to 55 billion tons of carbon? Indonesia is leading by example, mainstreaming the use of biodiversity in sectoral dialogues and development planning. In addition, Indonesia is actively implementing access and benefit-sharing measures under the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization, recognizing traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities associated with genetic resources (CBD Secretariat, 2024).

Socio-bioeconomy models are based on the sustainable use of biodiversity resources, integrating traditional knowledge systems and management practices. The models focus on generating value addition to products and services, resulting in both improvements to local livelihoods and benefits from conservation. It is grounded in the principles of inclusion, equity, social justice and environmental conservation. The approach promotes sustainable production systems, valorization of local and indigenous knowledge, fair benefit-sharing of biodiversity use, food security and sovereignty, and poverty reduction.

Trade can help harness socio-bioeconomy models by facilitating market intelligence and access for products and services derived from these models. A key component to support this effort is facilitating partnerships and cooperation among public and private actors that ensure fair benefit-sharing of biodiversity with local communities. Organizations such as UNCTAD and the ITC have a key role in fostering dialogue and building partnerships to achieve these goals.

Job creation is also an important aspect and outcome of bioeconomy-related models. For instance, in Argentina, peanut farms are generating biomass used to increase energy security. The waste product (peanut husks) from the “peanut belt” farming region is used to supply green energy to thousands of local people. However, job creation must also take into account just transition principles, as jobs created in bio-based industries may replace or cause job losses in unsustainable sectors.

In Brazil, there has been a significant shift in the last 30 years from being an importer to an exporter of biodiversity-based goods, many of which were previously “invisible” to many Brazilians. An example is acai, which has been used since pre-Columbian times but seems recent because the superfoods movement has scaled it up in the functional food and beverages sector. Brazil now has some 200 ingredients being commercialized in this way.

In general, the private sector can provide investments in innovations, support for diversification, and access to finance, among other support. Governments need to put in place protections to prevent benefits from flowing only to international companies and promote ways to decentralize these value chains while also contributing to wider ecosystem conservation.

Key Conclusions

- Partnerships are needed to foster socio-bioeconomy models that support local communities, producers and small businesses that rely on sustainable management and production activities involving biodiversity resources.
- Overall, socio-bioeconomy models need to be scaled up across a wider variety of ecosystem types and biomes. The private sector and governments need to support these models through policies and incentives that ensure conditions are in place so that activities that put a value on biodiversity do not fail, and so that bioeconomy models are both transformative and equitable. Key aspects to support this goal include facilitating access to green finance to scale up local business models and innovative solutions, fostering coordination between public and private actors, and building supportive networks and ecosystems for local communities and producers.

PLENARY SESSION 5

REGIONAL BIOTRADE ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Organized by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

- Jos van der Zanden, Programme Manager and Market Systems Advisor, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
- Christiaan de Leeuw, Manager, Nedspice Farmers Partnership Programme
- Lisa Huyen, CEO, Vinasamex (video)

Panel discussion:

- Jane Carter, Senior Advisor, Natural Resource Governance, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
- Peter Schmidt, Senior Advisor, Agriculture and Food, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
- Hoang Nhan, General Director Deputy, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Viet Nam
- Patrick Sieber, Programme Manager, Trade Promotion, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Marianne Kettunen, Senior Policy Expert and Advisor, TRADE Hub, and UNCTAD Consultant

Background

This session explored how countries in Southeast Asia's Mekong Region (Viet Nam, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Cambodia) have developed ways to achieve ethical and sustainable trade using biodiversity-based ingredients. Through the Regional BioTrade Programme implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and local entities, traders, processors and import and export companies in the Mekong Region have integrated biodiversity conservation and sustainability into their everyday business practices. The programme has successfully introduced the concept of BioTrade into regional supply chains, leading to significant exports of BioTrade products from the Mekong Region countries.

The session highlighted achievements in ethical sourcing of herbs and spices for premium beauty and food markets, with particular emphasis on initiatives in Viet Nam that have enhanced both environmental conservation and community wellbeing. Representatives from two Vietnamese processing companies presented case studies demonstrating positive impacts of their spice sourcing operations in high-biodiversity regions. The interactive debate discussed additional cases, the challenges that remain, the role of multi-stakeholder initiatives, and how public funding could support biodiversity-sensitive sourcing or upscaling of these models.

Summary of Discussions

The Regional BioTrade Programme, supported by the SECO, has achieved significant growth. The cumulative turnover in certified products of the four countries has reached approximately \$150 million, doubling in value over the last 12 months alone. Cinnamon is the most significant crop, followed by cashew nut, star anise, chili and pepper. The programme has demonstrated clear success in changing company behavior and awareness regarding BioTrade, as well as in changing the willingness of companies to invest in biodiversity-friendly models in the Mekong Region. Notably, it has created substantial employment opportunities for ethnic minorities, especially women. However, the risks of spice monoculture still exist, highlighting the need to consider sustainable landscape approaches that build in multi-cropping systems.

Financing and supporting mechanisms are crucial for this transformation. The SECO has provided long-term support for the programme and is aligned with its regional objectives. In Viet Nam, particular efforts have been made to support the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, given their potential for job creation and poverty reduction. While Viet Nam has made significant progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly on social inclusion and poverty reduction, the successes have come with challenges. These include the loss of natural capital and biodiversity, especially due to rapid urbanization, inefficient use of natural resources, and the increasing effects of climate change.

Nedspice, a processing company that sources cassia from partner suppliers in Indonesia and Viet Nam, has expanded to sourcing directly from farmers. The company is working with the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) on sustainable cassia projects, transitioning from monoculture to regenerative agriculture practices. Its approach includes intercropping cassia with native trees, which provides short-term income from additional cash crops (particularly important because cassia can take 15 years to harvest) while also enhancing carbon capture potential through increased biodiversity in sourcing areas. Although Nedspice is pursuing UEBT/Rainforest Alliance certification, it emphasizes that certification should not be an endpoint. Having said that, the company also recognizes that certification can incentivize farmers through premium payments and help engage consumers, which is crucial for a long-term sustainable model.

Another company, Vinasamex, processes and exports cinnamon and other spices from Viet Nam. Vinasamex has established direct partnerships with more than 10,000 farmers, including 3,000 organic cinnamon farmers and 385 organic star anise farmers. Since becoming a UEBT member company in 2019, Vinasamex has been progressively improving its sourcing practices. Its achievements include creating 800 new processing jobs, with over 90 per cent of the jobs held by women, and significantly increasing farmer incomes. Through its Biodiversity Action Plan, Vinasamex has developed a biodiversity-friendly model forest that intercroops medicinal plants such as moringa and canarium.

Government policies in Viet Nam are creating an enabling environment for biodiversity initiatives. Since the 2017 update to Viet Nam's Biodiversity Law, new regulations have strengthened benefit-sharing, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, linking these directly to national economic development. However, while progress has been made, more work is needed to raise awareness of biodiversity and encourage the uptake of biodiversity-friendly production models. The mutual recognition between Vietnamese national standards and international standards has also enhanced the country's capacity to implement biodiversity-friendly production practices. However, there is a need for clearer guidance to

support claims that products are indeed “biodiversity-friendly.” Where there is proof of more sustainable agriculture models, Viet Nam is also developing concrete incentives such as reducing income tax and land rents. Again, however, one ongoing challenge is aligning national incentives with international certifications. In addition, training is needed for private sector actors and certifiers regarding national efforts on biodiversity so that international efforts can be effectively implemented within the national context.

Key Conclusions

- Multi-stakeholder initiatives are crucial drivers of BioTrade efforts, fostering awareness-building, learning exchanges and the upscaling of successful models. Landscape-level approaches are also essential for long-term success.
- Funding for projects must be strategic, prioritizing projects with a common purpose that may not attract private sector investment, while at the same time ensuring that development finance does not cause market distortions.
- Export market promotion of biodiversity-friendly products needs strengthening, particularly by supporting local companies that leverage traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities or that employ biodiversity-friendly methods. These companies often lack the capacity for effective international marketing.
- Governments can support biodiversity-friendly practices through targeted incentive mechanisms, including tax incentives, subsidies, and other fiscal instruments that reward sustainable production methods.

SPECIAL SESSION

ZOOMING IN ON AFRICA'S TRANSITION TO GREENER DEVELOPMENT

Views from H. E. Ambassador Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission

Moderator: Hartmut Meyer, Advisor, ABS Capacity Development Initiative, GIZ

Biodiversity is the backbone of Africa. The region is endowed with between 500,000 and 700,000 endemic plants and approximately 1,100 endemic mammals. However, these vast resources often do not benefit local communities. Illegal trade and harvest, as well as biopiracy, are significant issues that negatively affect local people. Women need to be empowered, as 30 per cent of value chains can be attributed to them. Women in agriculture contribute to crop production, food security, livestock, fisheries and addressing land degradation. Africa's blue economy is also significant, with 38 coastal nations and six islands, and oceans have the potential to unlock opportunities to reduce poverty, malnutrition and hunger. For example, 200 species of seaweed have been discovered in Africa, but more research must be done to enable its sustainable economic use and contribute to securing local incomes.

The 2022 Assessment Report by the 6th Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) showed that Africa is warming faster than other regions of the world (IPCC, 2023). The triple planetary crisis affects soil fertility, food and energy insecurity, and cultural heritage, while driving reduced economic output and rising poverty. Today, 43 per cent of Africa's population lives in urban areas, and that number is projected to reach 60 per cent by 2050.

The people of Africa have always coexisted with nature. Biodiversity and natural capital account for 30 to 50 per cent of the total wealth of most African nations. There are opportunities for local value addition and biodiversity-related services, especially if investments are upscaled into the objectives of BioTrade. The reasons for biodiversity loss are clear: greed, external forces, commercialization and trade.

The African Union Congress is putting continental frameworks in place to protect people and biodiversity, including (1) the African strategy to combat illegal exploitation of wild species; (2) the Sustainable Forest Management Framework; and (3) the African Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ABSAP), as part of planning following COP15. The ABSAP has four pillars: (1) sustainable use and benefit-sharing for access to biological and genetic resources, (2) strengthening biodiversity governance and processes, (3) mainstreaming ecosystem-based approaches at the sectoral level, and (4) increasing financing for biodiversity conservation. The African Union was the first entity to begin to engage in earnest on such a regional biodiversity strategy and action plan.

BioTrade is a viable approach to complement or replace traditional agriculture and strengthen rural areas where climate change is making crops less resilient. It is critical to foster the sustainable use of biodiversity by upscaling export value chains from Africa such as those for baobab and shea nut. Africa also needs to develop new products and biodiversity-based ingredients through research and development to meet the global demand for natural and biodiversity-friendly products. This effort must be linked to a continental framework to stop gender inequality, part of a 10-year action plan known as the African Women's Decade for Financial and Economic Inclusion launched at the African Union Summit in 2021. Work is needed at the national level in all African countries on linkages between gender issues and biodiversity, providing access to biodiversity-related businesses for women across the continent.

PLENARY SESSION 6

THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK: ACCELERATING BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH BIODIVERSITY-BASED SUPPLY CHAINS

Organized by the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) and GIZ

- Moderator: Introduction to the topic

Panel discussion:

- Xinqing Lu, Lead, Champions for Nature, World Economic Forum (WEF)
- Friedrich zur Heide, BioInnovation Africa, GIZ
- Alejandro Bañol, Bioeconomy and Green Business Focal Point, Green Business Office, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS), Colombia

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Rik Kutsch Lojenga, Executive Director, UEBT

Background

This session examined the critical role of businesses in supporting Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) goals and targets, emphasizing both their independent commitments and their integration within national biodiversity strategies and action plans. The discussion featured comprehensive sector-specific guidance from the WEF and Business for Nature on achieving “nature-positive” outcomes across multiple industries, including the food, chemical, tourism and fashion sectors. The session also highlighted the collaborative work between the WEF and UEBT on developing specialized biodiversity guidance for the beauty sector, while showcasing successful regional and national initiatives from Africa and Colombia that demonstrate how businesses can develop and sustain biodiversity-based value chains.

Summary of Discussions

The WEF has recently developed [guidance that maps out essential actions for businesses striving toward “nature-positive” operations](#) (WEF, 2023). The guidance provides detailed analysis of how different sectors impact and depend on nature. The UEBT and WEF (2023) [collaborated on a publication](#) focusing on key issues and priority actions for companies in the beauty sector as they move toward biodiversity conservation. The deep-dive report promoted a number of urgent actions, including integrating biodiversity in supply-chain due diligence, incorporating equity and human rights into all biodiversity measures, and engaging meaningfully in supply chains by treating suppliers as partners. The WEF and Business for Nature also launched the “It’s Now for Nature” campaign to inspire companies to develop comprehensive, public-facing nature strategies.

The BioInnovation Africa (BIA) Project currently operates across four nations (Cameroon, Madagascar, Namibia, South Africa), supporting biodiversity-based value chains and ensuring compliance with national

access and benefit-sharing regulations. BIA has enhanced a range of products and innovations across a wide variety of ingredients and processing steps. Companies must invest at least 50 per cent in cofinancing, providing a mutually beneficial business partnership based on ethical, social and environmental standards that promote a clear public benefit beyond the company's market aspirations (for example, key performance indicators might include hectares protected or jobs created). While some business partners are in the research and development phase, others are focused on building their business-to-business relationships with potential purchasing companies in Europe.

The project promotes European-African partnerships for biodiversity and is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), with GIZ as the primary implementing agency. They work directly with the Cameroonian Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), the Madagascan Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD), the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) under the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), and the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE).

Colombia is developing an extensive network of green and sustainable businesses through a comprehensive programme that places strong emphasis on entrepreneurship, rigorous verification of “green and sustainable” practices through ecolabelling, and strategic connections with “anchor” companies capable of driving a large-scale impact. Biodiversity is integrated throughout the programme, and biodiversity loss is considered a key business risk. The country is updating its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan as part of its efforts following the Conference of the Parties 15 (COP15), and strengthening the alignment between its green business programme and Target 15 of the KMGBF. As the host of the COP16 in October 2024, Colombia advanced the “Peace with Nature” theme by focusing on indigenous peoples and local communities in nature conservation and promoting “green equity” (i.e., the connection between biodiversity and human rights).

Key Conclusions

- The COP16 in Colombia, positioned as the “people’s COP,” recognized that trade needs to benefit local people and drive socioeconomic impacts in all biodiversity measures. Business has a significant role to play in this process, and green and sustainable business models are leading the way.
- The private sector is increasingly committed to advancing the vision of “a world in harmony with nature,” as stated in the KMGBF. The beauty sector is uniquely positioned – through its market presence but also its connections to biodiverse landscapes – to take the urgent actions needed now to conserve, restore and sustainably use biodiversity.
- Value chains producing high-value food, cosmetic and pharmaceutical products offer particular opportunities for direct private sector investments in biodiversity conservation by providing countries with equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms. The BIA project and Colombia’s Green Business Programme demonstrate different approaches to ensuring that these opportunities contribute to local development and biodiversity conservation – in Africa, through a focus on direct private sector investments, and in Colombia, through an emphasis on entrepreneurship and anchor company partnerships.

PLENARY SESSION 7

MAKING IT REAL: USING POLICY INSTRUMENTS TO PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY AND BENEFIT-SHARING

Organized by the ABS Capacity Development Initiative (ABSI)

- Hartmut Meyer, Advisor, ABS Capacity Development Initiative, GIZ
- Prudence Galega, African Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Negotiator Group spokesperson and coordinator
- Pierre du Plessis, Technical Advisor to the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity and the ABS Capacity Development Initiative, GIZ

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Lara Koritzke, Communications Director, Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT)

Background

This session examined how existing and potential African policy frameworks can be leveraged to achieve three key objectives: biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource utilization, and equitable benefit-sharing. Through detailed presentations and analysis, participants explored critical components of both the African Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ABSAP) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The session featured discussions on whether these policy frameworks are being effectively used, what challenges impede their implementation, and how development cooperation could enhance their impact across the continent.

Summary of Discussions

The ABSI is spearheading innovative approaches to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), with a particular focus on developing access and benefit-sharing monitoring frameworks and establishing multilateral mechanisms for benefit-sharing from digital sequence information on genetic resources. The ABSI's work also extends to fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships for biodiversity-based value chains with benefit-sharing, specifically supporting commercial partnerships and facilitating access for research partnerships. It is mainstreaming access and benefit-sharing in national and regional policies, with a focus on the African Union Commission and the AfCFTA, and on national biodiversity strategies and action plans. A significant milestone was reached when the ABSAP received an endorsement from the 44th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union in February 2024, with one of the council's core strategic pillars aligned with the KMGBF's focus on sustainable use and equitable benefit-sharing.

The AfCFTA serves as the cornerstone project of Agenda 2063, with 54 of 55 Member States of the African Union signing and 47 completing ratification. This framework aims to establish a unified African marketplace for goods and services, enabling unrestricted movement of people, capital and investments.

While it is still in its early implementation phases, the AfCFTA's Intellectual Property Protocol explicitly acknowledges the fundamental importance of providing adequate support to biodiversity custodians, though it recognizes that biodiversity is a national jurisdiction matter.

The ABSAP was introduced as a regional tool to help strengthen biodiversity and benefit-sharing considerations for BioTrade. It aligns with the KMGBF, and several of its interventions align with a number of BioTrade Principles and Criteria, such as sustainable use, harvest and trade in wild species; business transformation to reduce harm to biodiversity; fair and equitable benefit-sharing from genetic resources and digital sequence information; and other areas of intervention in strategic pillars of the ABSAP.

The session's interactive debate covered topics that included the need for (1) private sector financing to mobilize resources for implementation of these policy instruments, (2) education of consumers on biodiversity-friendly products versus monocrop products, (3) empowerment of women, who are often the ones conserving wild species/seeds and who often hold the traditional knowledge about these resources, (4) capacity-building and support tools to support equitable benefit-sharing, and (5) prior informed consent for access to genetic resources and acknowledgement of where the genetic resources come from. A clear statement was made that change must happen from the bottom up, even with good policies in place, because change will never be realized unless anchored to the aspirations and livelihoods of the people and vulnerable groups in Africa.

Key Conclusions

- Recent global commitments have created new demands and implications for trade in biodiversity products and services in Africa. Implementation of these commitments on the continent presents growing challenges as experts emphasize the necessity for trade that is sustainable.
- The ABSAP offers significant opportunities for impact at the continental and regional levels and should drive urgent action to support implementation of the KMGBF, including fair and equitable benefit-sharing from the use of genetic resources, and mobilization of increased biodiversity financing with enhanced capacity for Africa.
- Successful implementation of the AfCFTA depends on several critical factors, including ensuring that conservation responsibilities are distributed equitably rather than burdening the poorest populations; promoting greater diversity in value chains; providing robust support for ecosystem restoration; and guaranteeing that local communities receive a larger share of benefits while simultaneously advancing consumer education initiatives.

PLENARY SESSION 8

NATURE-POSITIVE TRADE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: UNLOCKING TRADE-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT FOOD SYSTEMS

Organized by the Trade, Development and the Environment Hub (TRADE Hub), United Nations Environment Programme, Conference on Biological Diversity, World Trade Organization, International Trade Centre, and UNCTAD

- Jason Clay, Executive Director, Markets Institute, World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
- Delphine Babin-Pellier, Senior Liaison Specialist, Food Systems and Environment, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Liaison Office with the United Nations Office in Geneva
- Sandra Avérous, Economic Officer, Trade and Environment, World Trade Organization (WTO), on secondment from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Ulla Kask, Counsellor, Agricultural and Commodities Division, WTO
- Beatriz Fernandez, Associate Programme Management Officer, Environment and TRADE Hub, UNEP
- William Speller, Programme Management Officer, The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, UNEP

Interactive debate:

Moderator: Marianne Kettunen, UNCTAD Consultant, and Senior Policy Expert and Advisor, TRADE Hub, led by the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund of UK Research and Innovation

Background

This session examined the strategic role of trade and trade-related policies in advancing sustainable agriculture and food systems within the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), highlighting the currently untapped potential of trade policy to achieve KMGBF objectives. The session was built upon the event series entitled “Nature-Positive Trade for Sustainable Development” (2022–2024), including the [Trade and Biodiversity Series](#) by UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre (ITC) (UNCTAD, 2022a); a [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\) Conference of the Parties 15 \(COP15\) side event](#) in Montreal in 2022 held by UNEP and UNCTAD (UNCTAD, 2022b); a discussion on nature-positive trade [at the WTO](#) by UNEP, WTO, CBD and the Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS) (WTO Secretariat, 2022); and the [nature-positive webinar series](#) (2023–2024) featuring speakers from the CBD, TESS, WTO, UNEP and the Yves Rocher Foundation (TRADE Hub, n.d.; UNCTAD 2022a). The session drew from the UNEP/TESS [policy paper](#) entitled “Nature-positive Trade for Sustainable Development”

(UNEP et al., 2023) and also benefited from insights from regional consultations on nature-positive trade and sustainable agriculture led by UNEP in cooperation with UNCTAD and the ITC in 2023.

Summary of Discussions

A comprehensive analysis by the WWF reveals critical vulnerabilities in global food systems, highlighting how countries are increasingly susceptible to food-import dependency. WWF's research demonstrates that current food prices inadequately reflect production costs, creating environmental externalities that burden planetary resources. Climate change is affecting food production, with an increasing impact of what is called “climate loss” – that is, when a crop is not planted, harvest is delayed, or the crop is less productive. In some parts of Africa, climate loss is affecting 25 per cent of agriculture. Food production has significant negative impacts on biodiversity, including habitat, freshwater, soil health and more. One key consideration is that a small proportion of food production is responsible for most negative impacts, so these areas need targeted focus to identify the sources of negative impacts and develop effective incentives to change these harmful practices. Two issues and solutions were put forward: first, the idea of minimum global standards for food production, similar to CODEX Alimentarius, which could be known as “Codex Planetarius;” and second, a “1 per cent solution” that would involve a 1 per cent service fee on food exports. This fee would be invested in supporting farmers through land tenure certificates, prevention of deforestation, reforestation initiatives, land rehabilitation programmes, and direct grants covering 100 per cent of costs without any overhead expenses. This market-based mechanism would aim to drive systemic improvements in agricultural practices.

The FAO is working on its 2024–2027 action plan to align with the KMGBF, with conservation and sustainable use at the core of the FAO's mandate. The FAO aims to contribute to the KMGBF's Target 10 on sustainable agriculture, Target 6 on invasive species, and Target 7 on addressing pesticides, among others. The agrifood sector is key to achieving these targets. The action plan will strengthen legal frameworks, drive a shared vision of concerted action on agroecology, facilitate harmonization at the international level, and develop assistance for national policies on topics including pesticides, fertilizers, pollinators, agroecology performance evaluations, soil management and sustainable fisheries. The FAO is also creating a new biodiversity knowledge hub where practitioners can search for information regarding each KMGBF target. The FAO recognizes that there also needs to be a wider set of metrics around food systems. Addressing this is part of the theme of the FAO publication entitled “[State of Food and Agriculture 2023: Revealing the True Cost of Food to Transform Agrifood Systems](#)” (FAO, 2023).

The WTO is increasingly addressing more environmental issues and provisions within its various divisions, including those related to agriculture and food systems. WTO members are increasing their oversight through trade policy reviews that examine agricultural subsidies and related measures. Through this review process, members can question specific policies, and the reviewed members provide detailed responses. However, while this is a positive step towards recognizing sustainable agriculture and food systems as important issues, the current context of the war in Ukraine has caused WTO members to focus on issues more linked to national food security.

The UNEP is working at the regional level in Latin America, Asia and Africa, where 500 million smallholders depend on agriculture. The UNEP recommends setting up centres of excellence on cross-cutting topics, with affordable services embedded in these centres. Smallholders need to have access to finance, and the lack of clarity on land tenure can be a barrier (for example, in the case of inherited land). Banks often see

longer-term loans as higher risk. Trade policies can unlock barriers in some of these cases, and the power of trade should be harnessed to eliminate all harmful subsidies and redirect investment toward nature-positive outcomes.

Key Conclusions

- Some issues discussed considered providing support to farmers to transition to more sustainable practices, both financially and through enabling policies and incentives. Some considered that support mechanisms should be comprehensive, extending beyond payments for carbon or ecosystem services to include diverse forms of assistance and investment. Furthermore, innovative models could be developed to address areas of food production that generate the most significant negative environmental impacts.
- Participants also suggested the elimination of harmful subsidies, with investments redirected to nature-positive actions for the food sector. Trade policies are instrumental in this transformation.
- Regional initiatives should focus on strengthening legal frameworks and establishing centres of excellence to facilitate knowledge-sharing on key topics related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, developing new metrics is crucial to accounting for the true cost of food.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Launch of the UNCTAD-United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS) publication entitled “Voluntary Sustainability Standards and BioTrade: Is There a Connection?”** – Santiago Fernández de Córdoba, Senior Economist, TAB, head of UNCTAD’S Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) Programme and Coordinator of the UNFSS; and Rupal Verma, Sustainability Standards Expert, UNCTAD
- **Launch of the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework-EU Support Project publication entitled “Empowering Change: Unleashing Policy Innovation towards Global Sustainable Consumption”** – Maria Durleva, International Development Lawyer/Trade and Biodiversity Expert (video message); and Ana Cipriano, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, Division of International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD
- **Launch of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/UNCTAD collaboration** – Balakrishna Pisupati, Head of Environment Policy, UNEP
- **New Strategy for the French Facility for the Global Environment (FFEM)** – Nicolas Rossin, Head of Biodiversity Projects, FFEM

Moderator: Lorena Jaramillo, Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, Division of International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD

Background

This Special Announcements section highlights four significant launches and strategic developments in the field of sustainable trade and biodiversity conservation. The announcements were presented between the plenary sessions, showcasing new publications, partnerships and strategies that advance the implementation of BioTrade Principles and Criteria (P&C) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Each announcement addressed the challenges of biodiversity conservation, sustainable trade and environmental protection through policy innovation, collaboration and implementation.

Launch of the UNCTAD-UNFSS Publication “Voluntary Sustainability Standards and BioTrade: Is There a Connection?”

Santiago Fernández de Córdoba, Senior Economist, TAB, head of UNCTAD’S VSS Programme and Coordinator of the UNFSS; and Rupal Verma, Sustainability Standards Expert, UNCTAD

For more than a decade, UNCTAD has recognized the importance of VSS as market-based tools to address economic and environmental concerns, including biodiversity and the triple planetary crisis. Through its leadership of the UNFSS, UNCTAD has created a collaborative platform that brings together six United Nations agencies: the Food and Agriculture Organization, International Trade Centre (ITC), UNEP, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, with UNCTAD serving as the secretariat. The platform focuses on examining how sustainability standards impact sustainable value chains, particularly regarding trading opportunities for developing countries.

The publication “[Voluntary Sustainability Standards and BioTrade: Is There a Connection?](#)” presents a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between BioTrade P&C and 11 selected VSS (UNCTAD, 2023). Using data from the ITC sustainability map, the study examines various sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, tourism and commodities. The analysis reveals that nearly all 11 VSS demonstrated links with BioTrade P&C as well as the Minimum Eligibility Requirements (MER), though with varying degrees of alignment at the criteria level.

Table: BioTrade’s Minimum Eligibility Requirements

Terrestrial BioTrade activities	Marine or Blue BioTrade activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity focuses on material from terrestrial and inland biodiversity (e.g. living species). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity focuses on material derived from coastal and marine biodiversity (e.g. living coastal and marine species);
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not include the extraction of minerals, such as sands, nor the extraction of metals, oil and gas, or the generation of energy; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not include the extraction of minerals, such as sands, nor the extraction of metals, oil and gas, or the generation of energy;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not seek to use or develop genetically modified organisms; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not seek to use or develop genetically modified organisms;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not introduce or cause the introduction of invasive species, as well as it does not use or foster the use of these species where the activity is developed, unless it is to control the population or mitigate its negative impacts on local ecosystems and actions are implemented to avoid its spread; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not introduce invasive species, as well as it does not use or foster the use of these species, unless is to control the population or mitigate its negative impacts on local ecosystems;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not collect, harvest, use, disrupt, or otherwise threaten endangered species, including those covered in CITES Appendix I and in national and regional endangered species lists; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not harvest/catch, use, disrupt, or otherwise threaten endangered species, including those covered in CITES Appendix I and in national and regional endangered species lists;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not contribute to the degradation or transformation of terrestrial and inland ecosystems, such as deforestation of primary forests; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not contribute to the degradation or transformation of marine and coastal ecosystems, such as the draining of wetlands or the deforestation of coastal areas;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not use agrochemicals banned by the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), listed in the Rotterdam Convention and in World Health Organization (WHO) Categories I and II, and/or banned in the relevant country(ies) where the activity takes place; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity does not incorporate or directly support any form of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing or other illegal activity;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the activities are done in protected areas or similar, these comply with the requirements defined in the regulations, plans strategies or programmes applicable to these areas; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the activities are done in protected areas or similar, these comply with the requirements defined in the regulations, plans strategies or programmes applicable to these areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization ensures the respect for human rights and avoids immoral and illegal transactions in business operations; and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization ensures the respect for human rights and avoids immoral and illegal transactions in business operations; and
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity must apply the precautionary approach, as defined in the Rio Principles and other related agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity must apply the precautionary approach, as defined in the Rio Principles and the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (1995), <i>inter alia</i>.

Source: UNCTAD (2020).

The study identified several key areas where VSS can support BioTrade objectives. In terms of MER, VSS actively promote ecosystem protection through measures such as non-genetically-modified-organism mandates, restoration of high-biodiversity ecosystems, and protection of endangered species. Regarding biodiversity conservation, VSS ensure sustainable production practices and promote biodiversity-friendly products. They also advance sustainable use of biodiversity through sustainable harvesting limits and resource management practices.

Furthermore, VSS can contribute to fair benefit-sharing by implementing price premiums and creating advantages for multiple stakeholders, including farmers, through improved production efficiency and market access. They also support compliance with national and international legislation, as most VSS requirements are rooted in existing laws and regulations. The standards mandate respect for fundamental worker rights, equality, and fair working conditions, while incorporating requirements for prior informed consent of local communities regarding resource access and usage.

Launch of the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework-EU Support Project Publication, “Empowering Change: Unleashing Policy Innovation towards Global Sustainable Consumption”

Maria Durleva, International Development Lawyer/Trade and Biodiversity Expert (video); and Ana Cipriano, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, Division of International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD

The publication “[Empowering Change: Unleashing Policy Innovation towards Global Sustainable Consumption](#)” was launched as part of the [Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework-EU Support Project](#) funded by the European Union and implemented by Expertise France (Durleva and Pérez Oropeza, 2024).¹ This initiative comes at a critical time, as UNCTAD’s [World Consumer Protection Map](#) reveals significant gaps in incorporating sustainability into consumer protection policies. Among 108 surveyed countries, only 18 have cooperation agreements on sustainable consumption, 32 have consumer protection laws with sustainable consumption provisions, 35 have enforcement powers, 39 have launched educational initiatives, and 40 have developed policymaking powers in this area.²

The global context makes this work particularly urgent, as the world’s population is projected to reach 9.8 billion in the next three decades. This population growth presents serious challenges to resource security, exacerbated by biodiversity degradation, climate change and pollution that threaten future generations. The publication recognizes the growing role of consumers in mitigating biodiversity loss and emphasizes the importance of protecting consumers through the [United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection \(UNGCP\)](#) in public policies (UNCTAD, 2016). It specifically demonstrates how the UNGCP can support

¹ For more information about the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework-EU Support Project, see the project website at <https://4post2020bd.net/> (accessed 24 December 2024).

² The World Consumer Protection Map is available at <https://unctad.org/topic/competition-and-consumer-protection/consumer-protection-map> (accessed 24 December 2024).

Targets 15 and 16 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). Those targets focus on business accountability for biodiversity impacts and enabling sustainable consumption choices.

The study identifies six key messages that shape the landscape of consumer protection and sustainable consumption:

- (1) Shifting consumer behavior through public policy remains challenging because of an overemphasis on sustainable production rather than consumption.
- (2) There is a notable lack of visibility for sector-wide consumption policies.
- (3) Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for reaching and educating consumers about sustainable choices through targeted campaigns, influencer partnerships, and interactive content that raises awareness about environmental impacts.
- (4) Addressing resource security and engaging young digital consumers is crucial to achieve various global goals.
- (5) The synergy between the UNGCP and KMGBF promotes resource reallocation through collaborative efforts.
- (6) The e-commerce era demands coordinated approaches to make sustainable choices accessible and affordable for everyone.

UNCTAD's BioTrade P&C offer a practical tool for implementing the UNGCP-KMGBF synergy, promoting sustainable consumption, legal trade and resource efficiency. As a co-chair of the Working Group on Biodiversity and Consumption of One Planet Network's Consumer Information Programme, UNCTAD is well positioned to further explore how BioTrade P&C can foster sustainable consumption through consumer protection. This work represents a crucial step toward transforming global consumption patterns and protecting biodiversity for future generations.

Launch of the Collaboration between UNCTAD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Balakrishna Pisupati, Head of Environment Policy, UNEP

UNEP's Economy and Trade Division and UNCTAD have launched an expanded cooperation through the BioTrade Programme, marking a significant step forward in addressing global environmental and trade challenges. This enhanced partnership plays a crucial role in helping countries more effectively navigate the complexities of supporting commodity trade, BioTrade, and access and benefit-sharing issues.

The collaboration comes at a critical time when the concepts of trade, BioTrade, and trading genetic resources require careful consideration, particularly given the complex discussions surrounding trade and biodiversity. A significant challenge lies in reconciling conflicting national policies, especially those concerning trade promotion and the sustainable use of biological and genetic resources.

UNCTAD has taken a leading role in addressing these challenges by developing tools and creating opportunities for stakeholders. Working in parallel, UNEP's Environmental Policy Unit supports countries in reviewing and developing national environmental policies to implement global environmental commitments, including multilateral environmental agreements. This collaborative effort has led to several key initiatives, including an upcoming joint publication with UNCTAD that will address the integration of

BioTrade-related issues into national biodiversity strategies and action plans to implement the KMGBF targets. The organizations are also exploring collaboration on implementing the recently adopted United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (known as the [BBNJ Agreement](#)) (United Nations, n.d.).

The UN Environment Assembly's recent leadership dialogue on science policy interfaces has emphasized the critical nature of policy alignment and coherence, highlighting how data and science form the foundation for effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. The UNEP's Environment Policy Unit operates under three primary mandates: strengthening science policy interfaces, promoting policy coherence both within and outside UNEP, and supporting improved environmental governance.

New Strategy for the French Facility for the Global Environment (FFEM)

Nicolas Rossin, Head of Biodiversity Projects, FFEM

The FFEM was established in 1994 to support three major environmental conventions focusing on biodiversity, climate change and desertification. Working across hemispheres, the FFEM collaborates with public, private and civil society organizations, as well as with international organizations and donors. The organization has built an impressive track record, funding over 350 innovative environmental projects across 120 countries, with a particular focus on Africa. The FFEM's approach emphasizes knowledge production and science-based solutions, with innovation serving as a cornerstone of its mandate through pilot projects that can be replicated by various donors in different locations.

The FFEM's current Strategic Framework 2023–2026 rests on five key pillars: (1) circular solutions and pollution control; (2) biodiversity conservation and enhancement; (3) adaptation and low-carbon transition in urban areas; (4) sustainable management of agricultural and forest landscapes; and (5) resilience of aquatic ecosystems. Within the biodiversity conservation pillar, the FFEM focuses on enhancing national protected areas and supporting innovative financial mechanisms. The strategy specifically aims to strengthen value chains derived from biodiversity resources, including blue value chains, following BioTrade Principles and Criteria (P&C) (FFEM, 2023).

Among the FFEM's notable projects, PhytoTrade in Southern Africa stands as a remarkable example of success. Cofinanced with the French Development Agency (AFD) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, this project has achieved significant success in sustainable forest management, job creation, gender equality, capacity-building and the development of quality standards. It showcases how sustainable value chains based on traditional knowledge and participatory management can simultaneously preserve ecosystems, reduce deforestation and improve rural incomes.

The Blue BioTrade Project in the Eastern Caribbean represents another significant initiative. This second phase focuses on sea moss and sargassum development, building on the achievements of the Blue BioTrade Project for queen conch implemented by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and UNCTAD in cooperation with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. As part of the Caribbean Regional Architecture for Biodiversity (CRAB) Project, the Blue BioTrade Project (phase II) is set to support marine resource value chains in Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent

and the Grenadines. The aim is to develop sustainable seaweed and sea moss value chains through comprehensive analysis and regional Blue BioTrade planning.

The FFEM maintains specific eligibility criteria for project funding, emphasizing biodiversity value, inclusive governance, equity, benefit-sharing and a scientific approach. Projects must demonstrate innovative approaches and potential for scaling. The organization offers grants ranging from €500,000 to €2 million, covering up to 50 per cent of project costs. A key requirement is that proposals must receive endorsement from the AFD or an FFEM member institution. Members include five French ministries: Environment, Research, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, and Economy.

Looking ahead, the FFEM plans to expand its support for initiatives implementing BioTrade P&C in developing countries, continuing its commitment to innovative environmental solutions and sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS

Biodiversity needs all of us, and we all need biodiversity.

Global responses to the biodiversity crisis have unified under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and the Sustainable Development Goals, which serve as global frameworks to address the biodiversity crisis in the context of the broader triple planetary crisis: biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution. Effective implementation of these frameworks requires joint coordination and accelerated action by all stakeholders, including the trade community.

The 7th edition of the BioTrade Congress built on these global frameworks and critically examined the pivotal role of trade in reversing the alarming trend in biodiversity loss. The discussions at the Congress yielded concrete recommendations for policy and action by governments, businesses and civil society on how trade and trade policy can accelerate implementation of the KMGBF and halt and reverse biodiversity loss. While trade drives economic growth and prosperity, it can also exert significant pressures on biodiversity and ecosystems. However, through strategically designed trade policies, trade can generate the transformative change needed to conserve biodiversity and ecosystems, support local communities, and foster fair and equitable benefit-sharing among all supply chain actors.

The impact of BioTrade was evident throughout the two-day event, with participants sharing diverse examples of how the BioTrade Principles and Criteria are being implemented by governments, the private sector and civil society globally and across multiple sectors. These discussions demonstrated significant progress in integrating biodiversity and social considerations into trade policies, while emphasizing the critical need for intensified efforts.

A key message across many of the sessions at the Congress was that *trade is an underutilized means to reverse the biodiversity crisis*. Adoption of the KMGBF demonstrates that there is now a consensus for action, and that this action must be accelerated and take place across the whole of society.

Action must encompass conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, fair and equitable sharing of benefits, support for small producers, and the creation of incentives and frameworks to drive change and safeguard ecosystems and local livelihoods.

The engagement of the trade community and the private sector is crucial to unlock the full potential of sustainable trade. Mainstreaming biodiversity into trade discussions at various fora is essential, including in WTO processes, G20 events, multilateral environmental agreements, and the UNCTAD ministerial conference.

“The Bio Trade Congress reminds us of the importance of putting people, societies and the environment before capital by looking more closely at alternative business models such as social and solidarity economy models to advance sustainable livelihoods.”

– Chantal Line Carpentier, Head of Trade, Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development Branch, UNCTAD

As we approach UNCTAD’s 16th quadrennial conference, it is essential to align trade policies with biodiversity goals, drive global collective action and prioritize bold steps needed to reverse nature loss by 2030. The 7th BioTrade Congress highlighted the critical importance of biodiversity and the urgent need for

collective action to live in harmony with nature. The discussions emphasized the transformative potential of sustainable trade and the necessity for coordinated global efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity, underscoring the role of effective global governance in achieving implementation of the KMGBF.

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