

INVITATION to an Expert Meeting



Biodiversity	A strategic value in resilient food production systems	
Location	The Hague,	Nutshuis Riviervismarkt 5, The Hague www.nutshuis.nl , central Den Haag, close to Grote Markt. <i>for route description, visit our website</i>
Date	18th March 2010	12.30 – 5.00 p.m., followed by drinks

Agriculture and associated biodiversity worldwide is under serious pressure to deliver more food, more feed and more fuels. Changing political powers and financial realities place additional challenges on development agendas. What does agricultural development look like that is able to manage these demands in a sustainable way and with an eye for inclusiveness.

Diversity as a basic principle in agricultural production systems contributes to the current challenges of climate change adaptation and poverty alleviation. Drawing from eight years of experience with expert civil society organizations around the globe, the Hivos-Oxfam Novib Biodiversity Fund and its advisor IUCN NL present some noteworthy insights: lessons learned and experiences with biodiverse agricultural systems that are able to influence policies and practices.

An expert meeting has been organised for March 18th to further deepen the debates around these issues with those involved in policy making, advisory roles, CSR and, lobby and to indicate how biodiversity can be better mainstreamed in agriculture, climate change adaptation and poverty agendas.

Two angles will be approached to the topic:

- (1) Attaining more resilience with higher agrobiodiversity
- (2) Scaling-up trade from biodiverse agricultural systems

An active discussion programme with speakers from both the South and the North for Dutch and (a limited number of) European policy makers, civil society organisations and CSR institutions directly involved in policy development, and debates on agricultural development and climate change.

Organisers				
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Background and programme

Diversity as a basic principle in agricultural production systems contributes to long term solutions to the challenges of sustainable food production, climate change adaptation and poverty alleviation. Drawing from eight years of experience with expert civil society organisations around the globe, the Biodiversity Fund presents its insights and aims to discuss the way forward.

Everyone benefits from the richness of global biodiversity. Organic resources lie at the very basis of the world economy, and enable the subsistence of the world's poor. Biodiversity is not just a source of food. Wild and (semi) domesticated biodiversity is crucial for the development of medicines, additional sources of income – among others in tourism - as fibre, feed, fuel, and as a safety net in times of climate change and other shocks and stresses.

The FAO estimates that in 2009 more than 1 billion people were undernourished. This represents more hungry people than at any time since 1970 and is an aggravation of the trend before the economic crisis. It also has to do with the way the world has neglected agriculture. Local food systems have thrived on diversity, modern food systems and their industrial suppliers thrive on uniformity. Only 12 crops and 14 animal species compose 80-90% of our global food supply, and an increasingly limited number of companies control these genetic resources.

The pressure on the current global food system to perform better, deliver multiple services and be resilient is ever-increasing. Policy makers and large agribusinesses claim to have solutions. The members of the FAO, during its latest World Summit on Food Security (October 2009) embraced efforts towards a green revolution for Africa: they proposed a focused variety improvement combined with input packages. Others criticise this approach as not being sustainable. Can intensive farming and the use of GM crops really solve problems or do they also create new ones? Are no-tillage systems combined with high pesticide use really the solution to feed the world or do they also create unwanted effects on human health and ecosystems? A 'more of the same' approach?

The IAASTD report completed by more than 400 experts and scientists of all continents in 2008, clearly shows that continuing the current way of thinking and food production doesn't provide the solution to handle the food and environmental crisis. A more radical change in our thinking is needed. Not only because our highly oil dependent systems cannot provide the solution for tomorrow but also because with the above mentioned approaches, we risk losing out on agrobiodiversity, a very vital asset for future development and resilience.

Given these challenging political, environmental and social circumstances, in what ways can sustainable biodiversity management better contribute to poverty alleviation, and protect potentially vital agrobiodiversity resources from erosion and extinction? This **expert meeting** will look at a number of experiences in sustainable biodiversity management as potentially viable future options. The meeting will focus on agriculture, productivity issues and the need to increase the resilience of production systems

Two approaches will be taken :

(1) Attaining more resilience with higher agrobiodiversity

Variety of crops and races is the backbone of sustainable agriculture. Higher biodiversity in and around farms improves the resilience of food production systems. Soil fertility increases, water supply services improve and pests are controlled better. In many farming communities world-wide, no seeds means no food, and low quality or less well-adapted seeds mean less production. Enhancing the role of farming seed systems is crucial for resilience. The organisers invited civil society organisations SEARICE and CTDI to come and speak about their work. They developed 'participatory variety selection' and 'participatory plant breeding' tools in more than 10 countries in Asia and Africa that aim



to ensure that farming communities can select and develop their own seeds, suited to their specific conditions. However, it is not only changing climatic conditions that impact on farmers. Also the space for farmers to operate autonomously is reducing. The seed industries are lobbying hard to impinge on Farmers Rights to exchange, re-use and sell their seeds. And this is not without risk. SEARICE and CTDT belong to a global network called Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation that emphasizes that this right is fundamental to the resilience of food systems, locally and globally. What are the impacts of their work with farmers on biodiversity, agricultural production and on poverty? And, what if their experiences would be further upscaled? What does this require and how significant is this, given the increasing demand for food and land and changing climate conditions?

(2) Scaling-up trade from biodiverse agricultural systems

The European Commission states that “Organic farming has potential for mitigation of climate change through its efficient nutrient cycles and soil management, and as it usually implies higher diversity and high level of knowledge of the functioning of the farm ecosystem, it is also likely to be more resilient to climate change.” Demand for products from biodiverse farms is an important incentive for farmers and other stakeholders in the supply chain. What efforts can support the upscaling of these bio diverse production systems?

The Biodiversity Fund has worked with voluntary social and environmental standards systems similar to those for organic agriculture (IFOAM) and with ISEAL (the alliance of voluntary standards systems). What has been their impact on biodiversity and poverty in comparison to other policies and initiatives? Can these experiences serve as forerunners for sustainable practices including new relationships between producers, industry and customers? And, what can be done to further increase the impact of these voluntary standard systems? What is required to bring these systems and their support structures further up to scale?

The Hivos-Oxfam Novib Biodiversity Fund and its advisor IUCN NL would like to share experiences gained over the past years that indicate promising impacts on poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation. This meeting is aimed at Dutch and a limited number of other European policy makers, civil society organisations and CSR institutions, especially those interested in agricultural development and/or climate change. The organisers hope this event - and related online communication facilities in co-operation with IUCN NL's Natureandpoverty.net knowledge programme - will support the debates with anecdotal evidence, research data and useful contacts.

Aims

- To share the insights of experienced organisations on the role of agrobiodiversity in resilience of agricultural systems.
- To offer space for discussion for policy makers, NGOs and businesses to accelerate the shift to an agenda that puts biodiversity more central in agriculture and climate change debates.
- To facilitate interactions between professionals that have gained experience with and can show results in a biodiversity-inclusive agriculture and climate change agenda (e.g. increasing resilience through higher plant and animal diversity)
- To send participants home equipped with a better understanding of success factors of biodiversity-inclusive agriculture and climate change programmes, with new ideas and with interest in new partnerships.

For programme updates and essential readings see:

www.natureandpoverty.net/biodiv-fund/ and www.hivos.nl/english/bdf



Programme (DRAFT) facilitated by Theo van Koolwijk

12.30-13.30	Networking: coffee, tea and bread rolls
13.30	Welcome by Allert van den Ham , director programmes and projects, Hivos
13.45 – 14.15	Keynote speaker Michel Pimbert (IIED, UK) “Lack of Food Is a ‘Persistent Myth’ What is wrong with the global food system ? And, what can we expect from biodiverse agricultural systems?”
14.15 – 15.30	<p>More resilient food systems with higher agro biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 min movie – Bringing farmer realities in the room • Ditdit Pelegrina (SEARICE, Philippines) “Stability of the world’s food supply should be implemented in tandem with efforts to continually develop agricultural biodiversity”: An NGO with more than 25 years of worthwhile field and lobby experiences in Asian countries • Andrew Mushita (CTDT, Zimbabwe) Without Farmers Rights no maintenance of plant genetic resources. CTDT’s lobby agenda with African Governments, SADC and FAO Seeds Treaty <p><i>SEARICE and CTDT are member of the Community Biodiversity Conservation and Development (CBDC) programme. It enables farmers to be successful plant breeders which has shown very promising results in addressing the consequences of the global crisis for food security and livelihoods. How can policymakers, public gene banks, research institutes (CGIARs), donors and NGOs join hands to further scale up the positive experiences.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections: Henk Hobbelink (GRAIN) , Bert Visser (CGN, NL) (invited) and Dutch Ministry LNV • Participants of the meeting
15.30 – 15.45	Tea Break with a variety of local Dutch snacks
15.45 - 17.15	<p>Scaling up trade from biodiverse agricultural systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 min movie – Sustainable farmers marketing the future • Urs Niggli (FIBL, Research Institute for Organic Agriculture, Switzerland) - Can biodiverse agricultural systems really feed the world? What data are available and what more can be expected? • Karin Kreider (ISEAL, Voluntary social and environmental standard systems Alliance, UK) - Can voluntary standard systems expect to be the pull for biodiverse agricultural systems? Is this to become more than a niche reality and can it become mainstream? What is required to upscale? • Reflections: Theo van der Zanden, Hans van den Heuvel (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (invited) participants of the meeting.
17.15	Wrap up by the organizers Launch of the publication of the Biodiversity Fund, Oxfam Novib Drinks