



**Avaaz review comments
on the SBSTTA-24 document:**
Updated plan of action 2020-2030
for the International Initiative for
the Conservation and Sustainable
Use of Soil Biodiversity

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Introduction

This review contains human development-centred suggestions to improve the plan of action 2020-2030 for the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity. Avaaz believes, in order to succeed in this initiative, it is imperative that the world achieves, by 2030 a major conservation and restoration effort covering 50% of lands and oceans and a shift to regenerative carbon negative agriculture. Healthy ecosystems are key for this. We need to make sure that our efforts for conservation and sustainable use of soil biodiversity will be able to feed 10 billion people by mid-century, shifting our global food system to a predominantly regenerative (rather than extractive) system, providing nutrition for everyone.

We're already producing more than enough food to feed 10 billion people, but roughly 1/2 of the world's agricultural land is currently used to grow livestock feed and fuel crops. In addition, roughly 30% of produce yields are wasted. So we're only able to feed 7 billion people, leaving 1/10th of the population in hunger. If half of the areas used for food and fuel were put into food production instead, we could feed another 2.5 billion people. Soil sustainable use, along with complementary measures such as cutting food waste by half, will be critical for the success of this initiative.

Artificial Intelligence technology is also providing new solutions, like strategic crop placement to feed an additional 800 million people¹, which will be key in terms of land use. Taken together these measures can supply good nutrition for more than 10 billion people by mid-century on our current

agricultural footprint, even accounting for aridification of land predicted at 1.5C of warming². That model requires cutting methane emissions in half by 2050 (from 400 to 200 MtCH₄), mostly by reducing livestock and waste, and also a reduction of nitrogen (by about 1/3, from 7 to 4.5 MtN₂O) mostly by reducing agrochemicals, which are both important for this initiative.

Avaaz also understands that financial resources should be available to address key issues associated with soil biodiversity, especially in areas such as research, capacity building, land tenure, the rights of users, and as well gender: resources need to be sufficient, accessible, and dispersed equitably and appropriately.

Last but not least, people are central to the solution here, especially smallholder farmers. The United Nations estimates that smallholder farmers provide 80% of the nutrition in the global south, and many of these farmers rely upon traditional, agroecological practices, increasing seed diversity, decreasing chemical inputs, and regenerating fertile land through composting and cover cropping that conserves and protect soil biodiversity, and to increase carbon, water, and nutrient retention in the soil. Supporting smallholders could greatly increase nutrition, diet variability and food security in a warming world. Protecting them is protecting our soil: they're the roots of our existence and future.

¹ Davis et al. "Increased food production and reduced water use through optimized crops..." 2017. See: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41561-017-0004-5>

² Park et al. "Keeping global warming within 1.5 °C constrains emergence of aridification". See: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-017-0034-4>

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Document being commented on: [Updated plan of Action 2020-2030 for the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity - SBSTTA 24, May 2020](#). Quoting text will be in *Italic*, additions will be marked in **green and yellow**.

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Comments

Page	Paragraph	Comment
2	8	We welcome the intention of boosting and mainstreaming soil biodiversity into policies, at all levels, related to agriculture, food security, environment, climate change, land degradation and sustainable development, to ensure that soil biodiversity continues to provide a full range of functions and to promote sustainable soil management practices in agricultural systems that can enhance soil biodiversity while increasing farm productivity. We suggest adding between paragraphs 8 and 9 the following paragraph to outline a holistic, clear and overarching goal in order to harmonize actions and objectives on biodiversity soil protection, with a special emphasis on soil rehabilitation. In line with our text

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		<p>suggestion in Avaaz inputs for the zero draft (page 18)³, we suggest to include the following text:</p> <p><i>“Furthermore, the general objective of this Plan of Action is to (ensure) (support) the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, focusing on achieving by 2030, the curbing of unsustainable agriculture and aquaculture, ensuring that 100% of areas are sustainably managed, with zero new habitat conversion or deforestation, large scale soil rehabilitation, maintenance and strengthening of ecological connectivity, extension of ecosystem services, and increase resilience to climate change, through the application of agroecological approaches and nature-based solutions; food waste and post-harvest loss are reduced by 50%; and the global footprint of diets is reduced by 50%, aligning human and planetary health.”</i></p>
2	Line 59 (current)	<p>Avaaz suggests adding a fifth specific objective: <i>“5) Recognizing, supporting and securing traditional agroecosystems and agricultural practices by indigenous peoples and local communities, including those recognized by FAO as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS).”</i> Avaaz understands that the important role of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in preserving soil biodiversity should be properly reflected, in line with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment⁴, which gives evidence that biodiversity soil is less affected by drivers of loss in lands in control of IPLCs.</p>
4	Lines 118-124 (current)	<p>The rationale paragraph under <i>“Element 1: Policy coherence and mainstreaming”</i>, should include an explicit mention to the rights of small farmers and their unique role in delivering food quality while safeguarding biodiversity. As mentioned in our introduction, the United Nations estimates that smallholder farmers provide 80% of the nutrition in the Global South, and many of these farmers rely upon traditional, agroecological practices, conserving seed diversity, decreasing chemical inputs, and regenerating fertile land through composting and cover cropping that conserves and protect soil biodiversity and to increase carbon, water, and nutrient retention in the soil. Their role and leadership should be properly acknowledged in the document.</p>
4	Lines 133-135 (current)	<p>Avaaz welcomes this paragraph and stresses the full transition to 100% clean energy, a major conservation and restoration effort covering 50% of lands and oceans need to be more specific in which Sustainable Development Goals are relevant for this Initiative. From the perspective of Avaaz, we understand this paragraph is relevant for the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 2, 8, 11, 12, 13 and 15.</p>
4	Lines 137-140 (current)	<p>Under “Activities”, at point 1.3, we stress the need to add, after the mention of “integrated land-use planning”, the following: <i>“in a participatory manner.”</i></p>

³ See Avaaz submission with inputs to the Zero Draft: <https://www.cbd.int/api/v2013/documents/87366F86-8CFB-ECFB-B594-64C9BD63AB6F/attachments/Avaaz-2.pdf>

⁴ Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), Paris. 2019 (IPBES-7)

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4	Lines 142-143 (current)	Avaaz suggests adding the following sentence: “1.4 Adopt integrated, ecosystem approaches for the conservation and sustainable use of soil biodiversity and enhancement of agro-ecosystem functions, recognizing, considering and promoting the use, as appropriate, of traditional agricultural practices and knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities;”. There is no mention of the rights, interests or needs of IPLCs, including regarding customary use (article 10c) and to traditional knowledge (article 8j).
5	Lines 144-145 (current)	Avaaz welcomes this paragraph: “Develop policies and actions where soil biodiversity is central for managing protected areas, agricultural soils and restoring soil multi-functionality in degraded ecosystems, including urban soils.” and suggest adding language on equity. As pointed out by our ally organizations, IPLCs are essential partners in the fight to address biodiversity loss and need to be recognized as such at all levels.
5	Lines 147-149 (current)	Avaaz encourages parties to include an intergenerational element in that policy formulation. Also, there should be financial resources available to address issues associated with land tenure, the rights of users, and gender: resources need to be sufficient, accessible and dispersed equitably and appropriately. This requires an increase in resources from all sources since adequate finances are a critical condition. The burden of providing resources should not be equally distributed but following relevant principles. It is also critical that resources can be accessed by relevant stakeholders, including IPLCs. Therefore, Avaaz suggests adding in that paragraph: “1.6 Promote ways and means to overcome obstacles to the adoption of sustainable soil management associated with land tenure, the rights of users, including the recognition and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities to lands, territories and resources, gender, access to financial services and educational programmes, while recognising and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities to the lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied or used, and their systems of governance, knowledge and practices;” Recognising and providing secure protection for the tenure rights of IPLCs is a direct contribution to soil protection and the biodiversity outcomes sought by the CBD.
5	Line 156 (addition suggested)	Avaaz suggests adding a paragraph to reflect greater coherence between the Rio Conventions. It could read as follows: 1.8 Ensure soil biodiversity are properly reflected in the indicators and formulations of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs, under the CBD), and as well as in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), and in National Action Programmes (NAPs, under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification);

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5	Line 156 (current)	Avaaz welcomes the content and the whole section of the “ <i>Element 2: Implementing sustainable soil management practices</i> ” and suggest, when appropriate, to harmonize them with concrete SDGs ⁵ while formulating in a way that ensures that there are no unintended negative impacts on ecosystems and the people’s right dependent on them, carefully noting that, for instance, SDG4 on quality education does not recognize indigenous education systems, SDG8 on decent work and economic growth does not recognize traditional occupations, and SDG16 on peace and justice does not recognize customary law of IPLCs.
5	Lines 172-174 (current)	Avaaz welcomes the content of this paragraph and suggests adding the following sentence in order to emphasize that governments have the responsibility to ensure safe conditions for all. It could read as follows: “, <i>enabling safe conditions for the full participation of stakeholders in the implementation of this Initiative, including women, environmental rights defenders, and indigenous rights defenders;</i> ”
7	Line 213 (current)	Avaaz welcome the content and the whole section of the “ <i>Element 3: Engagement, awareness-raising, sharing of knowledge and capacity-building</i> ” and suggest, when appropriate, to include strengthening the capacity building for parties as duty-bearers, capacity building to understand rights and support implementation as well as the capacity building at the national level within countries (including with grassroots organisations and communities).
7	Line 263 (addition suggested)	Avaaz suggests adding a paragraph to reflect a stronger focus on mutual knowledge exchange at all levels, including community level instead of top-down capacity-building. We suggest: “ <i>Promote capacity- building and mutual learning at all levels, particularly nationally and community determined and/or country, and community-driven capacity-building;</i> ”
7	Line 263 (current)	Avaaz welcomes the whole section of the “ <i>Element 4: Assessment, targeted research and monitoring</i> ” and stresses the need to include, when appropriate, elements related to inclusiveness and equity. As some partners pointed out, there’s a need to reinforce and create conditions for intergenerational transmission of the diversity of knowledges, cultures and values in support of biodiversity, including educational reforms placing biodiversity and cultural values at the centre.
8	Line 286 (current)	Avaaz suggests adding a sentence to emphasize inclusiveness in the research efforts. It would read: <i>4.5. Mobilize targeted participatory research and development, ensuring gender equality, women’s empowerment, youth, gender-responsive approaches and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in all stages of research and development;</i> ”

⁵ SDG2: “End hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. It also commits to universal access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food at all times of the year”; SDG8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”; SDG10: “Reduce inequality within and among countries”; SDG12: “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”; and SDG13: “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”.

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8	Lines 298-299 (current)	Avaaz suggest adding a sentence in the end of the paragraph “4.9 Create and strengthen networking arrangements with a focus on supporting local initiatives on the ground, through partnerships that can leverage and connect activities at the local, national, regional and global levels and recognizing the important contributions of community-based and bottom-up approaches to biodiversity conservation;”
8	Lines 301-302 (current)	Avaaz suggest an addition: 4.10 Promote dissemination and exchange of information and data, in line with Articles 8(j) ⁶ and 8(h) of the 302 Convention on Biological Diversity; in particular promoting the generation of data, educational transmission, information sharing, and uptake of knowledge relating to biodiversity through an interdisciplinary and culturally-appropriate evidence base, ensuring that all decision-makers and other stakeholders have access to reliable and up-to-date information for the effective and equitable governance and management of soil biodiversity by 2030.” As our partners pointed out, it's key to promote the access to information for all, ensuring intergenerational equity and learning, and as well the support of interdisciplinary collaboration in education.

Conclusion:

Supporting smallholders could greatly increase nutrition and food security in a warming world. As a final comment, and in the light of the actions that should be taken for the conservation and sustainable use of soil biodiversity, it would be important for this initiative to start a discussion on the need of cutting food waste, livestock, and chemical inputs in half by 2050, which is in line with the EAT-Lancet commission’s diet recommendation. Delivering good nutrition for a population of 10 billion people is a challenge we can meet. To do so, we must look into the issue of biodiversity soil conservation and sustainable use from the perspective of human rights and science, taking into consideration that safeguarding and restoring 50% of our lands and oceans, and a full transition to 100% clean energy, will be complementary and necessary steps to deliver the objectives of this initiative.

⁶ See more on Article 8(j) Decisions at <https://www.cbd.int/traditional/decisions.shtml>