



Seminar on Ecosystems and Biodiversity

And Economic Implications for agri-businesses

IUCN HQ, Gland, Switzerland, 13 December 2010

Minutes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The seminar aimed to explore the implications of biodiversity and ecosystems for the agri-business sector. Participants identified the opportunities to build on existing research and tools developed by IUCN and partners, such as TEEB, ESR & IBAT, as well as the need to develop a few concrete “cases” of practical use of these approaches - in order to strengthen ongoing efforts and to develop new ideas aiming to improve the sustainability of agriculture. Discussions highlighted the importance of moving from a generic level to a more practical and context-specific engagement at the local level.

Opening Session:

Welcome, Juan Marco Alvarez (JMA), Director, Environmental Economics and Governance, IUCN and Peter-Erik Ywema (PEY), General Manager, SAI Platform

JMA welcomed everybody. He explained that IUCN does not have any specific program on food & agriculture per se, but deals with these through programs such as water, ecosystems etc. A tour of Europe’s first and only Platinum LEED certified building was organized. PEY thanked IUCN for hosting this event. He explained how most of our member companies view biodiversity as a key sustainability issue, but are often struggling to find ways to address it. Participants then introduced themselves and shared their expectations from the meeting (see [list of Participants](#)).



Setting the context: a food industry perspective about farm production and ecosystems/biodiversity preservation, Ian Hope-Johnston (IHJ), Pepsico

IHJ presented a food industry perspective about farm production and conservation (see [Presentation 1](#)). He provided an overview of Pepsico’s engagement in sustainable agriculture (SA) and emphasized the importance of understanding the challenges and opportunities related to biodiversity as they are perceived at the local (farm) level.

First Technical Session:

[Presentation 2](#): Introduction to The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) for (Agri) Business, Joshua Bishop, Chief Economist, IUCN

Key message: The presentation provided an overview of the origins, structure, timing and findings of the TEEB study. It focused specifically on the report for the business sector and highlighted the importance for companies to identify their impacts and dependence on ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as other opportunities to align business strategy and operations with biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

[Presentation 3](#): IUCN’s Engagement in Agri-business: Innovation and opportunity in business cases, JMA, IUCN

Key message: The presentation focused specifically on the potential for building on experience acquired across IUCN to support more targeted initiatives related to SA.



Discussion

The issue of eco-certification and its potential in developing countries was raised. It was noted that there is often scope to simplify certification procedures, especially for small-scale resource users. Certification by itself is generally insufficient; it needs to be accompanied by additional efforts to make conservation and ecosystem restoration profitable. The importance of having supportive policy frameworks was emphasized, notably to provide a level playing field for companies and to ensure that the costs and benefits of biodiversity are integrated in business decision-making (e.g. using fiscal incentives). While the actions of individual companies may be small in the broader context of SA, individual companies have an important role to play by providing visible leadership. The challenge of ensuring that agriculture- biodiversity linkages are reflected in land-use planning and zoning, was highlighted.

Second Technical Session:

Presentation 4: Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT), Jane Smart, Director, Biodiversity Conservation Group, IUCN

Key message: The web-based tool IBAT provides companies with detailed information on potential biodiversity risks (endangered species etc.) in areas in which they operate.

Presentation 5: Corporate Ecosystem Valuation (CEV) & Ecosystem Services Review (ESR), Eva Zabey (EZ), Program Officer, Sustainable Ecosystems, WBCSD

Key message: ESR helps businesses to identify risks and opportunities and develop strategies to manage their dependence & impacts on ecosystems. CEV provides a framework to inform corporate decision-making at various levels, using monetary valuation of ecosystem services and biodiversity.

Presentation 6: Sustaining waters: food security and conservation challenges for river basins, Mark Smith, Head, Global Water Programme, IUCN

Key message: The importance of addressing the gap between planning and implementation in order to learn effectively through action, was highlighted.

Presentation 7: Multifunctional Landscapes: proactive field margin management, Mark Titterington, Syngenta

Key message: The presentation discussed multi-functional landscapes and conservation through proactive field margin management. It detailed the experience accumulated by Syngenta through its Operation Pollinator initiative.

Discussion

The participants welcomed the tools presented. They raised concern about their complexity, though, and shared their wish to see complementary tools developed which would be more relevant to the agricultural sector. An important consideration was the accessibility to farmers of the different tools. It was also stated that such a bottom-up perspective needed to be complemented by 'top-down' efforts to achieve change through policy reform. The importance of coordination with governments was emphasized, notably to convene stakeholders with a shared interest in the sustainable management of specific regions or watersheds. The idea of engaging on a specific issue, such as pollination and field margins, was seen as a useful starting point for refining tools. SAI Platform could play a role to ensure that the different tools are well understood and appropriately used by the companies, and that the lessons learned effectively inform policy discussions at various scales. This will be discussed with interested member companies in the near future.



Break-out session:

Participants split into groups to discuss the following:



1- How does biodiversity relate to your business?

It was acknowledged that biodiversity conservation is a relatively new issue for many companies. Nevertheless, its relevance was highlighted notably in terms of addressing food security, rural economic development, business reputation (towards consumers and shareholders), and the long-term provision of raw materials. For these reasons, companies wish to show facts & numbers about progress on biodiversity conservation.

2- How do TEEB, and other related tools, relate to your work?

Members first started by highlighting the need for tools to:

- measure performance and improvement
- identify problems/risks and move from reactive to pro-active strategy
- make it tangible, help the farmer understand what he can do.

The need to ensure that these tools are simple and usable for farmers was emphasized. It was also stated that it is important to ensure a level of consistency across the different tools.

3- How will you make use of TEEB findings and other tools in your work?

There is a need to apply the tools in order to test their practical value. In particular, TEEB is seen as bringing lots of intellectual value but needs to be tailored to the audience and local situations. It could be useful to complement TEEB with concrete examples of how such an approach can be used to address biodiversity challenges in specific local contexts.

4- What additional information/products/arguments might be needed?

Several additional efforts were proposed to support the integration of biodiversity in agriculture. It was agreed that there is a need to strengthen the business case for biodiversity in the sector, and that a compilation of case studies, clearly demonstrating how conservation can support agriculture and rural development, was needed. The importance of measuring biodiversity performance and improvements in SA was raised as a key challenge. Participants also stressed the fact that greater transparency on the costs and benefits associated with different land management practices could be useful. This was notably raised as a possible endeavor that could be facilitated through SAI platform. Some members also expressed their wish to push for educational awareness to get ecosystems and biodiversity more known at various levels (agricultural schools, Executive training, etc). EZ will share with us some [links on this issue](#) after the workshop.

Conclusion and next steps

In their concluding remarks, JMA and PEY reflected on the day's proceedings. Overall, the value of specific tools to support the integration of biodiversity into the agriculture sector was remarked and commended. The need to make them more accessible and relevant at farm and local levels was emphasized, as was the need to raise awareness on their relevance to the wider agricultural sector. Pilot testing of the various tools was seen as an important possible next step in the broader effort to generate more examples and success stories of how biodiversity conservation can support SA, and vice-versa. Also, the compilation of relevant case studies on the economic case for integrating biodiversity in agri-business was seen as a useful possible follow-up activity. The Platform secretariat will brainstorm about these various options internally with interested member companies early next year, and get back to IUCN thereafter with a possible way forward.

PEY thanked JMA, all the other speakers as well as the participants for a truly interesting and inspiring seminar. The event was adjourned.