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High-Level Sustainable Agriculture Dialogue Addresses Urgent Need for Change

Kampala, Uganda — October 17th, 2023 Today, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in collaboration with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and under the leadership of the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries, is convening a Regional Common Ground Regional Dialogue for Mainstreaming Sustainable Agriculture in Eastern and Southern Africa held in Kampala, Uganda. This event, under the theme Promoting Sustainable Farming Approaches for Conserving Biodiversity and Enhancing Food Production, sponsored by IKEA Foundation, aims to promote a resilient and sustainable farming approach that restores and conserves biodiversity while enhancing food systems management across Eastern and Southern Africa.

The Common Ground Dialogues on Agriculture represent a series of conversations across national, regional, and international levels, focusing on actionable solutions to common agricultural challenges. These discussions aim to foster convergence on priority actions and policy instruments that incentivise land health in key agricultural value chains and landscapes. The dialogue builds on a momentum created from the Africa Food Systems Forum 2023 that took place on 4 - 8 September 2023 in Dar es Salaam which underpinned the need for strategies and actions to support recovery and regenerative practices so as to achieve sustainable food systems. It also addresses the pressing need to shift from prevailing agricultural paradigms that have prioritised production at the expense of soil health, water, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability. The event is a response to studies that link unsustainable consumption and production patterns to climate change, water depletion, biodiversity loss, and pollution crises. This has a direct impact on human well-being and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

In line with this regional common dialogue, Luther Anukur, Regional Director for IUCN Eastern and Southern Regional Office, stated, "This dialogue is a crucial step towards aligning agricultural practices with Nature with the aim of protecting biodiversity and natural resources as well as ensuring that farming communities will be able to adapt to climate change in the future."

The event also highlights the critical role of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) in promoting sustainable agriculture. NbS, based on the premise that healthy ecosystems provide essential benefits to humanity, simultaneously support biodiversity, reduce emissions, secure water resources, and enhance food security.

“The prevailing agricultural paradigm, which focused on maximising production through standardised processes, depleted soil fertility, degraded soil and above-ground biodiversity, and undermined the resilience of farming systems. To counter these challenges, we must embrace Nature-Based Solutions (NbS). NbS, when implemented effectively, secure significant benefits for humans, society, and the environment,” stated the Minister of State, Agriculture (MoSA) Hon Fred Bwino Kyakulaga (MP).

Smallholder farmers, the backbone of global food production, are especially vulnerable to climate change. ASARECA, recognising this challenge, has resolved to promote climate-smart agricultural innovations for enhanced productivity, resilience, and livelihoods of millions across the 15 ASARECA countries. "This dialogue is a call to action for all stakeholders in agriculture. Together, we have an opportunity to transform the way we farm, ensuring the prosperity of both people and the planet," remarked Dr. Enock Warinda, Executive Director of ASARECA.

Through this dialogue, stakeholders were able to share experiences and best practices in sustainable agriculture from various Eastern and Southern African countries; identify priority actions for transforming food systems at both regional and national levels; and foster collaboration between policy decision-makers, farmer federations, ASARECA members, and private sector players in food systems in support of sustainable agriculture initiatives in the region.

Dr Yusuf Nkungula, Malawi’s PS for Natural Resources and Climate Change graced the event, stating, “Today’s dialogue marks a pivotal moment in our collective pursuit of sustainable agriculture. By prioritizing innovative and resilient farming practices, we are not only safeguarding biodiversity and natural resources but also securing a resilient future for farming communities in the face of climate change.”

The partnership between IUCN and ASARECA is further bolstered by the support of IKEA, Pernod Ricard, and the French Development Agency. This coalition’s shared goal is to accelerate the global transition to sustainable agriculture, recognising that adopting Nature-based Solutions is critical to addressing food and water security, climate change, and societal challenges. By prioritising land health through sustainable agriculture, this dialogue seeks to improve crop production, biodiversity conservation, human well-being, and overall climate change resilience.

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About the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF)

The [Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries](#) is dedicated to the development and transformation of the agricultural sector in Uganda. It aims to enhance food security, promote sustainable farming practices, and improve the livelihoods of farming

communities. It is mandated to formulate, review and implement national policies, plans, strategies, regulations and standards and enforce laws, regulations and standards by enhancing crop production, improving food and nutrition security, widening the export base and improving the incomes of the farmers.

About the Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)

The [Ministry of Water and Environment](#) established in 2007 has overall responsibility of the development, managing, and regulating water and Environment resources in Uganda. It aims to promote and ensure the rational and sustainable utilisation, development and effective management of water and environment resources for socio-economic development of the country.

About IUCN

The [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) is a global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. It is composed of both government and civil society organisations. IUCN is committed to finding nature-based solutions that promote sustainable development and address pressing environmental challenges.

About ASARECA

The [Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa](#) (ASARECA) is a sub-regional Inter-Governmental organization of the National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES) comprised of 15 member countries. It focuses on agricultural research and development, with a mission to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the region. It has a mandate of coordinating the implementation of coordinated food systems processes leading to food, nutrition and income security and efficient service delivery in the sub-region.