

**Statement by
Elizabeth Maruma Mrema
Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity
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Theme: Where food begins**

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Soil biodiversity is vital to our health and our food supply, providing a multitude of ecosystem functions and services that are essential to sustain food production. Sadly, **90% of the Earth's precious topsoil is likely to be at risk by 2050** (FAO).

Most of the threats to soil biodiversity are the result of human activities, including deforestation, urbanization, agricultural intensification, loss of soil organic matter/carbon, soil compaction, and contamination, among others. We must act now in order to recover and conserve soil biodiversity. Improved management of soil and its biodiversity offers solutions for all sectors that rely on soils, including forestry and farming, and can simultaneously increase carbon storage, improve water and nutrient cycling, increase resilience to climate change, and mitigate pollution.¹ Traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities is an important contribution to the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of soil biodiversity. Action is needed from all stakeholders to recognize the role of women and indigenous and local communities in implementing sustainable soil management practices.

In just a couple of days, at the UN Biodiversity Conference, COP 15, Parties to the Convention will discuss global action for the conservation and sustainable use of soil biodiversity. This will be vital in exploring sustainable land-use options for the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The framework will help elevate sustainable food systems on the global agenda, by:

- ensuring sustainable agricultural management;
- reducing pollution, pesticide use, and nutrient loss;
- ensuring benefits for people;
- encouraging responsible choices and reducing food waste and overconsumption; and
- conserving genetic diversity, including by monitoring the number of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

Soil is where our food begins, and if we do not become responsible stewards of that soil, it will also be where our food supply ends. We must protect soil biodiversity for without it, our food security is not just threatened, it is lost. As Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.”

¹ [CBD/SBSTTA/REC/24/6](https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/2016/CBD/SBSTTA/REC/24/6/CBD-SBSTTA-REC-24-6-en.pdf)

This World Soil Day, I challenge you to spread awareness of the importance of soil biodiversity and how you can do your part to protect it.