



Safeguarding Human and Ecosystem Health

POSITION PAPER



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Key Areas of Intervention for Safeguarding Human and Ecosystem Health

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1. Reform Wildlife Trade

The existing system to regulate the wildlife trade cannot address health-related threats. With the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as its backbone, the current system was mainly designed to avoid the overexploitation of species but was not intended to provide solutions for public health risks posed by wildlife trade — not even in cases of high-risk taxa. The current system can be improved by:

- Strengthening the enforcement and monitoring of existing national laws regulating wildlife management and trade, as well as strengthening pathogen surveillance and inspection of traded animals and wildlife products.
- Basing decisions on the use and trade of wildlife on evidence about the risks and impact of trade on species numbers, habitats, food security, and local livelihoods.
- Keeping in mind that long-term policy change requires cautious and gradual interventions, a nuanced approach, and meaningful public participation and stakeholder engagement.
- Improving standards of hygiene and sanitation in traditional food markets to reduce the risk of transmission of zoonotic diseases.
- Designing well-targeted demand reduction campaigns and, where necessary, initiatives to provide alternative sources of protein and livelihood programmes for people severely affected by potential trade bans.

2. Enhance Biodiversity Conservation

Besides clean air, water, food, medicines and climate mitigation, robust and healthy ecosystems provide another important ecosystem service to humans: disease control. Healthy ecosystems can buffer the spread of disease by



hindering the transmission and mitigating people's vulnerability to different health risks. Preserving natural habitats is crucial for preventing future pandemics and it can be done by:

- Recognising that a well-managed, sustainable and effective Protected Area (PA) network plays an important role in preventing the spillover of diseases from wildlife to people and allocating sufficient resources to PA management and designation.
- Mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors and other health, development, or security initiatives.
- Encouraging both transformative changes in human relationships to nature and a better collective understanding of the strong linkage between climate change and biodiversity loss, and the implementation of a green recovery that provides benefits for the economy, climate, and nature.
- Pricing biodiversity by implementing payment schemes that both incentivise conservation and frame conservation as necessary for pandemic prevention. Governments, industries and businesses are more likely to absorb such payments if shown that the costs of another pandemic are higher.

3. Create Better and Sustainable Food Systems

To protect biodiversity and maintain natural disease control while, in parallel, creating safe food systems across the globe — including better management of livestock production and animal welfare — we need more sustainable, resilient, and diverse agriculture and harvesting systems. The COVID-19 crisis offers an unparalleled opportunity to transform the global food system and make it resilient to future shocks — ensuring an environmentally sustainable and healthy nutrition for all — by:



- Focusing on new farming and business models that shift from conventional monoculture agriculture towards practices that support biodiversity, such as organic and mixed crop-livestock farming, sustainable soil management, and ecosystem restoration.
- Significantly lowering chemical and fertiliser use and restoring soils with regenerative practices (e.g., eliminating monocultures) which can restore farmland biodiversity and significantly contribute to locking up carbon in soil and vegetation.
- Implementing approaches in which genetic resources, species, and ecosystems are managed in an integrated way in the context of production systems and their surroundings at the landscape or seascape levels.
- Increasing sustainability in agriculture to meet food requirements from currently available land — by integrated crop-livestock systems — and subsequently reduced land areas, and promoting a transition to healthier and more sustainable and diverse diets, including responsible meat consumption.

4. Adopt a One Health Approach

One Health is an approach that integrates human health, animal health and environmental sectors. This notion represents a system of tackling key health issues by recognising that the health of people, animals and the environment are often inextricably linked; and by leveraging work in all three sectors to better address the proximal and underlying causes of health issues. This can be done by:

- Giving equal importance to environmental and wildlife health as to human health in stakeholder discussions and decision-making processes.



- Institutionalising One Health in national governments to build pandemic preparedness and properly investigate and control outbreaks across sectors.
- Enhancing pandemic prevention programmes, instead of focusing purely on detection, through surveillance and response through coordination.
- Integrating human, animal and ecosystem health in research and practice to prevent disease emergence.

