

# UNEA Monitor

UNEA Monitor is a daily newsletter powered by Major Groups during the UN Environment Assembly. The newsletter tracks the most important negotiations and events and delivers the daily news through the lens of civil society.

## An Snapshot of the Civil Society Contribution to the Science-Policy-Business Forum: Redressing Global Food Systems

The Global Major Groups attended the first day of the Science-Policy-Business Forum that was organized as part of UNEA-4. Here is a glimpse of one of the sessions held on March 9, 2019.



*Environmental and Health Impacts of Food Systems* was the topic of a Science-Policy-Business Forum presentation supporting the 6<sup>th</sup> *Global Environmental Outlook Report* (GEO6). Introduced by Eddah Kaguthi, panelists included Lorenzo Giovanni Bellu of FAO, Isis Alvarez of Global Forest Coalition, Brett Rierson of World Food Programme, and Professor Andres Guhl of the University of the Andes. The panelists provided provocative presentations and engaged in a robust discussion with attendees following their opening remarks.

A key issue emerging from the session was whether the current food and agricultural systems will be able to feed the growing human population sustainably and satisfactorily. How can we satisfy increasing nutritional needs while producing food in a sustainable way?

Food production is the biggest anthropogenic use of land, and it is the biggest driver of biodiversity and habitat loss. Livestock farming bears particular responsibility, with monocultures of soya as animal feed displacing natural habitats. It also contributes to land degradation, greenhouse gas emissions and growing antibiotic resistance.

Seeking sufficient and sustainable food production with reduced inequality and reduced propensity to malnourishment still envisages a production increase by about 40 percent. This is achievable based on currently available land, though requires specific measures to be taken. Measures include consuming less meat, accepting higher food prices, and reforming government subsidies to producers.

Whilst the world's food systems are very complex, small changes can make a big difference. For instance, a major cause of lost agricultural output is damage and consumption by insects. The World Food Programme's "Zero Loss Initiative" has introduced a simple solution: a hermetic storage of air tight bags and silos. Taking advantage of insects being killed by their own CO<sub>2</sub> production in sealed containers is a low-cost, effective approach to reducing food waste with a number of co-benefits. Storing food at home allows greater control of time and price of sale, and greater control by women.



Ms. Isis Alvarez of Global Forest Coalition, Women MG, speaking during Session 18 on food systems.

## Exercising Caution on Geoengineering

### A Statement from Representatives from the ETC Group and Heinrich Böll Stiftung

For UNEA-4, Switzerland has proposed a resolution on geoengineering, the large-scale technological manipulation of the Earth's oceans, soils, biosphere and atmosphere to counteract, dilute or delay some symptoms and impacts of climate change. Members of the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG), a negotiating bloc in the UNFCCC consisting of South Korea, Mexico, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Georgia, co-sponsored the resolution with a few other member-states including Burkina Faso, Federated States of Micronesia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Montenegro and New Zealand.

ETC and HBS argue that when governments discuss geoengineering, they must do so with caution. They should ensure that no resolution result in encouraging or enabling high-risk technological interventions under the umbrella term of geoengineering. These technologies have profound risks and often irreversible and adverse global-scale impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity and societies. Further they are bound to disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities that depend on ecosystems and local environments. Some of them have significant potential to be weaponized, in particular Solar Radiation Management. All of these technologies are likely to cause local, regional or international conflicts.

To ensure a strong precautionary approach to geoengineering that adequately reflects the associated vast risks, the UNEA-4 resolution on geoengineering should minimally:

- 1) Reflect and assess the wide-ranging and multi-faceted impacts of testing and deployment of geoengineering technologies on the environment and the profound risks for societies and developing countries in particular, on food security, international peace and security, democracy, indigenous peoples, women and children;
- 2) Acknowledge the decisions adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity and London Convention/London Protocol on marine dumping as the starting point and foundation for deliberations on any governance mechanisms, and build on these;
- 3) Acknowledge the precautionary principle as providing guidance for responding to scientific uncertainty and to anticipate and prevent environmental damage by potential geoengineering research and deployment;
- 4) Ensure that the report on geoengineering represents the knowledge, interests and views of those potentially most affected by and vulnerable to the risks of geoengineering including indigenous peoples, women, youth and civil society;
- 5) Set up a multi-stage review process that allows national governments to comment on draft reports produced by expert groups or by the Secretariat of UN Environment before they are finalized; and
- 6) Ensure that the entire process is free of conflict of interests, such as fossil fuel industry interests, investors or stakeholders in geoengineering companies or researchers with patents on geoengineering or other conflicting commercial interests by establishing a robust conflict of interest policy.

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