



13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

“Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”
Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 21-29 October 2018

Resolution XIII.19

Sustainable agriculture¹ in wetlands

1. CONCERNED that 80% of wetlands have been lost in many areas of the world since 1700², and that 35% of wetlands, where data are available, have been lost since 1970, a rate of loss three times greater than that of forests (Global Wetlands Outlook, 2018); and NOTING that there is a recognition that one of the main drivers of the loss and degradation of wetlands, as indicated by the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (2005), has been the clearing and drainage of land, including for agricultural production;
2. FURTHER CONCERNED that many wetland areas that were for centuries used for sustainable agricultural production have been lost in the past 150 years, either intentionally by drainage, which has increased sharply since the 1960s, or indirectly by groundwater depletion;
3. AWARE that, in Resolution VIII.34 on *Agriculture, wetlands and water resource management*, the Conference of the Contracting Parties recognizes that wetlands can play important roles in relation to agriculture; and NOTING the high dependence of local communities on wetland resources, particularly in developing countries and notably in terms of small-scale subsistence agriculture, domestic water supply, and other uses that may contribute directly to poverty alleviation;
4. FURTHER AWARE that Resolution X.31 on *Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems* and Resolution XI.15 on *Agriculture-wetland interactions: rice paddy and pest control* stress the importance of sustainable rice-paddy cultivation for local and global livelihoods;
5. NOTING the recognition by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (“Rio+20”, Brazil, 2012), in paragraph 111 of the outcome document *The Future We Want*, of the need to promote more-sustainable agriculture and to maintain natural ecological processes that support food production systems, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 1 and SDG 2;

¹ Article I paragraph 1, second sentence of the Constitution of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reads: ‘In this Constitution, the term “agriculture” and its derivatives include fisheries, marine products, forestry and primary forestry products.’ See *Basic Texts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/022/K8024E.pdf>.

² Davidson, N.C. (2014). How much wetland has the world lost? Long-term and recent trends in global wetland area. *Marine and Freshwater Research*, 65(10), pp.934-941.

6. NOTING the outcomes of the second International Symposium on Agroecology (Rome, 2018) which call on stakeholders to view agroecology as an opportunity to transform the food system and address challenges including environmental, economic and social components;
7. NOTING the 2015 Paris Pact on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Basins of Rivers, Lakes and Aquifers, which calls for the services of water-related ecosystems in adaptation to climate change to be enhanced, through, *inter alia*, protection and restoration of wetlands and coastlines, reforestation and other natural water-retention measures;
8. NOTING Resolution 3/2 on *Pollution mitigation by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sectors* and Resolution 3/10 on *Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems*, adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its third session (2017);
9. RECALLING Resolution XII.9 on *The Ramsar Convention's Programme on communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) 2016-2024*, which identifies key actors, including the agriculture sector, and specifies the main messages for this target audience;
10. ACKNOWLEDGING the 2016 assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on pollinators, pollination and food production, which shows that a number of features of current intensive agricultural practices threaten pollinators and pollination, and that moving towards more sustainable agriculture and promoting diversity in agricultural landscapes offers key strategic responses to risks associated with pollinator decline;
11. ALSO ACKNOWLEDGING the 2018 BirdLife International report *State of the world's birds: Taking the pulse of the planet*, which reports that agriculture is a key driver in the decline of a number of bird species, impacting 1,091 globally threatened bird species (74%), including waterfowl and other aquatic birds;
12. REALIZING that wetlands are often intricately connected to groundwater – either by the wetland replenishing groundwater or groundwater feeding the wetland, or by a combination of the two depending on time and space – and that human and climatic impact on one system will affect the other;
13. ALSO REALIZING that the increasing lack of water in landscapes and scarcity of natural vegetation cover have contributed to increases in both the frequency and amplitude of temperature fluctuations, and that, in many parts of the world, maximum summer temperatures are becoming too high and water shortages too severe for either humans or livestock to live comfortably, or for optimum crop yields;
14. FURTHER REALIZING that severe shortages, and also surpluses, of water occur more frequently today in many parts of the world than in the past and that the increasing frequency of persistent droughts (highlighted in Resolution VIII.35 on *The impact of natural disasters, particularly drought, on wetland ecosystems*) and other extreme weather events, such as thunderstorms, hailstorms, sandstorms and also late frosts, leads to major losses of agricultural production and thus threatens food security and efforts to eradicate poverty;
15. CONCERNED that non-sustainable agricultural practices can have an adverse impact on landscape and species diversity (including wetland biodiversity), cause soil erosion, leaching of nutrients, and loss of soil fertility for agriculture, and also have an adverse impact on wetland functions and services;

16. RECALLING Resolution X.24 on *Climate change and wetlands*, which states that climate change and accelerated desertification will have major impacts on water availability and distribution, affecting wetland functions and values as well as agricultural production; and ALSO RECALLING the high primary and secondary production of some wetlands and their important role in retaining nutrients and water, as well as their contribution to the mitigation of climate change;
17. FURTHER CONCERNED that the continuing drainage of wetlands, and especially of peatlands, for agricultural production, forestry and natural resource exploitation further accelerates climate change (Resolution XII.11 on *Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention*);
18. AWARE that wetlands may provide resources that can be used for human and animal nutrition, as building materials and for energy production; and
19. ACKNOWLEDGING that many examples from across the world show that agriculture and forestry have been conducted successfully while conserving wetlands, and that many wetlands worldwide remain important sources for fisheries, crop production and animal husbandry;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

20. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to develop sustainable agricultural practices that promote the conservation of wetlands by discouraging further wetland drainage and properly managing aquifers, enhancing water-retention time in the landscape, recreating local atmospheric water cycles and contributing to climate change mitigation and the alleviation of adverse impacts of droughts, as well as reducing peak water discharges coupled with high nutrient and organic matter runoff;
21. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to identify and support sustainable traditional as well as innovative uses of wetlands and their biodiversity, while maintaining the ecological character of wetlands, ensuring sustainable and wise use of wetlands for fisheries, crop cultivation, reed harvesting, wetland grazing or mowing, berry and flower picking and floodplain forestry, and to search for and promote novel uses of wetlands such as the use of integrated buffer zones and constructed wetlands for the treatment of agricultural runoff or the use of degraded peatlands for sphagnum moss cultivation and other kinds of sustainable crop and animal farming;
22. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to support and develop guidance tools for the co-management of wetlands, other surface water resources and groundwater resources, as wetland protection and management cannot be done in isolation and require active land use, surface and groundwater protection and groundwater management, and as each integrated system needs to be monitored and well understood in order for the best management and adaptation strategies to be devised;
23. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to strengthen the role of communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) to enhance the understanding of communities that wetlands and agriculture can co-exist and even benefit from each other, and notably:
 - a. that agriculture in certain wetlands can benefit from their high primary and secondary productivity without compromising the ecological integrity of such wetlands;

- b. that wisely used wetlands can continuously provide many beneficial products, such as biomass, building materials, food and fodder;
 - c. that wise use of wetlands provides options for receiving multiple benefits, such as diverse production, water retention in the landscape, prevention of floods, stable groundwater storage, reduced runoff of nutrients, preservation of biodiversity, and carbon storage as long as the water table is sufficiently high for a large part of the season;
 - d. that natural wetlands also function as refuges of wild relatives of crops; and
 - e. that, thanks to their multiple benefits, wetlands can support human livelihoods and well-being;
24. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties: to work with research institutions, farmers and other stakeholders to promote sustainability within farming practices such as agroforestry, permaculture, grazing, aquaculture, fisheries, integrated production, organic production and sorjan farming in and around wetlands; to seek to support basic and applied research and demonstration projects; and to examine the potential for sustainable traditional and novel wetland products and production systems in wetlands;
 25. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to review and, if appropriate, improve their respective programmes and policies in support of agricultural production, and to assess their effects on wetlands and their sustainability, including on the integrity of wetlands and the long-term impact upon the sustainability of local livelihoods;
 26. ALSO ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to adapt, if appropriate, incentive schemes to consider criteria for the sustainable use of natural resources, conservation of biological diversity and prevention of the degradation of ecosystems related to wetlands;
 27. FURTHER ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties, in their National Reports, to assess the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of relevant domestic legislative, regulatory and wetland protection policy frameworks, to ensure that wetlands located in highly intensive agricultural landscapes have the necessary and adequate protection in place;
 28. REQUESTS that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), funding permitting and consistent with its scope, mandate and priority thematic work areas for 2019-2021, in developing its proposed work plan for presentation at the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee, together with the International Organization Partners, and in collaboration with Contracting Parties and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, compile and review information on the positive and negative impacts of agricultural practices on wetlands in terms of their biodiversity and ecosystem services, and document best-practice examples of wetland use for agricultural production that preserves wetland integrity and is sustainable in the long term and in the context of climate change;
 29. REQUESTS that the STRP, funding permitting and consistent with its scope, mandate and priority thematic work areas for 2019-2021, in developing its proposed work plan for presentation at the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee, support the implementation of the present Resolution by providing data on, and an overview of, the extent of intact agricultural wetlands and those damaged and destroyed through conversion to agricultural land uses since the 1970s; and
 30. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to support agroecological practices favouring sustainable food and agricultural systems.