

Remarks from Dr. Li Junsheng at the TEEBAgriFood Regional Symposium (22 June 2022)

Honorable Dr. Salman Hussain, ladies and gentlemen, friends.
Hello everyone!

Thank you very much for the invitation from UNEP and it is an honor to participate in the TEEB Regional Workshop on Agro-food Systems. This workshop provides a good opportunity for dialogue and exchange, experience sharing, etc. between representatives from government, scientific community and social organizations around the transition of agro-food systems for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration.

Currently, biodiversity loss has become a serious threat to human health and well-being, food security and sustainable socio-economic development. And biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and restoration are important means to synergistically address biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation, and are key initiatives to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In recent years, under the guidance of Xi Jinping's thought on ecological civilization, China has adhered to the concept of harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature, insisted on conservation first and low-carbon green development, and the quality of the nation's ecological environment has continued to improve and steadily improved. China is continuously promoting the construction of nature reserves, building a nature reserve system with national parks as the mainstay; implementing the ecological protection red line system, with the area allocated to the ecological protection red line exceeding 25% of the land area, covering all biodiversity protection ecological function areas; comprehensively implementing ecological protection and restoration projects, for example, systematically promoting the constructions of the Three-North Shelterbelt Program, the protection of Three-river Source, the protection of natural forests, the Grain for Green program, and the 10-year fishing ban on the Yangtze River. The country's forest coverage and comprehensive grassland vegetation cover have steadily increased, desertification, rock desertification and soil erosion have continued to shrink, and the carbon sink function of the natural ecosystem has been enhanced. China is also developing ecological circular agriculture and strengthening the certification of green, organic and geographical indication agricultural products, and steadily improve the quality of arable land and the quality and safety of agricultural products. By combining ecological protection and restoration projects with local characteristics, ecological industries have become a new growth point for rural economy, effectively promoting poverty alleviation and prosperity for people in the area.

Agro-food system is the main driver of biodiversity loss. In the past decades, many regions and countries have increased food production by expanding farmland areas or increasing inputs of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, energy, land and water, etc. This has contributed greatly to food security and poverty eradication, but has also brought considerable negative impacts to biodiversity, ecosystems and human health. Guided by systems thinking, a comprehensive consideration of the hidden costs and benefits of agri-food system practices

on biodiversity, ecosystems, and our own health, and the integration of biodiversity and its multiple values into agri-food system decisions at all levels will help promote a more nature-friendly, biodiversity-supportive approach to our farming practices.

As early as 2014, China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the Chinese Academy of Sciences jointly launched the China National TEEB Initiative to establish a national TEEB valuation methodology, conduct early demonstration areas, raise stakeholder awareness, promote the establishment of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use policies, and integrate ecosystem service values into policy decisions. 2019 onwards, we begin to conduct TEEB assessment in Agro-food systems, with a pilot in Tengchong City, Yunnan Province, a national "green is gold" practice innovation base, to explore the effective transformation of green to gold to achieve high-quality regional and community development.

China is entering a new era and people's living standards are improving. In order to meet people's expectations for a better life in the new era and to achieve diversified, comprehensive and balanced nutritional needs while providing a beautiful ecological environment, we are required to achieve a balanced development of sustainable agricultural development, ecological protection and agricultural modernization.

Reality has repeatedly reminded us that, in the face of global challenges, humanity is a community of destiny. We are willing to work together with all to promote the sustainable transformation of agro-food systems, continuously strengthen the conservation of biodiversity in farmland ecosystems and their regions, and safeguard our common home.

Finally, I wish this symposium a great success!

Thank you all.