

The IPBES Pollination Assessment: Implications for work under the CBD

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Earlier this year, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) finalized its first thematic assessment which focuses on pollinators, pollination and food production ('IPBES pollination assessment'). IPBES approved its Summary for Policymakers (SPM) and accepted the individual chapters of the full report at its fourth plenary meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Key findings of this assessment state that (i) pollinators play a key role for many processes in nature, (ii) animal pollination contributes substantially to global crop production, and (iii) current agricultural practices threaten many pollinator species. During its 20th meeting, the Subsidiary Body of Technical, Technological and Scientific Advice to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD SBSTTA-20) will discuss the implications of the IPBES pollination assessment for work under the CBD.

BACKGROUND

Pollinators and pollination services have been addressed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) several times in the past. In 2000, the CBD established the "International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators" (International Pollinator Initiative – IPI) as a cross-cutting activity within its programme of work. IPI aims at promoting the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of pollinator diversity in agriculture and related ecosystems worldwide. The implementation of IPI's action plan is facilitated and coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)¹. Research results and other knowledge that has been obtained in the context of IPI has contributed to the IPBES pollination assessment. The outcomes of this assessment are, in turn, highly relevant to the CBD and to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets²: The IPBES pollination assessment "provides detailed information on pollination as an essential ecosystem service, as referred to in Target 14³, and further elucidates some of [the] key components of sustainable agriculture as referred to in Target 7⁴. Progress towards Targets 5, 8, 9, and 12 addressing habitat loss, pollution, invasive species and species loss, respectively, would contribute to the protection of pollinators and pollination, as would, in turn addressing the

direct drivers of loss through Targets 1-4⁵. The assessment also demonstrates the relevance of Targets 18 (traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities) and 19 (knowledge, the science base and technologies)."⁶

KEY FINDINGS OF THE IPBES POLLINATION ASSESSMENT

Among the key findings of the IPBES pollination assessment are the following⁷:

- Animal pollination plays a vital role as a regulating ecosystem service in nature.
- More than three quarters of the leading types of global food crops rely to some extent on animal pollination for yield and/or quality.
- The vast majority of pollinator species are wild, including more than 20,000 species of bees, and some species of flies, butterflies, moths, wasps, beetles, thrips, birds and bats and other vertebrates.
- The abundance, diversity and health of pollinators and the provision of pollination are threatened by direct drivers [...].
- Moving towards more sustainable agriculture and reversing the simplification of agricultural landscapes offer key strategic responses to risks associated with pollinator decline.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/pollination/en/>

² <http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets>

³ Target 14: By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services [...] are restored and safeguarded [...].

⁴ Target 7: By 2020, areas under agriculture [...] are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

⁵ Targets 1-4 refer to mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society.

⁶ UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/9

⁷ The full set of key findings can be found in the SPM available at: <http://www.ipbes.net/publication/summary-policy-makers-thematic-assessment-pollinators-pollination-and-food-production>

POSSIBLE RESPONSES: CONGRUENCE AMONG MAJOR GLOBAL INITIATIVES

SBSTTA points out that the key findings of the IPBES pollination assessment and the options for strategic responses that are presented therein are reinforcing the conclusions concerning food systems and agriculture of the fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO = CBD flagship publication, published approx. every four years), such as that “addressing trends in food systems is [...] crucial in determining whether the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 will succeed” (and therefore whether the Aichi Biodiversity targets will be met) and that “unsustainable practices in agriculture, aquaculture and forestry still cause substantial environmental degradation and biodiversity loss”.⁸

Furthermore, the key findings of the IPBES pollination assessment are congruent to the “critical need for transformational change in agriculture that reverses the current trend of unsustainable intensification of production and unsustainable consumption” that is suggested in another SBSTTA document addressing the mainstreaming of biodiversity across sectors including agriculture, forests and fisheries⁹. To achieve this transformational change, the following responses are regarded as urgent¹⁰:

(a) sustainably increasing production, chiefly through ecological intensification;

(b) maintaining and restoring biodiversity in agricultural landscapes to provide more diverse, resilient and productive landscapes; and

(c) addressing unsustainable consumption through promoting behavioural change towards more sustainable, nutritious and healthy diets.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY SBSTTA TO COP

At its 20th meeting, SBSTTA will likely recommend to the 13th CBD-COP to endorse the key messages of IPBES pollination assessment and to encourage its member states to take actions against developments that threaten pollinators and pollination

services. These actions are outlined as a long list of possible policy responses¹¹, including to

- Integrate consideration of issues related to the conservation and sustainable use of pollinators in agricultural policy;
- Promote diversity of habitats and production systems in the landscape;
- Promote cropping systems and the management of grasslands and rangelands to enhance floral diversity over time and space;
- Improve hygiene and control of pests (including the *Varroa* mite) and pathogens in managed pollinator populations;
- Implement national pesticide risk reduction strategies and promote Integrated Pest Management practices to reduce the unnecessary and inappropriate use of pesticides;
- Where pesticides are used, improve application practices to reduce exposure of pollinators;
- Promote weed management strategies that take into account the need for pollinator forage and nesting sites;
- Develop incentives for farmers to protect pollinators and pollinator habitat;
- Build taxonomic capacity on pollinators;
- Assess the values of pollinators and pollination services; and
- Promote further research that supports the abovementioned activities and that identify risks to pollination services under climate change.

Moreover, SBSTTA will probably recommend to the 13th CBD-COP to encourage academic institutions as well as international organisations and networks, to address knowledge gaps identified in the IPBES pollination assessment.

At its 20th meeting, SBSTTA will discuss implications of the IPBES work programme not only with respect to pollinators and pollination services. SBSTTA will also discuss more generally, how the work of IPBES, and in particular its global assessment, may feed into the preparation of the fifth edition of the GBO which is due in 2020 (see NeFo factsheet “The Global Biodiversity Outlook 5: Integrating the IPBES Global Assessment”).

⁸ <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo4/gbo4-summary-en.pdf>

⁹ UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/15

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The full list of recommendations is included in UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/9

IMPRESSUM

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For more information about the NeFo-Project and the NeFo-Team visit www.biodiversity.de.