

A blue-themed graphic for a webinar. On the left, a circular inset shows a close-up of hands holding various types of seeds. The main text is centered and reads: 'Theme: Africa-China CSOs Collaboration towards the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework' and 'Webinar Topic: Protecting Agricultural Biodiversity and Constructing Scientific Food System Security'. Below this, it lists the date (21 September 2022), venue (Zoom), and time (2:30PM Beijing Time | 6:30AM GMT | 9:30AM EAT). Three panelists are introduced with circular headshots: Zhu Chunquan, Linzi Lewis, and Jiang Gaoming. At the bottom, there are logos for CSABC and ACBA, and a silhouette of a person walking on a grassy hill against a blue sky.

ACBA and CSABC hosts a webinar on: Protecting Agricultural Biodiversity and Constructing Scientific Food System Security.

Nairobi, 21 September 2022 – Agriculture is dependent on biodiversity, just as DNA is the essential genetic material for humans. Biodiversity is an essential component of the agricultural landscape and a cornerstone of food and nutrition security, climate change adaptation, and sustainable livelihoods. Agricultural biodiversity includes crops, livestock and fish, soils and pollinators, and agricultural landscapes, among others, which are the basis for human food.

African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) in collaboration with China’s Civil Society Alliance for Biodiversity Conservation (CSABC) hosted a webinar which brought more perspective on **protecting Agricultural Biodiversity and Constructing Scientific Food System Security** on the 21st of September 2022. This webinar aimed to promote multi-stakeholders to contribute to the conservation of agricultural biodiversity in communities and grassroots organizations at the practical level. The webinar attracted over 60 participants and the main outcomes were a common understanding on the importance of relationship between agricultural biodiversity and food system security. The webinar can be accessed [here](#).

During the webinar the first speaker ZHU Chunquan, who is the head of the Nature Initiatives of Centre for Nature and Climate from the China, World Economic Forum Beijing Representative Office highlighted

about how there is inequality in the global food system. It is important for innovations that have improved food production and consumption to benefit people globally, especially at the global level. Addressing the distribution issue will be beneficial to everyone. From the global perspective, the resources needed for food production, there are natural disparities based on climate, etc. The global food system should also be of service to these parts of the world, so international trade is an important complement to strengthening local value chains.

Following Mr ZHU was Linzi Lewis who is the research and advocacy officer at the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB). Linzi reported that food security has many aspects. She said “The focus on production and quantity is a part of the problem. Distribution is also an issue, as farmers have greater incentive to produce large quantities and engage in monocropping, than to for instance, to address the food needs in their local environment. Additionally, local value chains are weakened. All in all, the food system is the overarching issue, and production by itself will not address this.”

As she continues she highlighted that “in many cases, local value chains have the capacity to meet the local needs for food consumption. The challenge is arising from the lack of incentive for markets that can meet their own needs to do so sustainably for production needs and maintaining biodiversity. Many of these markets are becoming over-reliant and dependent on importing across the value chain: from importing feed to the food products themselves”. Concluding Linzi mentioned that “it is essential to address this distortion, because this shapes how the global food system delivers solutions.”

Jiang Gaoming, the researcher at the Institute of Botany in the Chinese Academy of Sciences spoke of how the current patterns of industrial production in China are unsustainable and cost-prohibitive, and it’s important for the agricultural sector, especially farmers, to consider the future. The cost of maintaining these patterns is the rights of both farmers and people. He emphasized that Biodiversity loss and climate change have had an impact on agriculture, and this needs to be accounted for as success in agriculture is defined: what would be the levels of production if biodiversity and climate were stable? Promoting organic farming is integral to restoring agricultural biodiversity, and its potential to enhance food security. He added that alongside this promotion is countering misinformation that deters sustainable agriculture, is unscientific and harmful to biodiversity: farmers told that if they don’t kill pests e.g. moths, their yields will be lower – this kind of misinformation and oversimplification has consequences.

To his talk he mentions “the indiscriminate use of pesticides, fertilizers and other chemical products is one of the vulnerabilities of the food system. Research shows that the use of these products hasn’t resulted in proportionate gains in food production. In China for example, the use of pesticides to manage weeds and pests, has in some instances, heightened crop vulnerability to both. Organic farming and other sustainable agricultural practices are therefore important to address the challenges of today’s production and consumption patterns. They present a successful model for more productive farms that maintain biodiversity. They minimize reliance on chemical products whose impacts are not always well known to the farmers using them, especially in terms of their relationship to biodiversity loss, promote circular economy, and strengthen local value chains.”

Important it is to note that “when agriculture is evaluated, the focus tends to be on quantity, that is production” said Mr Jiang. The question of fair and equitable distribution of food is always left for “the future”. “One of the issues with China’s food system is waste, which can be considered across 2 dimensions – land and food itself. This waste results land degradation, biodiversity loss, and can be linked to food-related deterioration of human health, including lifestyle diseases. The proliferation of weeds and pests in China’s modern era points to a food system issue: the pesticides and other chemical used in the agricultural sector are arguably the results of working against biodiversity. Food production has suffered as a result – dealing with 8 main pests/weeds to over 739 disrupts productivity.”

His closing remarks were on how organic agriculture is not just about crop productivity. It's about ensuring that farming practices designed in an integrated and scientific manner for circular agriculture: it is possible on one farm to produce crops, generate fuel for energy, have organic manure, and so forth.