

COMMON GROUND, COMMON FUTURE: USING ECOAGRICULTURE TO RAISE FOOD PRODUCTION AND CONSERVE WILD BIODIVERSITY

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The world's biodiversity—the richness of its many species of plants, animals, birds and insects—is on the brink of a mass extinction comparable to the disappearance of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. Globally, agricultural expansion and intensification are among the leading causes of habitat and species loss. Almost half of the world's major protected areas are themselves heavily used for agriculture, and many of the rest are “islands” in a sea of farmland. Malnutrition is pervasive among people living in at least 16 of the 25 biodiversity “hotspots” where wildlife is most at risk, even as population growth is increasing local demand for food. New forms of agriculture—“ecoagriculture”—are needed that *both* raise farm production and incomes, *and* increase wild biodiversity, in these hotspot regions. Ecoagriculture builds on the concept of “ecosystem management”, by increasing wildlife habitat in non-farmed patches in agricultural landscapes, and enhancing the habitat quality of productive farmlands themselves. A global review has identified a range of ecoagriculture strategies, and well-documented examples of such farming systems that resulted from new scientific research, farmer-conservationist cooperation and innovation, and policy action. Actions are proposed to promote ecoagriculture on a scale sufficient to make a significant contribution both to conserve global biodiversity and reduce rural poverty.