



**A Country-Led Initiative in support of United Nations Forum on Forests
hosted by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental
Protection, Regions and Water Management, Republic of Austria**

23 - 25 February 2026, Vienna, Austria

Concept Note

1. Introduction

Sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches¹ have gained significant global tractions and support over the past several years. The 19th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF19) held in May 2024 recommended its member states to engage major groups and other relevant stakeholders in advancing sustainable forest management and sustainable forest-based bioeconomy, among other approaches, while underlining the need to ensure sustainable patterns of consumption and production. The 27th session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO27) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held in July 2024, called for advancing sustainable bioeconomy practices across agrifood systems and forestry; initiating a global bioeconomy partnership and cooperation; and convening an international conference on the contribution of the forest sector to sustainable bioeconomy². The 176th session of FAO Council (FAO Council176) held in December 2024, reviewed the Report of COFO27 and invited FAO to scale up its work on a range of aspects related to sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches, fully incorporating sustainable forest management.³ The “G20 High-Level Principles on Bioeconomy” and other like-minded initiatives highlighted the need of fostering international collaboration and cooperation within bioeconomy.

In this context, the Government of Austria, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management, in collaboration with other interested countries

¹ The 42nd Session of the FAO Conference adopted the following definition: “Bioeconomy is the production, utilization, conservation, and regeneration of biological resources, including related knowledge, science, technology, and innovation, to provide sustainable solutions (information, products, processes and services) within and across all economic sectors and enable a transformation to a sustainable economy.”

² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2024). *Report of the 27th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO27)*, Rome, Italy, 22–26 July 2024. FAO. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/nq036en>

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2024). *Report of the 176th Session of the FAO Council (2–6 December 2024)*. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b8e0ad48-e989-47d4-9157-d63b8b0001c0/content>

and partners, has taken the lead in hosting a UNFF Country-Led Initiative (CLI) entitled Global Summit: Advancing Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy Approaches. The CLI will be co-convened together with Australia, Finland, Japan, Türkiye, FAO and UNFFS.

2. Background

The **sustainable bioeconomy** represents an integrated approach that leverages biological resources to replace fossil-based materials and processes, driving progress across economic sectors while balancing environmental integrity with economic viability and social inclusiveness. **Forest products** harvested from sustainably and responsibly managed forests are a crucial element of the bioeconomy, with the ability to influence social well-being, economic development, and environmental values. The appreciation of the full diversity of the entire forest-based bioeconomy approaches beyond focusing only on wood construction is essential. This includes non-wood forest products, food systems, and the role of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Against this background, a **Country and Organization-Led Initiative on Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy Approaches (COLI)**, initiated by Austria together with partner countries and organisations, is aiming to further **develop the understanding of the contribution of the forest sector to sustainable bioeconomy and ways to upscale the adoption of sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches** in the global sustainable development context. To achieve this objective, COLI consists of a set of activities from a global webinar series to bi- and multilateral workshops and conferences (e.g. International Symposium “Wood, health and sound”, Japan) which will culminate at the Global Summit entitled **“Advancing Sustainable Forest-based Bioeconomy Approaches”**. The outcomes of all COLI activities, including results from the global webinar series, the synergetic events, the scientific policy briefs, and next steps for the COLI process will be compiled into a comprehensive COLI report.

Outcomes of COLI and of the CLI are contributing to the implementation of the **UNFF19** resolution. Accordingly, the Global Summit will be organized as a UNFF country led initiative to contribute to the discussion at the twenty-first session of the UNFF (UNFF21) on its thematic priorities, namely global forest goals 1, 3 and 5⁴, and the policy discussions at the UNFF21 on the implementation of the United Nations Forest Instrument (UNFI) and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSFP).

COLI and the CLI will also contribute to the implementation of the decisions of FAO COFO27, in particular to the invitation to FAO “...to convene, subject to availability of extra budgetary resources, an international conference on the contribution of the forest sector to sustainable bioeconomy and to present its results at the 28th Session of the Committee on Forestry, and to the appropriate Sessions of the FAO Council and Conference”. It contributes to and will be guided by the 176th session of FAO Council, which “invited FAO to scale up technical support, capacity building and development, and the voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research and technology transfer, on mutually agreed terms, to support formulating national, regional and global sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches, strategies, action plans and innovations fully incorporating sustainable forest management.”⁵;

⁴ Global Forest Goal 1: Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change. Global Forest Goal 3: Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests. Global Forest Goal 5: Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the UN Forest Instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2024). *Report of the 176th Session of the FAO Council (2–6 December 2024)*. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b8e0ad48-e989-47d4-9157-d63b8b0001c0/content>

3. Objective

The CLI-ASFBA aims to serve as a strategic platform for advancing sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches through inclusive, evidence-informed dialogue across thematic areas and among experts from Forum Members, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), Regional and Subregional organizations, and Major Groups. The CLI-ASFBA is an opportunity to share and develop ways to optimize the contributions of sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches to phase out fossil-based materials and processes across economic sectors, balancing environmental integrity, economic viability and social inclusiveness. It will do this by

- **Assess the current state of sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches**, by compiling state-of-the-art knowledge, science-based evidence and best practices to raise awareness of the benefits, innovation needs, and potential risks and related trade-offs;
- **Define key priorities for advancing sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches**, including options to integrate this knowledge in policy decisions, strengthen cross-sector collaboration and policy-/science interface, and engage the private sector, finance, research, and innovation actors to enhance the national and international contribution;
- **Identify strategic actions and next steps to enhance the forest-based bioeconomy**, including commitments and facilitating partnerships that engage all stakeholders, including women, youth, private sector, Indigenous Peoples and Local communities (IPLCs); and formulating clear, actionable messages and recommendations for the policy forums dealing with forest-based bioeconomy (UNFF, FAO COFO as well as Council/Conference) and give guidance to the COLI process beyond the Global Summit.

4. Expected outcome

The outcome of the CLI-ASFBA will be a concise Co-Chairs' Summary, including, among other elements, recommendations to be submitted to the **UNFF21** and **COFO28** for governmental deliberations.

5. Format and modalities

The CLI-AFSBA will be held from 23 to 25 February 2026 in Vienna, Austria, in a hybrid format. The program will include two and a half days of deliberations and exchange on the thematic areas and a half-day field trip. The meeting will be interactive (breakout groups) and conducted in English.

6. Contact

For further information and interest in participating at the Global Summit contact Ms. Raphaela Hellmayr under office@coli-bioeconomy.org.