



Belgian One  
Health Network

# Outcome of the workshop – Biodiversity

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# Biodiversity and human health

**Health** is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

**Biological diversity** (biodiversity) is "the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems."

**Biodiversity underpins ecosystem** functioning and the provision of goods and services that are essential to human health and well-being.

The links between biodiversity and health are manifested at various spatial and temporal scales. Biodiversity and human health, and the respective policies and activities, are interlinked in various ways.



**Direct drivers** of biodiversity loss include land-use change, habitat loss, over-exploitation, pollution, invasive species and climate change. Many of these drivers affect human health directly and through their impacts on biodiversity.

**Women and men** have different roles in the conservation and use of biodiversity and varying health impacts.

**Human population** health is determined, to a large extent, by social, economic and environmental factors.

**The social and natural** sciences are important contributors to biodiversity and health research and policy. Integrative approaches such as the Ecosystem Approach, Ecohealth and One Health unite different fields and require the development of mutual understanding and cooperation across disciplines.



## *Significance of Biodiv Strategy in Belgium*

- Biodiversity provides many essential goods and services
  - => underpins good health, supports socio-economic needs
- Belgian biodiversity loss still increases despite many efforts
  - ↔ change in land and sea use, pollution, chemical and waste contamination, climate change and ecosystem degradation,...
  - => threats to human, animal and plant health eg. floods, droughts, heat waves, acidification of seas...
- 👍 EU Biodiv Strategy: tackle drivers, mainstreaming to support transition to SD, restoration, funding



- Human, animal, plant and environmental health are all intrinsically connected, and profoundly influenced by human activities:
  - => two thirds of known human infectious diseases are shared with animals, and the majority are associated with wildlife.
  - ↔ illegal and uncontrolled trade of live wild animals creates dangerous opportunities for contact between humans and diseases the animals carry
  - ↔ Belgium is an important hub and receiver of illegal trade in bushmeat!!



## *Participants of the workshop Biodiv*

- Federal authorities (Public Health, Safety of the Food Chain, Environment)
  - Academia
  - Nature NGOs
- => No representation from regions
- => No representation from health sector nor Sciensano



## *Highlights of Intermediate Steps*

- COVID raised awareness of the links between our own health and the health of ecosystems. Measures to restore biodiversity, enhance well-being **and** at same time reduce risk of pandemics of zoonotic origin – in BE policies:
  - ⇒ tackle the drivers of biodiversity loss
  - ⇒ enlarge protected areas on land and at sea
  - ⇒ conserve and protect intact and functional ecosystems
  - ⇒ reduce unsustainable use of natural resources
  - ⇒ control/eradicate invasive species
  - ⇒ restore ecosystems



- ⇒ Ensure greater sanitary control and regulation of unsustainable wildlife trade
- ⇒ Support global actions to close wildlife markets, especially those with live wild mammals for human consumption, and associated (legal and illegal) trade



# Recommendations

- Use OH approach to overcome sectoral and disciplinary silos, implement **multidisciplinary** solutions to address opportunities and challenges, enhance complementarity:
  - ⇒ Multisectoral cooperation for nature restoration in/around urban areas, nature-based solutions to climate change and its impacts on human, animal and plant health
    - Ex. launch of *Belgian Biodiversity Alliance* on Voluntary Engagements for Biodiversity
    - Ex. planning to establish a Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis in relation with the planet boundaries
    - Ex. Green Deal Business & Biodiversity in Flanders, Yes-We-Plant in Wallonia





- ⇒ Transdisciplinary **cooperation** and **knowledge sharing** for re-connecting to nature, for applied/practice oriented research and for preventive measures
- ⇒ **Leading by example**: share views on nature related health risks & benefits, on results of nature experience on human health (nature by medical prescription) and reducing the burdens on healthcare systems
  - Ex. Action plan + pilot projects on nature-human health in Flanders



- Invest in **education and awareness** raising for OH approach (schools, universities, public)
  - ⇒ Develop narratives on good practices
- Ensure policy processes include recognition that human health ultimately depends on ecosystem integrity and a healthy planet:
  - ⇒ **Mainstream** biodiversity and ecosystem health into land and sea use as well as into human-animal-plant health decision making **and** vice versa
    - Ex. FPS Health initiative for Belgian action plan to tackle antimicrobial resistance



- ⇒ **Integrate** health impact assessments into EIA procedures
- ⇒ **Implement regulation** on illegal wildlife trade (capacity building of customs)
  - Ex. FPS Health and Belspo project proposal to monitor trade in wild meat and exotic animals
  - Ex. BE participation in PREZODE project on Preventing ZOonotic Disease Emergence
- ⇒ Support the adoption of an international **pandemic treaty**, which aligns with the One Health approach and addresses prevention at source.



## On finances:

- ⇒ Increase **synergies** between climate and biodiversity finance to boost investments in biodiversity and nature-based solutions to enhance win-wins.
- ⇒ Ensure the **biodiversity proofing** of investments and financial flows



## *How BeOH can contribute*

BeOH network to:

- ⇒ Include experts on animal, plant and public health, health insurance, wildlife trade, climate,... to enhance holistic and systemic approach of One Health
- ⇒ Enhance exchange on information, expertise, concrete projects to support decision making
- ⇒ Focus research on concrete relations between human-animal-plant-ecosystem health, on applied/practice issues and on prevention

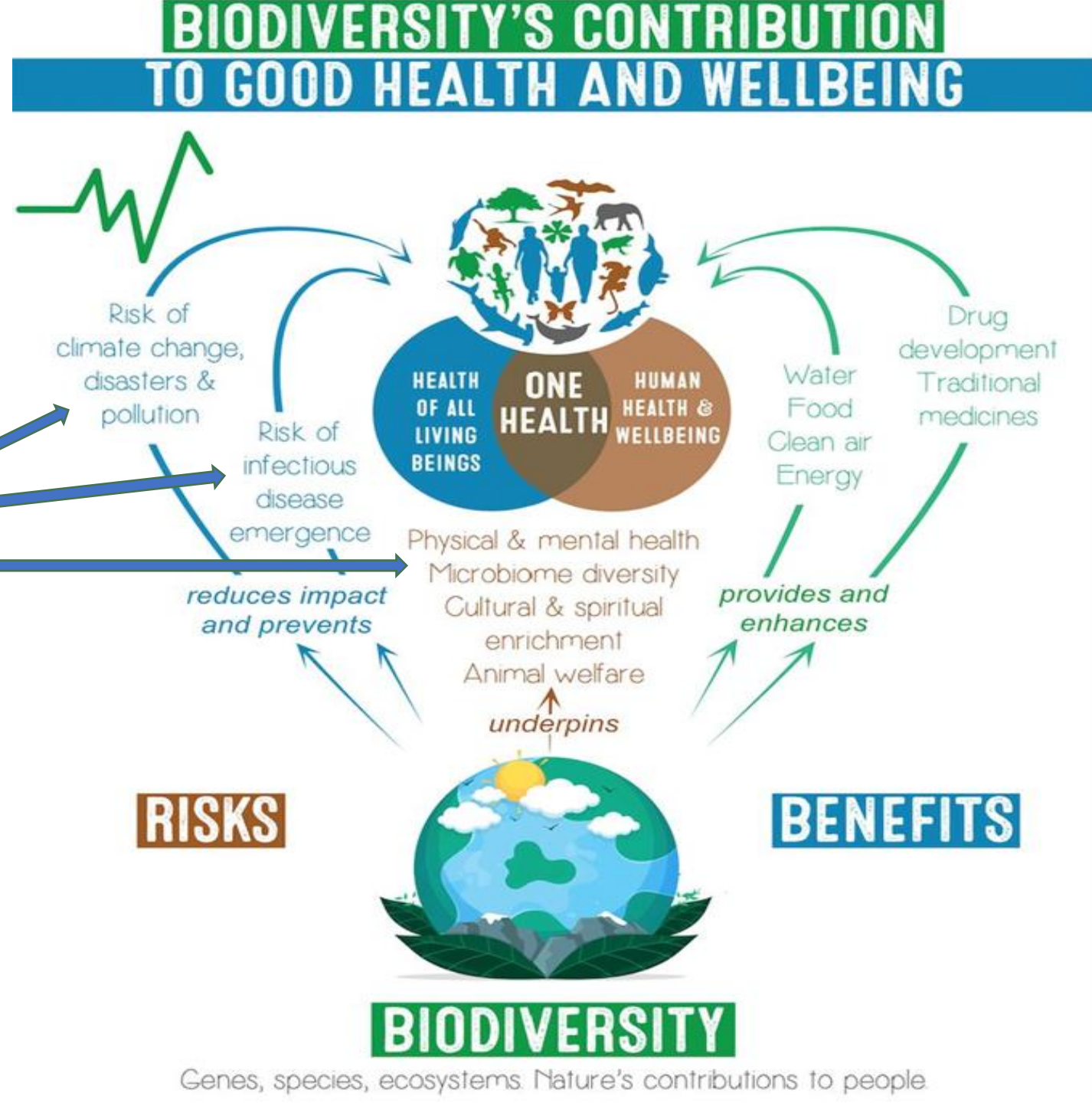


Belgian One Health Network

BeOH network to support

Research  
Consultation  
Policy decision  
Implementation  
to  
reduce impacts  
& risks  
+  
restore and  
maintain benefits  
to support  
transition

ONE WORLD ONE HEALTH





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**One Health** involves everyone.



**Working together** is key  
to One Health.

[www.cdc.gov/onehealth](http://www.cdc.gov/onehealth)



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*Thank you for your attention*