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**Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop
an international legally binding instrument on plastic
pollution, including in the marine environment
Fifth session**

Busan, Republic of Korea, 25 November–1 December 2024 and
Geneva, Switzerland, 5–14 August 2025
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Preparation of an international legally binding instrument on
plastic pollution, including in the marine environment**

Information submitted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Note by the secretariat

1. In July 2022, at its 28th Session, the FAO's Committee on Agriculture (COAG 28)¹ welcomed the FAO report *Assessment of Agricultural Plastics and Their Sustainability: A Call for Action*,² highlighting the need for improved intersectoral collaboration and the development of new solutions to address plastic use across agrifood systems. The Committee encouraged FAO to conduct further scientific assessments and to develop a Voluntary Code of Conduct (VCoC) for the sustainable use of plastics in agriculture, and recommended FAO to support deliberations of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, established by the United Nations Environment Assembly, with guidance on the issues of plastics used in agriculture.
2. The COAG 28 Report was endorsed in December 2022 by the FAO Council at its 171st Session,³ and in July 2023 by the FAO Conference at its 43rd Session.⁴
3. In September 2024, at its 29th Session, the FAO's Committee on Agriculture (COAG 29)⁵ “welcomed the work of FAO; considered with appreciation the proposed *Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Sustainable Use and Management of Plastics in Agriculture* (VCoC) (...); recommended⁶ the

¹ FAO. 2023. Report of the 28th Session of the Committee on Agriculture.
<https://www.fao.org/3/nj925en/nj925en.pdf> (Section 3.4 para d)

² FAO. 2021. Assessment of agricultural plastics and their sustainability. A call for action. Rome, Italy.
<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cb7856en>

³ FAO. 2022. Report of the 171st session of the Council of FAO. <https://www.fao.org/3/nl148en/nl148en.pdf>

⁴ FAO. 2023. Report of the 43rd Session of the Conference of FAO. <https://www.fao.org/3/nm800en/nm800en.pdf>

⁵ FAO. 2024. Report of the 29th Session of the Committee on Agriculture. <https://www.fao.org/governing-bodies/technical-committees/committee-on-agriculture/coag-2024/en>

⁶ “Argentina and Brazil are able to join consensus on endorsing the conclusions for this Agenda item, with the understanding that the draft Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Sustainable Use and Management of Plastics in Agriculture was not endorsed by the Committee on Agriculture in its 29th Session. The current version of the draft

continuation of the process to further develop the proposed document, in consultation with Members, including after the adoption of a legally binding agreement on plastic pollution, (...) while acknowledging Members' decisions to utilize the proposed VCoC in their national contexts, in the meantime, if they wish to do so". Furthermore, the Committee "encouraged FAO to continue engaging, as an observer and within its mandate, with the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in their deliberations to develop an International legally binding instrument on plastic pollution (...) by providing guidance on the issues of plastics used in agriculture."

4. The COAG 29 Report was endorsed in December 2024 by the FAO Council at its 176th Session⁷, and in June 2025 by the FAO Conference at its 44th Session⁸.

5. FAO has engaged as an Observer in all five meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Its contributions aim to ensure that the instrument balances the sustainability aspects of plastics in the food and agriculture sector, reflects the perspectives of key stakeholders—such as smallholder farmers—and includes crucial topics such as agriculture and food safety. FAO's submissions to the INC meetings are available online.⁹¹⁰¹¹¹²¹³¹⁴

6. Addressing plastic pollution within agrifood value chains should be an integral part of transforming agrifood systems to be more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. Considering the specificity of plastics' use in agriculture, FAO advocates for appropriate sector-specific approaches to prevent and reduce plastic pollution while safeguarding food security, nutrition, food safety, considering the One Health approach, and improving sustainability.

7. In line with the COAG 29 recommendations, in February 2025 FAO published the VCoC as a Provisional Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Sustainable Use and Management of Plastics in Agriculture.¹⁵ The VCoC offers a framework to assist governments and stakeholders in developing strategies, policies, and programmes to prevent plastic pollution in agriculture, while fostering cooperation among relevant parties to promote the sustainable use and management of plastics and their alternatives. Additionally, it seeks to promote knowledge dissemination, stimulate research, and encourage development aimed at preventing plastic pollution in agriculture.

8. The VCoC outlines actions to strengthen the enabling environment for the sustainable use and management of plastics in agriculture, including building evidence to support decision-making; developing policies to encourage investments and the adoption of sustainable practices; promoting multistakeholder collaboration, particularly with agrifood producers; supporting research and development (R&D) to identify alternatives that reduce plastic pollution and improve sustainable plastic

Voluntary Code of Conduct and any future amendments do not set any kind of precedent for the deliberations of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in charge of developing an internationally legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution, including the marine environment, established by the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution UNEP/EA.5/Res. 14." (FAO. 2024. Report of the 29th Session of the Committee on Agriculture. <https://www.fao.org/governing-bodies/technical-committees/committee-on-agriculture/coag-2024/en>, p.18)

⁷ FAO. 2024. Report of the 176th session of the Council of FAO.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b8e0ad48-e989-47d4-9157-d63b8b0001c0/content>

⁸ FAO. 2025. Report of the 44th Session of the Conference of FAO.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/967d6642-010e-4d26-98d3-f0332e4374a4/content>

⁹ FAO. 2022. Submission to INC-1.

https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/fao_submission_to_the_intergovernmental_negotiating_committee_inc.pdf

¹⁰ FAO. 2023. Submission to INC-2.

https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/230106_food_and_agriculture_organization_of_the_united_nations_0.pdf

¹¹ FAO. 2023. Submission to INC-3 – template A:

https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/fao_15082023_a.pdf

template B: https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/fao_15082023_b.pdf

¹² FAO. 2023. Information submitted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/43797/FAO.pdf>

¹³ FAO. 2024. Submission to INC-4. https://resolutions.unep.org/incres/uploads/fao_statement_to_inc-4_final.pdf

¹⁴ FAO. 2024. Information submitted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/46520/FAO.pdf>

¹⁵ FAO. 2021. *Assessment of agricultural plastics and their sustainability – A call for action*. Rome.

<https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7856en>

management; and fostering capacity building, awareness-raising, and knowledge-sharing. In addition, the VCoC suggests actions to be taken directly by stakeholders in the agrifood systems at various stages in the life cycle of plastics used in agriculture, addressing key areas such as the design and manufacture of plastics, the use of plastic products and their alternatives, authorization and labelling requirements, recycling, and the environmentally sound management of plastic waste.

9. The VCoC could play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of the Instrument in the agrifood sector by offering guidelines, best practices, and indicators tailored to agricultural stakeholders,

10. FAO recently published *State of research on the impacts of plastic pollution on soil health and crops* - a comprehensive report on the impacts of plastic pollution on soil health and crops. The report examines how plastic pollution affects soil quality, agricultural productivity, and the long-term sustainability of food systems has just been published.

11. FAO remains committed to supporting the global efforts to address plastic pollution and will continue to engage in the development of a legally binding instrument to ensure that food and agriculture are addressed effectively within the broader framework of global plastic pollution efforts.

12. FAO is pleased to share the following resources from its work on the management of plastics used in agriculture that may be of relevance to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee:

- a) FAO webpage on *Sustainable use and management of plastics in agriculture*:
<https://www.fao.org/climate-change/thematic-areas/plastics-in-agriculture/en>
- b) *A Provisional Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Sustainable Use and Management of Plastics in Agriculture*: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd3004en>
- c) *State of research on the impacts of plastic pollution on soil health and crops*:
<https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cd6407en>

13. The present note has not been formally edited.