

NEW SITES RECOGNIZED IN 2024 AS GLOBALLY IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS GIAHS IN THE WORLD

In 2024, during the meeting of the GIAHS Scientific Advisory Group on September 19, [three new sites have been recognized as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems \(GIAHS\)](#): the carp pond farming system in Austria, the agroforestry system cultivating salak, or snake fruit in Bali, Indonesia and the Cocoa Agroforestry System of Sao Tome and Principe.

[With the newest addition to the global agricultural heritage systems list, FAO's worldwide agricultural heritage network now consists of 89 systems in 28 countries](#)



The news in the website presents the three new GIAHS included in the list:

Unique Austrian carp pond farming

Carp pond farming in the Waldviertel region of Lower Austria is a unique aquaculture system with a 900-year history. Using low stocking densities and traditional practices, it maintains a biodiverse pond ecosystem that connects to the surrounding forests. This sustainable practice supports biodiversity, conserves water and preserves cultural heritage through the production of high-quality carp and innovative fish products. The farming system supports the local economy not only through the sale of carp but also by promoting agrotourism and the innovative use of carp leather to create accessories. Besides producing food, the ponds offer ecological services such as water retention, flood control, and carbon sequestration, helping to regulate the local microclimate. They also serve as important habitats for a variety of species, including birds, insects, and aquatic life, contributing to regional biodiversity. The maintenance of this diverse ecosystem also helps to preserve the genetic diversity of carp and other species, which is vital for adapting to future environmental changes.



Salak Agroforestry System in Karangasem, Bali

This agroforestry system in Karangasem, Bali—the driest region on the island—integrates cultivation of the salak - also known as the snakefruit because of its snakeskin-like peel - with diverse crops. It was developed by the Indigenous Balinese People using the traditional subak system of water management. This enhances biodiversity, conserves water, sequesters carbon, and supports food security, while preserving cultural heritage and sustaining local livelihoods. Every part of the salak palm is utilized, making it a zero-waste crop. This practice enhances sustainability and resource efficiency. Meanwhile the system integrates salak cultivation with various other crops, including mangoes, bananas,



and medicinal plants, creating a rich, biodiverse agricultural landscape. Rooted in traditional Balinese philosophies like “Tri Hita Karana” and “Tri Mandala,” this system reflects a harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and spirituality that have been listed as [UNESCO Cultural Landscapes](#).

Cocoa Agroforestry System in Sao Tome and Principe

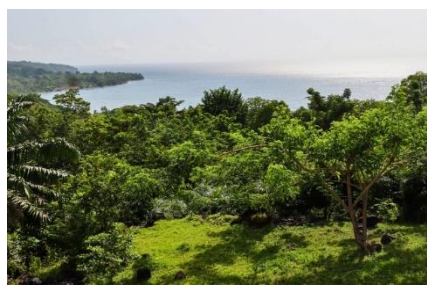
The Cocoa Agroforestry System of Sao Tome and Principe is known for its high-quality Amelonado cocoa. It combines traditional farming with diverse crops to enhance food security, strengthen the livelihoods of farming families, preserve cultural heritage, and maintain biodiversity. Despite a history of enslavement, inequality, and conflict, this system exemplifies the resilience of its people in their commitment to building sustainable practices and development. Cocoa is a major source of export income, but the integration of diverse crops like bananas, breadfruit, and taro provides additional food sources and income streams, enhancing resilience against market fluctuations and environmental stresses. Sao Tome and Principe’s tropical forests are a global conservation priority, being the second highest for bird and fauna conservation among 75 African forests. The country is a leader in organic farming, with over 25 percent of its agricultural land certified for organic production. Local cooperatives focus on high-quality, fair-trade products and involve both women and men, promoting gender inclusion and improving farmer livelihoods.

The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) are agroecosystems inhabited by communities that live in an intricate relationship with their territory. These evolving sites are resilient systems characterized by remarkable agrobiodiversity, traditional knowledge, invaluable cultures and landscapes, sustainably managed by farmers, herders, fisherfolk, and forest people in ways that contribute to their livelihoods and food security. Under the GIAHS programme of FAO, the sites selected are of global importance, demonstrating food and livelihood security, agro-biodiversity, sustainable knowledge systems and practices, social values and culture as well as outstanding landscapes. Many sites showcase excellent practices to render agrifood systems more resilient to climate change, and use biodiversity and manage ecosystems sustainably.

The Report *Twenty Years of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems*. *Success stories of dynamic conservation for sustainable rural development* published in 2022 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is a collection of success stories from different Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) and aims to showcase the achievements made over the past 20 years since the establishment of the GIAHS Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The publication features success stories from Tanzania, China, Japan, Italy, Spain, Peru and Algeria to give an insight into what has changed since the designation of these systems as GIAHS.

Traditional agriculture systems are still providing food for some two billion people today. They also sustain biodiversity, livelihoods, practical knowledge and culture. -This global agricultural heritage needs to be recognized and supported in ways that allow it to continue evolving – and provisioning goods and services for the present and future generations.

In order to provide systematic support to the conservation and adaptive management of agricultural heritage systems, the GIAHS Programme promotes intervention strategies at three distinct levels:



- At the *Global level*, it facilitates international recognition of the concept of GIAHS wherein globally significant agrobiodiversity is harboured, and it consolidates and disseminates lessons learned and best practices from project activities at the pilot country level.
- At the *National level* in pilot countries, project activities ensure mainstreaming of the GIAHS concept in national sectorial and inter-sectorial plans and policies.
- At the *Local/Site level* in pilot countries, the project activities address conservation and adaptive management at the community level.

In all countries of the world, with the rapid expansion of industrialization and urbanization, a great number of agricultural heritage systems are at risk of disappearing. [Conserving and developing such agricultural practices](#) today allows not only to face the great challenges for increasing agricultural productivity and farmer's income, but also to sustainably manage essential natural resources such as water, to conserve biodiversity and maintain basic ecosystem services adapted to cope with climatic change.

Since 2005, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has designated [89 systems in 28 countries as agricultural heritage sites](#). The GIAHS website allows to check the list by region and country of the global agricultural heritage sites. In this section is possible to visit each designated system's dedicated webpage to discover more information, photos, videos, news and stories.

To know more

[News in the GIAHS website](#)

[The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems \(GIAHS\) Initiative](#)

[Twenty years of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems - 2022 FAO publication](#)

[Preparation and submission a GIAHS proposal](#)

