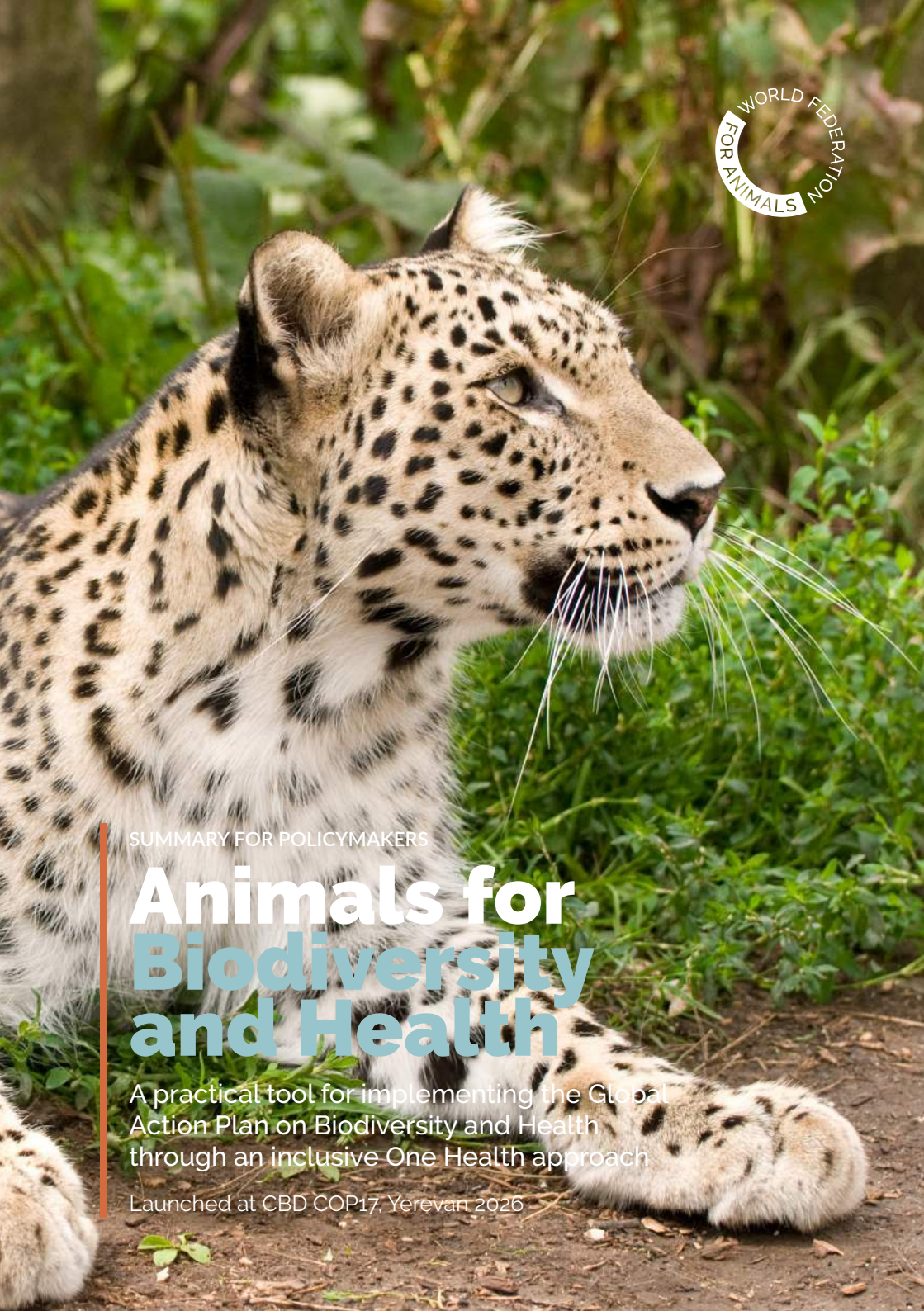

SUMMARY FOR POLICYMAKERS

Animals for Biodiversity and Health

A practical tool for implementing the Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health through an inclusive One Health approach

Launched at CBD COP17, Yerevan 2026

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In collaboration with the Born Free Foundation

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The full guidance is available at https://animals4biodiversityhealth.wfa.org

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Animals for Biodiversity and Health





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Policy recommendations for implementing Section III, Part B of the Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health (GAPBH) Annex

KEY MESSAGES

1 Animals are at the heart of the biodiversity–health nexus.

How wild animals are captured, traded, farmed and conserved, and how farmed animals are managed and kept, shapes the risk of pathogen spillover, the prevalence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), pressure on ecosystems, and resilience to climate change. Wild animals also pollinate, disperse seeds, and cycle nutrients and carbon; therefore, plans, cities and infrastructure should protect them and the ecosystem functions they provide.

2 The GAPBH gives Parties a clear, voluntary mandate to act.

The Plan calls for wildlife use and trade to be sustainable and safe for human and wildlife health, improved standards of animal welfare in farm systems to reduce communicable disease and prevent AMR, and the integration of climate, biodiversity and health interlinkages into national policy.

3 Animal health and welfare is a practical, effective lever.

Reducing stress and injury, overcrowding, poor hygiene and the mixing of species lowers disease susceptibility, the need for routine antimicrobials, and opportunities for pathogens to spread.

4 Leverage existing instruments countries already have.

Measures can be taken up through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), One Health strategies, AMR national action plans, climate plans, and through wildlife, agriculture, food, and urban planning policies.

5 Implementation of inclusive One Health governance.

Include animal health and welfare expertise in One Health platforms, invest in veterinary capacity, and co-design measures with full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and those most affected, respecting customary sustainable use, rights and food security, while remaining within ecological limits and ensuring compatibility with long-term biodiversity conservation, animal health, and community wellbeing.





WHY DO ANIMALS MATTER FOR BIODIVERSITY AND HEALTH?

Biodiversity loss, climate change, zoonotic disease emergence and antimicrobial resistance share many common drivers, and animals sit at the centre of them.

Intensive confinement, poorly regulated wildlife trade, and the degradation of habitats create conditions in which pathogens circulate and spill over, drive the routine use of antimicrobials, and erode the ecosystem functions which human wellbeing depends on.

The Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health, adopted at CBD COP16 in Cali in 2024 (Decision 16/19), offers a voluntary framework for addressing these links through the One Health approach, which aims to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals, plants and ecosystems. Section III, Part B of the GAPBH sets out actions aligned with GBF Targets 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 16. Among them, the GAPBH calls on Parties to:

Improve the regulation, management and use of and trade in wild species so that it is sustainable and safe for human and wildlife health, and limit pathogen spillover and spillback in activities such as wildlife farming.

Promote improved standards of animal welfare to reduce the risk of communicable disease in farm animals and aquaculture, including by preventing antimicrobial resistance (Action 10(3)).

Integrate the consideration of climate change, biodiversity and health interlinkages into national policy and planning instruments (actions aligned with Target 8).

Promote sustainable consumption choices that benefit biodiversity and health (actions aligned with Target 16).

Improving how animals are managed and kept is one of the most direct ways to deliver these actions. Better welfare reduces disease susceptibility and antimicrobial use, while healthy wild animal populations maintain functions such as pollination, seed dispersal, and nutrient and carbon cycling that underpin ecosystem resilience and climate adaptation. Measures that improve animal health and welfare therefore generate co-benefits across biodiversity, health and climate objectives.



APPLICATION OF THE GUIDANCE TOOL

The guidance supports national implementation of Section III Part B of the GAPBH Annex and contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), and the prevention and One Health objectives of the WHO Pandemic Agreement.

Each of its **22 policy measures** sets out a recommended policy option, common challenges and ways to overcome them, indicators to track progress, and case studies of policies already in place or that are emerging.

9

Wildlife protection

KMGBF targets
3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 16

Trade, capture and transport, wildlife farming, surveillance, demand, One Health governance.

6

Biodiversity and climate

KMGBF targets
8

Green infrastructure, urban canopy, corridors, buildings, crossings, climate and biodiversity planning.

7

Farm animal welfare

KMGBF targets
10, 16

Confinement, antimicrobial use, procurement, dietary guidelines, agroecology, local breeds, awareness.

The guidance is designed to be applied through existing national processes rather than new institutions. Key entry points include:

- updated **National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)** and national targets;
- national One Health strategies, platforms and zoonotic disease plans;
- national action plans on antimicrobial resistance;
- climate adaptation plans and nationally determined contributions; and
- food, agriculture, public procurement, wildlife management and urban planning policies.



Guiding principles

Measures should be proportionate to demonstrated risk; distinguish illegal, unsustainable and high-risk practices from legal and sustainable use; and be co-designed with affected communities, respecting the rights, customary sustainable use and food security of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, consistent with GBF Targets 5, 9 and 22, while promoting approaches that uphold ecological sustainability and good animal welfare.

Respect for customary use and better animal welfare can go hand in hand. Communities should be supported to strengthen welfare within their own practices, including humane capture, handling and killing methods. Any measure affecting customary use should be developed with the full and effective participation of the communities concerned, respecting their rights, traditional knowledge and customary governance.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE



These measures respond to GAPBH actions aligned with KMGBF Targets 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 16, focusing on safer, more sustainable and more ethically responsible use, trade and management of wild animals.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Healthy wild animal populations underpin ecosystem resilience, climate regulation and human wellbeing, and wild animals merit protection in their own right. Consistent with CBD Decisions 15/4, 16/19 and 16/22, protecting wild animals, conserving biodiversity, promoting welfare and reducing zoonotic risk are mutually reinforcing. The guidance distinguishes illegal trafficking, informal or unregulated trade, and legal trade that may still carry health, welfare or conservation risks.

01

Prohibit or strictly regulate high-risk and inhumane capture, transport and trade practices

Measures can be taken up through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)
One Health strategies, AMR national action plans, climate plans, and through wildlife, agriculture, food, and urban planning policies.

02

Establish positive lists for legal animal species

Adopt science-based lists of species that may legally be kept, traded or farmed, using welfare needs, zoonotic risk, invasiveness and conservation status as criteria, while bearing in mind the need to consider customary and subsistence use separately.

03

Strengthen oversight of wildlife farming and commercial facilities

Require licensing tied to species-specific welfare standards, veterinary oversight, biosecurity, traceability and regular risk-based assessment.

04

Establish participatory wildlife health surveillance

Co-design wildlife health and population monitoring with hunters, farmers, traders and Indigenous Peoples and local communities, integrating non-invasive tools, where possible, and enhancing community data governance.

05

Support viable alternatives where wildlife use cannot be managed sustainably, safely, ethically and equitably

Develop national strategies for non-lethal, non-consumptive alternatives such as eco-tourism and restoration-based livelihoods, with transition support for affected communities





06

Reduce demand for unsustainable and non-essential wildlife products

Combine awareness campaigns, behaviour change, public procurement, and restrictions to reduce demand for high-risk products including luxury, entertainment and exotic pet markets, and ensure remaining consumption is legal, safe and sustainable.

07

Integrate animal welfare into biodiversity and genetic resource management

Set species-specific minimum welfare requirements for conservation breeding, translocation and assisted migration, from capture to post-release monitoring.

08

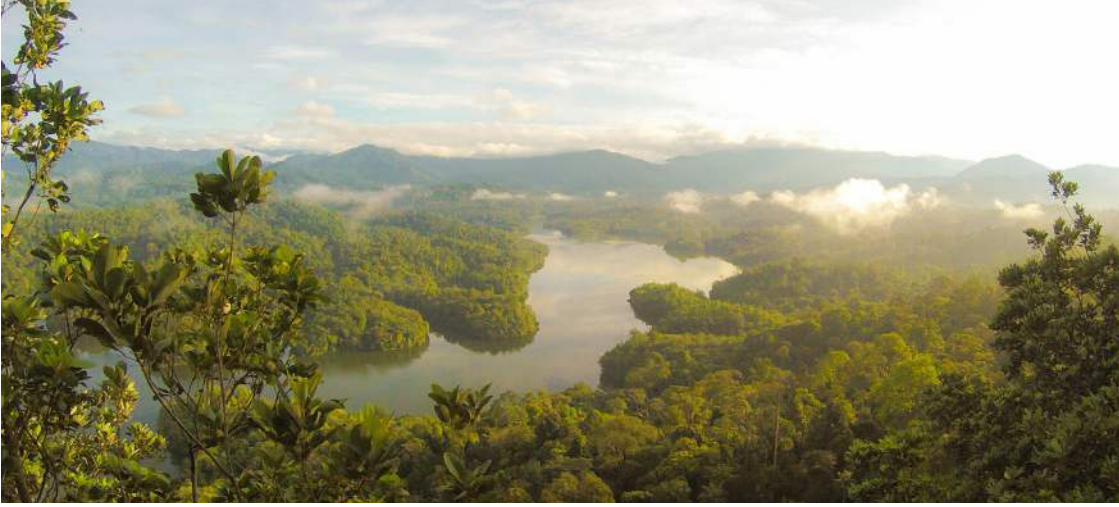
Institutionalise One Health governance that includes animal welfare expertise

Embed welfare expertise in national One Health platforms and mandate collaboration across environment, health, agriculture and wildlife ministries.

09

Invest in strengthening animal health systems and veterinary capacity

Increase investment in veterinary services, laboratories, surveillance and the workforce, including rangers on the frontline of human–wildlife coexistence.



These measures respond to GAPBH actions aligned with KMGBF Target 8, recognising the role of wildlife and habitats in climate adaptation and mitigation.

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE

Wild animals pollinate plants, disperse seeds, cycle nutrients and carbon, and engineer ecosystems. Conserving and restoring their populations brings co-benefits for biodiversity, health and climate, yet climate and biodiversity policies often focus on habitats and vegetation and overlook animals. Several measures can be taken up directly by city and regional governments.

01

Integrate wild animal welfare into green infrastructure design

Update design manuals to require plant species and habitat features that provide food, shelter and connectivity for wild animals.

02

Protect and enhance urban tree canopy for wild animal welfare

Require or incentivise planting and protection of trees for their habitat value, prioritising native species, and protect mature trees from removal.



03

Protect ecosystems and establish wildlife corridors

Connect habitats to maintain wildlife movement, genetic exchange and the ecosystem functions animals provide.

04

Design wildlife-friendly buildings and developments

Mandate bird-friendly materials in new and altered buildings, require or incentivise green roofs with real habitat value, and dark-sky lighting standards in new development.

05

Construct wildlife crossings to reduce animal–vehicle collisions

Build overpasses and underpasses that cut collisions and keep landscapes connected.

06

Integrate animal-mediated ecological functions into climate and biodiversity planning

Recognise pollination, seed dispersal, nutrient and carbon cycling and other animal-mediated functions in national biodiversity strategies, climate adaptation plans, nature-based solutions and restoration.

EVIDENCE IN FOCUS

Wild animals as climate allies

In Central Africa, forest elephants disperse the seeds of large, carbon-dense trees and clear competing vegetation. Protecting such species is a climate measure as well as a conservation one.

+15.7%

above-ground carbon stocks at one forest elephant per km²

350+

scientists back the 2026 Scientific Consensus on Wildlife and Climate

-86%

decline in African forest elephant populations over three decades

Source: Berzaghi et al. (2019), 2026 Scientific Consensus on Wildlife and Climate





These measures respond to GAPBH actions aligned with GBF Targets 10 and 16, including GAPBH Action 10(3) on improved standards of animal welfare.

FARM ANIMAL WELFARE

The conditions in which farm animals are kept have direct consequences for biodiversity, public health and climate. Poor welfare in intensive systems (including overcrowding) increases disease susceptibility, drives routine antimicrobial use, creates conditions for zoonotic pathogens to emerge, and contributes to habitat conversion and greenhouse gas emissions.

01

Phase out high-risk confinement systems

Adopt a national roadmap, over a defined period such as 8–12 years, to phase out the most intensive confinement systems, with financial and technical support for farmers.

02

Reduce antimicrobial use through welfare-based disease prevention

Set national reduction targets, require veterinary prescription, and promote lower stocking densities, better biosecurity and enrichment; monitor use by species and system.

03

Integrate animal welfare into sustainable public food procurement

Require or create incentive for public institutions (such as schools and hospitals) to source animal products from higher-welfare systems and include welfare criteria in tenders and contracts.

04

Revise national dietary guidelines

Include messages about animal welfare and environmental sustainability alongside nutrition, encouraging higher-welfare choices and lower consumption of intensively produced animal products.

05

Promote agroecological farming systems that integrate animal welfare

Provide financial and technical support for the transition, and include welfare criteria in agroecology certification and subsidy schemes.



06

Conserve locally adapted, genetically diverse livestock breeds

Support gene banks, breeding programmes and farmers raising traditional breeds, building on the knowledge of pastoralists and Indigenous Peoples and local communities. And ensuring fair benefit-sharing.

07

Launch public awareness campaigns on animal welfare, biodiversity and health

Link animal welfare, AMR, biodiversity and human health in national campaigns, building on established platforms such as the World AMR Awareness Week.



Measuring progress

Every measure comes with recommended indicators that governments can build into national monitoring and reporting. They cover welfare, sustainability, safety, legal compliance, and implementation.

Most track the adoption and implementation of policies, as these are the data most Parties can report in the near term. Countries are encouraged to complement them, as monitoring systems develop, with outcome indicators and to align reporting with existing CBD national reports and the KMGBF monitoring framework. This also responds to the GAPBH's call to explore indicators on the links between climate, biodiversity and health.

Illustrative indicators include:

- The proportion of live wildlife shipments meeting welfare and biosecurity standards, and trends in injury and death during capture and transport.
- Trends in commercial wildlife trade, disaggregated by legal status and risk level, with progress measured by reductions in illegal, unsustainable or high-risk trade rather than total volume.
- The percentage of farm animals kept in higher-welfare systems.
- Antimicrobial use in livestock, tracked by species and production system.
- The number of NBSAPs and One Health plans that address animal health and animal-mediated ecosystem functions.
- Urban tree canopy cover and habitat connectivity metrics.



OVERCOMING COMMON CHALLENGES

This tool anticipates the barriers governments are likely to meet and suggests practical responses. The most common are summarised below.

Challenge	How we suggest addressing it
Limited enforcement and inspection capacity →	Strengthen customs and wildlife authorities, use intelligence-led and risk-based inspection, improve inter-agency cooperation, and link wildlife monitoring with veterinary and public health systems.
Costs for producers and consumers →	Offer transition grants, low-interest loans and technical assistance; phase requirements in gradually; use public procurement to create demand for higher-welfare products; remove or redirect incentives for intensification.

Challenge	How we suggest addressing it
Livelihood and cultural reliance on wildlife use	Co-design alternatives with affected communities and provide transition support such as micro-grants and market access, taking particular care where wildlife supports subsistence and food security.
Welfare expertise missing from One Health structures, and conflicting incentives across ministries	Write animal welfare into One Health mandates and technical working groups; review policies, incentives and subsidies across government; set clear responsibilities for each sector.
Limited municipal capacity or budget	Build on existing green infrastructure investment, use template design manuals, and partner with universities or NGOs for technical support.
Industry resistance and reliance on antibiotics	Ground changes in scientific evidence, run transparent multi-sector processes, highlight health and environmental co-benefits, and pair antimicrobial limits with veterinary oversight, training and peer learning.



EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Countries and cities are already putting many of these measures into practice. The full guidance includes more than 40 case studies.

Selected examples include:

Netherlands

Veterinary antimicrobial use fell by about 70% between 2009 and 2019 through mandatory sector targets, public reporting and benchmarking that required farmers and vets to reduce use or justify it.

Belgium

Established a positive list for mammals (2009) which allows only species that can be kept safely and humanely as pets, reducing the exotic pet trade and related risks.



Brazil

IBAMA's wildlife triage and rehabilitation centres (CETAS) received more than 54,000 wild animals in 2023 for veterinary care and, where possible, release. The 2025 Arapaima Programme governs community-based, traceable harvest of pirarucu.



Germany

The 2024 national dietary guidelines define sustainable nutrition across health, environment, social aspects and animal welfare.



Denmark

In the coalition agreement of its new government "regeringsgrundlag" (June 2026), Denmark commits to a package of reforms for pig welfare, including committing to fully phasing out sow crates around farrowing, enforcing the tail-docking ban by 2030 and banning extreme breeding by 2035.



China

A 2020 decision banned the trade and consumption of most terrestrial wild animals for food to protect public health after the COVID-19 outbreak. A revised Wildlife Protection Law (in force since 2023) then made this permanent and strengthened zoonotic disease prevention. Surveys since show fewer people willing to eat wild animals, suggesting that law combined with public health messaging can change consumption habits.



Bangladesh and Cameroon

National One Health frameworks recognise animal welfare, as a guiding principle in Bangladesh and within the veterinary mandate in Cameroon, offering a basis for welfare expertise in governance.



Scotland, U.K.

The Livestock Health and Welfare Strategy 2025–2030 links good animal welfare with biodiversity and soil health outcomes.



Medellín, Colombia

Since 2016, the city has built 30 green corridors along roads and streams, lowering average urban temperatures by about 2°C. Birds, lizards, frogs and bats absent for years have returned, showing that one investment can deliver climate adaptation and wildlife recovery together.



New York City and Toronto

New York's Local Law 15 requires bird-friendly materials in new construction; Toronto adopted the world's first mandatory green roof by-law and guidelines for biodiverse green roofs.



SIX PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

01

Map entry points.
Identify where the measures fit within your national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAP), One Health strategies, AMR action plans, climate commitments, among other instruments.

02

Prioritise.
Select three to five measures that match national risk profiles, capacities and priorities as a starting point.

03

Bring the welfare and One Health expertise to the table.
Include animal health and welfare expertise, alongside environment, health and agriculture authorities, in national coordination mechanisms.



04

Use the levers government already holds.

Public procurement, dietary guidelines, planning codes, and building standards can scale higher-welfare and wildlife-friendly practice quickly.

05

Invest in capacity and partnership.

Fund veterinary and surveillance systems, and co-design measures with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, farmers, and other stakeholders.

06

Monitor and share experience.

Use the guidance indicators, as appropriate; Track progress through existing reporting and share results and lessons through the CBD and other partner networks.

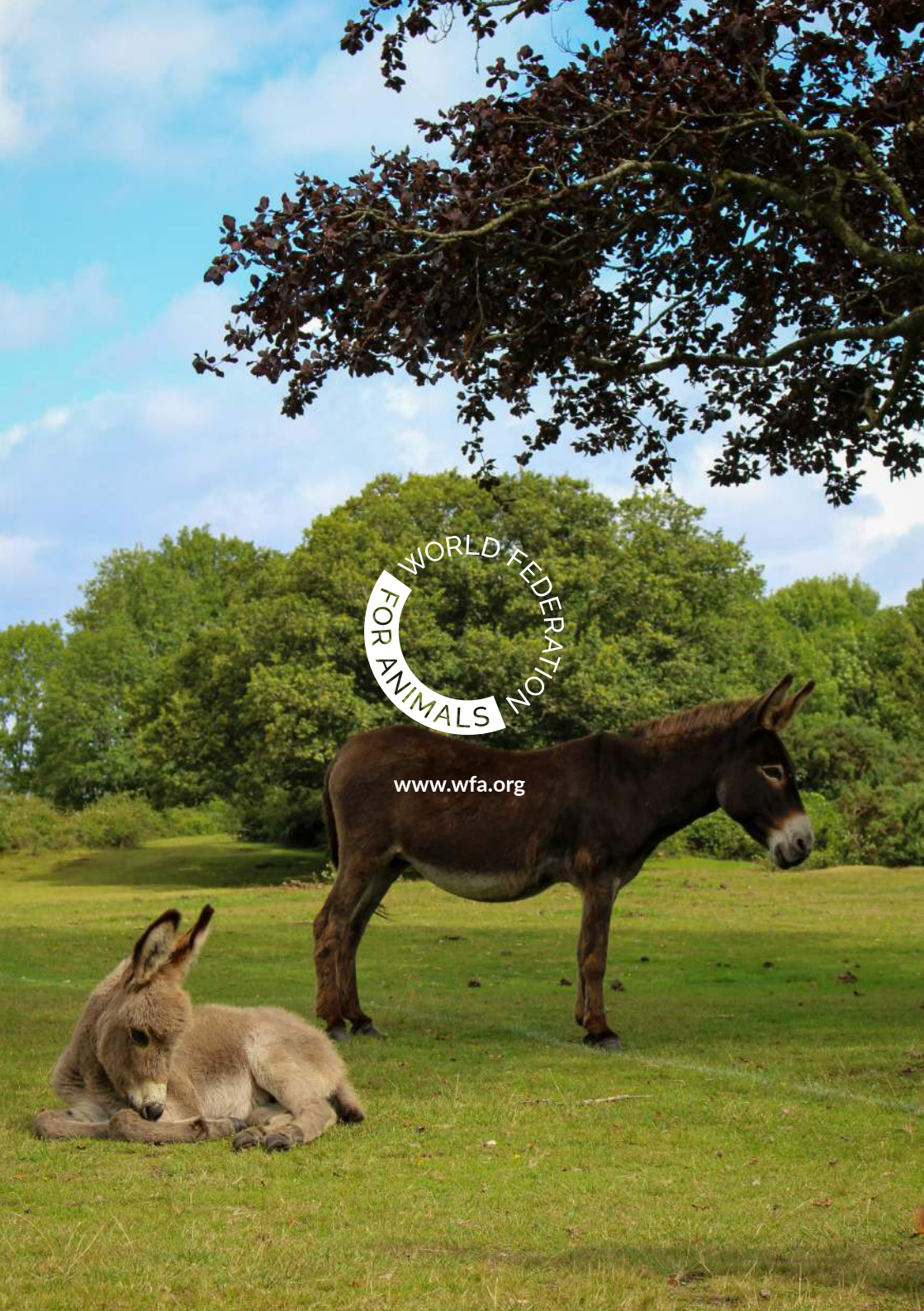


ACCESS THE TOOL ONLINE

Scan to access the full guidance tool

WFA welcomes the opportunity to support Parties in applying the guidance in their national contexts. Kindly reach out to info@wfa.org if you're interested in technical support, or would like to collaborate on biodiversity-health initiatives.

animals4biodiversityhealth.wfa.org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