

Dialogue between NGOs/Civil Society and GBEP

15th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

7 May 2007 - 15:00-17:00

The Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) organized a discussion with NGOs and civil society on 7 May 2007. The dialogue engaged key civil society stakeholders from the bioenergy field as part of the 15th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which took place in New York from 30 April to 11 May 2007.

The objectives of the meeting were both to inform leading NGO and civil society representatives of the Partnership's current and planned activities, as well as to discuss how best to engage civil society stakeholders in these efforts.

Key Messages for consideration by the Steering Committee

- GBEP should retain a focus on sustainability at the core of its activities.
- The Partnership should contribute to the establishment of the regulatory systems and institutional frameworks which will facilitate sustainable bioenergy production.
- Future discussion should focus on bioenergy for domestic use as well as for export, and should cover all bioenergy applications rather than taking a limited focus on liquid biofuels for transport.
- GBEP should take part in shaping the discussion of a post-Kyoto regime, particularly with respect to the adjustment of carbon finance rules to ensure real carbon accounting for bioenergy
- Current gaps in knowledge should be addressed by encouraging further research on production systems, technologies, food security and water requirements.
- GBEP should continue its dialogue with civil society partners by expanding membership to additional civil society partners, and by using other communication channels to engage with the wider civil society community, including NGOs, farmers and research organisations. Regional discussions should complement a global level dialogue.

Sustainability

During discussion participants affirmed that the core focus of each of GBEP's activities should be the sustainable production and use of bioenergy. Toward this goal, GBEP should support the establishment of regulatory systems and institutional frameworks that facilitate sustainable bioenergy production. Participants noted that GBEP work should build upon existing initiatives, such as the International Roundtable on Biofuels.

It was also recommended that GBEP focus its efforts on developing an analytical framework by which to assess the sustainability of bioenergy production, rather than evaluate specific technologies and processes. The establishment of any principles, criteria, or standards for sustainable bioenergy should occur through discussion among all partners, from public, private, as well as civil society sectors. Sustainability criteria should reflect social and labour concerns. Regarding environmental impacts, GBEP should promote the optimisation of water use in bioenergy production. GBEP was encouraged to refrain from promoting the use of

GMO's in bioenergy production. With respect to safeguarding food security, which GBEP should retain at the core of its objectives, it was acknowledged that this cannot be easily addressed by establishing sustainability criteria or standards, but that a broader policy approach was necessary.

Suggestions for GBEP Activity

Participants detailed several areas in which GPEP might specifically serve as the facilitator of dialogue regarding sustainable bioenergy. It was suggested that GBEP's scope include bioenergy for domestic use as well as export, and should not be limited to biofuels for transport, but include other bioenergy applications (electricity, heat), especially where these are more sustainable. It was also recommended that future discussion be channelled to distinguish between small and large scale production systems.

Participants suggested that GPEP take part in shaping the discussion of a post-Kyoto regime, in particular with respect to the adjustment of carbon finance rules to ensure real carbon accounting for bioenergy.

GBEP was also encouraged to promote the establishment of "realistic" targets for bioenergy to contribute to sustainable energy future, keeping in mind benefits and challenges. GBEP should also facilitate efficient functioning of bioenergy production chains and promote the equitable sharing of benefits

Information Requirements and Research

Beyond the facilitation of discussion, participants recommended that GBEP encourage research on a number of topics, including:

- a wider array of bioenergy production systems, including jatropha;
- new technologies, particularly regarding 2nd generation biofuels and algae biodiesel;
- the food security implications of bioenergy production;
- water requirements of feedstocks and their potential competition with local water needs.

Engagement of NGOs and Civil Society

In order to encourage and cultivate the engagement of NGOs and civil society in discussions on bioenergy, it was recommended that GBEP undertake the following steps toward the goal of continuous dialogue and collaboration:

- include well-established NGO/civil society networks as members of GBEP;
- interact with the broader civil society community through the BioenergyWiki;
- endeavour to engage diverse strands of civil society, including NGOs, farmers, and research organizations, in future communication;
- complement global level dialogue with regional discussion;
- use regional networks as entry points to select appropriate interlocutors at regional levels.