

4th meeting of the GBEP Task Force on Sustainability
Heidelberg, 19-20 March 2009
Kongresshaus Stadthalle

Chair Conclusions

The GBEP Task Force on Sustainability held its fourth meeting on 19-20 March 2009. Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, People's Republic of China, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA, European Commission, FAO, UN Foundation, UNEP, UNFCCC and UNIDO participated in the meeting. The meeting was chaired by the United Kingdom, the leading partner for this work. Colleagues from IEA Bioenergy Task 40 and Bern University of Applied Sciences attended part of the meeting and gave presentations on their experiences of developing sustainability indicators.

Discussion of criteria

The Chair introduced the background document for the meeting, which included all of the written comments received from Partners and Observers on the set of draft GBEP sustainability criteria circulated on 21 January, together with specific proposals and comments from the Chair in response to the comments received. The Task Force (TF) discussed the draft criteria one by one. In opening the discussion, the Chair invited the TF to work towards consensus on a set of draft criteria at this meeting that would enable work on indicators to begin. He encouraged the TF members not to be concerned about describing the criteria too precisely at this stage, as it would be necessary to revisit the language in light of the results of the forthcoming discussion on indicators. In the course of the discussion, the general principle was established that whilst the draft of the criteria developed at this meeting should be as concise as possible, at this stage the risk of some duplication was preferable to that of omitting important issues.

The results of the discussion on each of the criteria are summarized below and in the table of draft criteria in Annex A.

Cross-cutting recommendations

The TF agreed¹ that cross-cutting issues for which suitable indicators could not be found should be addressed through cross-cutting recommendations outside of the baskets to accompany the criteria and indicators. Issues relating to the investment environment for bioenergy, the capacity of countries to develop bioenergy sustainably and good governance were proposed by Partners as appropriate for inclusion in this section. Discussion of the Social and Economic Baskets (summarized below) resulted in the subjects of two specific draft criteria, "Direct and indirect impacts of trade policies" and "Institutional, policy, legal, and financial frameworks and good governance" (or similar, since there was no discussion of

¹ The USA stated that due to their recent change in administration, they were unable to adopt an official position on the GBEP criteria, and could not therefore join any consensus amongst the Task Force. Throughout this document, therefore, reference to acceptance or agreement should be interpreted as consensus bar the USA.

the exact wording, the focus being on the issues) being moved to this section. This section would be revisited once indicators were developed.

Environmental Basket

Criterion 1 – Chair’s proposal: “Greenhouse gas emissions”

The TF accepted² the Chair’s proposal, on the understanding that conservation of major carbon stocks would be considered at indicator level. As a result of accepting this formulation, the text in square brackets – “[from bioenergy compared to fossil fuels]” – was deleted, although it was recognized that it would be helpful if the TF report on the final criteria and indicators should make it clear that all the criteria and indicators related to the impact of bioenergy on their subject.

Criterion 2 – Chair’s proposal: “Productive capacity of land and ecosystems”

Partners and Observers expressed a range of views during an extensive discussion on this criterion. Several supported the deletion of “ecosystems” from the formulation proposed by the Chair, as it was either covered by the term “land” or the separate criterion on “Biological diversity”. Others argued for retaining the “ecosystems” concept here because “land” did not adequately cover the full range of relevant ecosystems, such as forests and aquatic environments and that maintaining the productive capacity of ecosystems was one objective while maintaining ecosystems for reasons of promoting diversity was another. In the end, while acknowledging that some Partners and Observers held different views on the issue, the TF agreed² to keep the criterion as “Productive capacity of land and ecosystems” and to develop these concepts further during the work on indicators.

Criterion 3 – Chair’s proposal: “Direct and indirect land-use change”

Discussion of this criterion revolved around reaching compromise between those who felt it was important to make reference to indirect land-use change in order to give out the message that GBEP considered this an important issue to be addressed and those who felt that the science of indirect land-use change was not sufficiently robust at this stage to develop indicators to measure it. The TF agreed² the compromise text “land-use change, including indirect effects”.

Criterion 4 – Chair’s proposal: “Air quality”

The Task Force accepted² the Chair’s proposal, noting the need to address potential overlap with the criterion on human health and safety later in the process.

Criterion 5 – Chair’s proposal: “Water availability, use efficiency and quality”

The TF agreed² to the Chair’s proposal, on the condition that indicators about scarcity of water resources and competition amongst uses were explored during the work on indicators. Several Partners commented that “use efficiency” could eventually be dropped, since it might be covered by the economic criterion on resource use efficiencies.

Criterion 6 – Chair’s proposal: “Biological diversity”

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It was argued that the term “biological diversity” (as, for example, defined by the CBD) included diversity of ecosystems, but also pointed out that the meaning of the term was not always clear in use. The TF agreed³ to keep the criterion as “biological diversity” for now and seek a means of clarifying the meaning of this term and the fact that it included ecosystems, during the work on indicators.

Social Basket

Criterion 1 – Chair’s proposal: “[Direct and indirect impacts of trade policies]”

The TF agreed³ to move this to the list of issues for cross-cutting recommendations.

Criterion 2 – Chair’s proposal: “Food security”

The TF accepted³ the Chair’s proposal.

Criterion 3 – Chair’s proposal: “Property and use rights and access to land and natural resources”

The main issue discussed was whether or not “rights” should be included in the criterion. Following a discussion during which Partners and Observers expressed a range of views, the TF agreed³ as a compromise approach to omit the word “rights” from the name of the criterion amend the title of the criterion to “Access to land, water and other natural resources” and to explore how rights issues, including formal and customary land tenure rights, could be addressed through indicators.

Criterion 4 – Chair’s proposal: “Labour conditions”

The TF accepted³ the Chair’s proposal to replace the previous draft criterion “Human and labour rights” with “Labour conditions” and to capture other human impacts in a separate criterion “Human health and safety” (see criterion 7 below). It was noted that in removing the reference to human rights, related issues such as gender equity should be examined at indicator level under this criterion or that on rural and social development.

Criterion 5 – Chair’s proposal: “Rural and social development”

After discussing whether access to energy could be merged with this criterion, and whether the content of this criterion better belonged in the Economic Basket, the TF agreed³ to leave the “rural and social development” criterion and the “access to energy at the local level criterion” as separate and in the Social Basket for now. The point was made that the Baskets were an artificial structure which could be revisited later.

Criterion 6 – Chair’s proposal: “Access to energy at the local level”

Whilst it was agreed³ that the word “local” in the proposed criterion meant with respect to the household, business, industry etc. rather than the site of bioenergy production, the TF agreed³ that the term could introduce some confusion and possibly undesired narrowing of the scope of the criterion. The TF agreed³ to the revised title “Access to energy”, whilst noting that for

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now the fact that the criterion was in the Social Basket helped make clear the social theme of this criterion, as opposed to broader energy security considerations.

Criterion 7 – Chair’s proposal: “Human health and safety”

Further to discussion of criterion 4 above, the TF accepted⁴ the Chair’s proposal, on the condition that the subject of this criterion was not limited to occupational health and safety.

Criterion 8 – Chair’s proposal: To include a new set of cross-cutting recommendations alongside the matrix of criteria and indicators, which would include a section on institutional, policy, legal, and financial frameworks and good governance (or similar).

As a result of discussion on cross-cutting recommendations, the TF agreed⁴ that the criterion previously named “Institutional, policy and legal framework” would be deleted and placed in the list of subjects for cross-cutting recommendations, as per the Chair’s proposal.

Economic Basket

Criterion 1 – Chair’s proposal: “Resource availability and resource use efficiencies in bioenergy production, conversion, distribution and end-use”

The TF agreed⁴ to revert to the previous Chair’s proposal, namely to have “Resource availability” and “Resource use efficiencies in bioenergy production, conversion, distribution and end-use” as two separate criteria. It was noted by some Partners that the issue of competition with other end uses and resource availability not just before bioenergy production but also after, i.e. as a result of bioenergy production, should be addressed by the first of these criteria. Amongst the resources proposed for consideration were soil, water, agricultural inputs, energy, capital and workforce for production and feedstock, enzymes etc. for conversion.

Criterion 2 – Chair’s proposal: “Economic development”

The TF agreed⁴ to revise the wording of the criterion to “Economic development”, as long as balance of payments was addressed at indicator level. It was explained that balance of payments, as opposed to balance of trade, would take into account international aid, and if a country developed its bioenergy sector without depending on international aid, this was a good sign of sustainability. Also many countries in e.g. South America relied heavily on unilateral transfers from people working outside of the country, which would be picked up in the broader balance of payments.

Criterion 3 – Chair’s proposal: To discuss further whether “[Policy and regulatory framework]” should be included as a criterion or as a subject for cross-cutting recommendations.

The TF agreed⁴ to consider addressing the issue of policy and regulatory frameworks in the cross-cutting recommendations, in the same way as reported above under Criterion 8 of the Social Basket.

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The TF also agreed⁵ to replace this criterion in the Economic Basket with “economic viability and competitiveness”, and to consider incentives and disincentives at indicator level.

Criterion 4 – Chair’s proposal: “Access to technology and technological capability”

The Chair’s proposal was accepted⁵ by the TF.

Discussion of the Task Force progress report

The TF agreed that a report summarizing progress on the work on criteria and indicators should be submitted to the GBEP Steering Committee for consideration at its next meeting. The Steering Committee would then determine how much of it would be submitted to the G8 Summit.

Discussion of indicators

Lessons learnt from similar initiatives

Introducing this session, the Chair said that the quality and practicality of the GBEP sustainability criteria indicators would be vital to their broad acceptance and application, and that it was important to learn from the experience of others who had been down the route we are now travelling. He welcomed Jinke van Dam from Utrecht University, on behalf of IEA Bioenergy Task 40, and Dr Jan Grenz from Bern University of Applied Sciences, whom had been invited to give presentations to the TF on their experiences of developing and implementing sustainability criteria and indicators in related areas.

Ms van Dam described her experience in the development and use of criteria and indicators for measuring the sustainability of biomass and bioenergy, drawing attention to the questions of measurement, scale, geographical dependence and improvement over time of indicators and trade-offs between them. She stressed that new, improved and unified methodologies for indicators were required, as well as local and regional databases. She also pointed to lessons learnt from case studies in Argentina.

Dr Grenz outlined lessons learnt from developing and applying Response-Inducing Sustainability Evaluation (RISE). RISE is an indicator-based method for holistic sustainability assessment of agricultural production at farm level that aims at motivating farmers to reflect on sustainability issues and initiate improvements. It operates on the “best available data” principle, without physical measurements, and Dr Grenz felt that this form of analysis was a good complement to monitoring initiatives.

The Secretariat then presented a possible process for the selection of GBEP indicators, which would be elaborated in light of comments in a document to be circulated following this meeting for agreement by the TF.

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The way forward

The TF agreed⁶ to move on to develop indicators for the current set of draft criteria by forming three sub-groups: environmental, social, and economic and energy security. It was also agreed that consistency across sub-groups and cross-cutting recommendations would be assured by an *ad hoc* group composed of the Secretariat, the TF Chair and the sub-group leaders.

It was agreed that UNEP and Germany would co-lead the environmental sub-group, within which Germany would lead work (of a scope to be defined and agreed amongst Partners) on indirect effects; FAO would lead the social sub-group; UN Foundation and IEA would co-lead the economic and energy security sub-group.

The Chair proposed that within the environmental sub-group, to be co-led by UNEP and Germany, there would be the locus for focused work on indirect effects, which could also include activities such as a workshop bringing together experts working in the area. Germany stated that they and the UN Foundation offered to facilitate the participation of developing countries in the work on indirect effects, and that Brazil had also expressed an interest in this work. It was agreed that Germany would prepare a paper outlining the proposed work on indirect effects for submission to the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

The Chair invited initial requests to join the sub-groups, and the following results emerged:

Environment sub-group, to be led by Germany and UNEP with additional members: Brazil, France (provisional), Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden Switzerland, UK, US and FAO;

Social sub-group, to be led by FAO with additional members: Brazil, France (provisional), Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK and USA;

Economic and energy security sub-group, to be co-led by IEA and UN Foundation with additional members: Brazil, France (provisional), Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, US and UNEP.

Next steps

- The Secretariat will prepare a paper in collaboration with sub-group leaders describing the proposed process for selecting indicators and an indicative timetable, and will circulate it on 24 April 2009 for comments by Partners and Observers by 8 May. Partners and Observers, who have not yet expressed an interest in joining any of the indicator sub-groups but who wish to do so, should let the Secretariat know by 24 April.
- The Secretariat will circulate a paper setting out the proposed scope of work on indirect effects within the environmental sub-group by 17 April for comments from Partners by 27 April, after which an amended version will be submitted to the Steering Committee for approval.

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- The next meeting of the Task Force on Sustainability is proposed for the first half of July. The meeting will provide an opportunity to receive and discuss feedback on initial work done on indicators by the sub-groups. The Secretariat will circulate further details in due course.
- **The 7th Steering Committee meeting** will be held on 14 May 2009 in New York. (date and venue to be confirmed). At the meeting the progress of the Task Force, the proposal for work on indirect effects, and the GBEP report to the G8 will be discussed.

Draft GBEP sustainability criteria, 20 March 2009

Environmental Basket

Draft criteria at end of 20 March 2009	Issues identified during the 4 th meeting of the Task Force on Sustainability for consideration as indicators (this list is not exhaustive)	Comments
1. Greenhouse gas emissions	Conservation of major carbon stocks (here or under criterion 3 below)	
2. Productive capacity of land and ecosystems	Soil, including soil fertility, structure and erosion Sustainable harvest levels for wood	Non-terrestrial ecosystems such as those involving fish and algae should be born in mind during the development of indicators.
3. Land-use change, including indirect effects	Deforestation	
4. Air quality		Potential duplication with Human health and safety noted.
5. Water availability, use efficiency and quality	Scarcity of water resources and competition amongst uses	Potential duplication with Economic criterion noted.
6. Biological diversity	Specific biodiversity issues relating to ecosystems	The Task Force will continue to seek a means of clarifying the meaning of "biological diversity" and the fact that it includes ecosystems.

Economic Basket

Draft criteria at end of 20 March 2009	Issues identified during the 4 th meeting of the Task Force on Sustainability for consideration as indicators (this list is not exhaustive)	Comments
1. Resource availability		Amongst the resources proposed for consideration were soil, water, agricultural inputs, energy, capital and workforce for production and feedstock, enzymes etc. for conversion.
2. Resource use efficiencies in bioenergy production, conversion, distribution and end-use		
3. Economic development	Balance of payments	Economic dimension of rural development to be considered also here.
4. Economic viability and competitiveness of bioenergy	Incentives and disincentives	
5. Access to technology and technological capability		

Social Basket

Draft criteria at end of 20 March 2009	Issues identified during the 4 th meeting of the Task Force on Sustainability for consideration as indicators (this list is not exhaustive)	Comments
1. Food security	Competition between food, fuel and fibre	
2. Access to land, water and other natural resources	<p>Applicable formal and customary property (including land tenure) and use rights</p> <p>Natural resources should include water, forests and genetic resources</p>	
3. Labour conditions	Labour rights	
4. Rural and social development	<p>Job creation/ opportunities</p> <p>Income generation</p> <p>Quality of incomes</p> <p>Creation of sustainable livelihoods</p> <p>Social equity</p> <p>Workforce capacity</p> <p>Rural development</p> <p>Gender equity</p> <p>Property and use rights and access to land and natural resources</p>	
5. Access to energy		
6. Human health and safety	Aspects beyond just occupational health and safety	<p>Whilst the potential for duplication is noted, for now the idea is that this criterion would cover the impacts on human health and safety arising from those factors whose physical measurements would fall under the criteria on air quality, water and labour conditions, as well as potentially criteria such as rural and social development, food security and access to energy, where changes due to bioenergy could result in changes in human health.</p>

Energy Security

Draft criterion at end of 20 March 2009	Issues identified during the 4 th meeting of the Task Force on Sustainability for consideration as indicators	Comments
1. Energy security		

Cross-cutting recommendations

The Task Force agreed to establish a separate heading of cross-cutting recommendations outside of the baskets where important issues that could neither be dealt with as criteria or through indicators could be placed.

At this stage, issues to be considered under this heading are:

1. Direct and indirect impacts of trade policies; and
2. Institutional, policy, legal, and financial frameworks and good governance (or similar).

Enabling frameworks and the investment environment for bioenergy were also proposed by Partners during discussion in Heidelberg.

The Chair asked the Secretariat to assist him in reorganizing the above list of issues into a draft section on cross-cutting recommendations, to which items would be added as work in the indicator sub-groups went forward. This section would be discussed by the Task Force later. Where possible, indicators should be sought for important issues that have been identified, and cross-cutting recommendations made where suitable indicators cannot be found.