

Conclusions of the 5th GBEP Task Force meeting on GHG methodologies

Kongresshaus Stadthalle - Heidelberg, Germany, 18 March 2009

The Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Methodologies Task Force of the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) held its 5th meeting in Heidelberg on 18 March 2009. This Task Force was created to design a common methodological framework for lifecycle analysis (LCA) of greenhouse gas emissions associated with biofuel production and use.

The goal of the framework is to ensure that countries and organizations can evaluate GHG emissions associated with bioenergy in a consistent manner, using methods appropriate to their circumstances, conditions and systems of production. Furthermore, the framework will enable a multi-tiered approach to be taken to the analysis of GHG emissions, as appropriate to the level of sophistication employed in the production of the biofuel and the data available.

At the 2nd meeting of the Task Force a ten box LCA framework was proposed, and four subgroups were charged with the work of developing detailed reporting checklists for each step in the LCA. At the 3rd and 4th meeting, these subgroups presented progress on their work.

The primary purpose of the 5th meeting was to achieve Task Force consensus on a draft GHG Methodological Framework Report that could be presented to the GBEP Steering Committee at its upcoming meeting on 14 May. At the opening of the 5th meeting, the United States announced that it would be unable to join Task Force consensus due to its present transition in Presidential Administrations. All “decisions” and “agreements” reached during the Task Force meeting therefore represent consensus only in the absence of a United States position.

With regard to the methodological framework, participants decided that some minor changes were required in the “Source of Biomass” and “Biomass feedstock production” check lists, and that a caveat paragraph on net changes of carbon stocks must be added to the “Land Use Change” checkbox. Partners agreed to finalize these changes through email communications so that a complete LCA framework Report can be presented to the GBEP Steering Committee on 14 May. The last version of the Report is attached to this document in Annex 1.

Remaining issues and next steps

Following a proposal raised during the last Steering Committee from some members volunteering themselves to test their own methodologies against the GBEP framework, findings were briefly shared with the Task Force in a non-judgmental discussion. It was recognized by the group that a detailed assessment could be quite complex. However, for an overall assessment of the GHG Methodological Framework

and to better identify the gaps and needs for further improvements of the methodology, it is crucial that GBEP members follow up on efforts and test different LCA against this framework.

It was also recognized that the methodology should be made more user-friendly, with further guidance notes to help the user complete the checklist. This activity can greatly benefit from partners feedback on testing the methodology.

Regarding the next steps for the Task Force, Partners are asked to review the version of the methodological framework attached as Annex 1 and to provide any further requests for edits to the Secretariat by 13 April. After any requested edits are reviewed, the framework will be circulated to Partners for final Task Force approval. The Task Force-approved framework will be named "Version Zero," reflecting the understanding that it will be improved and updated in the future. The Task Force will submit Version Zero and its accompanying report to the Steering Committee, which will make decisions regarding final approval of Version Zero, will consider publication options, and will direct the Task Force regarding future work.

Timeline

- 03 April – Secretariat circulate among Partners and Observers the GHG TF Chair Summary with the Methodological Framework Report attached as Annex 1.
- 13 April – Deadline for Partners and Observers to send comments and remarks.
- 22 April – Secretariat circulate revised Framework and Report.
- 01 May – Deadline for final Task Force approval of Framework and Report
- 14 May – Framework and Report to be presented to the GBEP Steering Committee for final approval and decisions on publication.