

10th meeting of the GBEP Task Force on Sustainability

FAO Headquarters – Philippines and Iran Rooms

Rome (Italy), 16–18 November 2010

Chair Conclusions

The GBEP Task Force on Sustainability held its 10th meeting on 16–18 November 2010. Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Mauritania, Netherlands, Paraguay, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America, Asian Development Bank (ADB), ECOWAS Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), European Commission, FAO, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), IEA, UN Foundation, and UNEP participated in the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Sweden.

Discussion of the draft GBEP sustainability indicators

Discussion of the indicators led to provisional agreement on a number of indicator names and descriptions, and to the identification of a small number of indicators where further work and discussion were required between this and the next meeting of the Task Force to help reach consensus.

Discussion of contextual information

Discussion of other elements of the draft report on the GBEP sustainability criteria and indicators was limited to the subject of contextual information. The Sub-Group leaders introduced their draft proposal developed in order to reflect the discussion in the previous meeting of the Task Force on transforming the section of the draft report on contextual information into a concise, clear list, upon which countries could reflect. Many Partners voiced their support for the proposal, stating it was useful, whereas three Partners voiced concerns, stating that it did not add value. Reasons given for these different positions included the following:

- i) The proposed section on contextual information was an easy way for developing countries to determine which indicators they could handle and which ones they would need support on;
- ii) Given that indicators are very technical and scientific and this doesn't always translate well into decision-making by policymakers and that policymakers at the decision-making level were not going to read the methodology sheets, this section would add utility by making the GBEP product better able to achieve its purpose of informing national policymaking;
- iii) It was helpful to have a one-stop-shop where one could see everything useful for the analysis of the indicators;
- iv) The section added value by providing a list of information that might explain observed changes in indicator values and hence facilitate analysis of the sustainability of bioenergy (e.g. an increase in job creation in the bioenergy sector could be seen as linked to a particular policy);
- v) Policy measures are not needed to use the indicators. Contextual information, such as maps, is needed for certain indicators, but this should be included in the methodology sheets;

- vi) The proposal asked questions about policies. In doing this, GBEP would prompt the question of what is the right policy, which is not a question GBEP can or should answer;
- vii) The contextual information should be provided in the methodological sheets. The proposal does not shed light on the process of using the indicators. It was not clear from the draft what the precise purpose was. Furthermore, the sentences immediately before the table suggested that some indicators would not be valid if there were not a sufficient policy or scientific framework in place prior to the measurement of the indicator, whereas the measurement of the indicator in itself should be enough.

The Chair determined that the Sub-Group leaders should take on board the feedback obtained during this meeting and further comments from Partners and Observers to be submitted in writing after the meeting, and produce a further draft in advance of the next meeting.

Discussion of criteria and baskets

The Task Force discussed a proposal to remove the criteria and de-link the indicators from the three “baskets”.

Regarding the removal of the criteria, the proponent gave several justifications: criteria were not mentioned in the original G8 mandate in 2008 – only indicators were consistently present in all the G8 mandates regarding GBEP’s work on sustainability; criteria is a term that implies directionality; they are mere category headings instead of criteria; there is now almost numerical parity between the criteria and indicators; and some of the criteria no longer have indicators under them.

The proposal prompted various reactions: G8 Leaders committed in the recent G8 Summit in Canada to the adoption of criteria and indicators in GBEP; the word criteria is important and suggests these are issues that matter and need to be taken into account in bioenergy policy development; the Task Force’s agreed process for the selection of indicators states that the Task Force should reflect upon necessary revision of the criteria in light of provisional agreement on indicators, and it seemed to be appropriate to do this now; retention of the criteria would show that the important issues relating to the sustainability of bioenergy were being dealt with; mention of criteria could be omitted from the initial report on the indicators and the question could be returned to after piloting the indicators; the initial report would need to mention the criteria in order to give a rationale for the choice of indicators; criteria were used since the beginning to facilitate the process of selecting indicators, but no longer extremely necessary; criteria names could be mentioned outside the list of indicators, highlighting that they were used as a basis for the process of selection of indicators; and if the criteria remain unaltered, mentioning them in the report could cause confusion since there are some that no longer have indicators under them. Finally, it was also suggested that if the criteria were deleted, their names could be inserted into the indicator names or descriptions, or as an introduction to each indicator.

Regarding the baskets, the justification given for the proposal of de-linking the indicators from them was that many indicators were connected with two or three of the baskets, and an integrated assessment of the sustainability of bioenergy was required. One Partner commented that if balance across the baskets were achieved, it might be acceptable to remove the three headings from the list of indicators. However, it would remain important to mention in the report that these three dimensions of sustainable development were important and that GBEP was considering this during the entire process. Another Partner restated their very strong position regarding the balance across the three pillars, and remarked that this balance could only be measured if the baskets were retained. Another stated that use of the three pillars was

very common in work on sustainability and it might appear unusual not to use them in the GBEP work. Links across the pillars could be stated in the report.

The Chair noted that it would be important to have text in the report stating that the number of indicators on a theme was not proportional to the importance of the theme. He added that even if the pillars were to be removed, it would be clear that the indicators covered the three pillars. He concluded that more thinking and discussion were necessary on both issues and invited Partners and Observers to send views on these issues to the Secretariat to inform preparation of a basis for discussion at the next meeting.

Piloting on the GBEP criteria and indicators

There was insufficient time for discussion of piloting of and consultation on the criteria and indicators, as well as on the collection of best practices in sustainable bioenergy. Discussion on those issues will be held at the next meeting. In particular, the Chair invited Task Force members to facilitate an agreement on piloting the indicators, once agreed, at the next meeting.

Information session on indirect land-use change

On the afternoon of 18 November, the Task Force's workstream on indirect effects of bioenergy held an information session regarding international perspectives on the science and policy regarding indirect land-use change (ILUC) due to bioenergy. Presentations from the US EPA, European Commission and Brazil (ICONE) on recent developments in scientific research and policymaking in this area were followed by a comparative analysis of different approaches to quantifying ILUC, and especially the resulting GHG emissions, by Ecofys (on behalf of the UK). The workstream leader announced that work was under way on the inventory of policies on ILUC, with a draft for internal review due by the end of the year. The information paper circulated prior to the meeting on the quantification of indirect effects of biofuel production and mitigation of unwanted indirect effects would be updated if funds could be secured. He proposed a second GBEP workshop on ILUC in March 2011, back-to-back with the next set of GBEP meetings, where, in particular, mitigation responses and an indicator on indirect effects could be explored.

Next steps

The work of the Task Force will now focus on refining the methodology sheets for the provisionally agreed indicators and reaching agreement on the outstanding indicators. The Chair proposed the following tentative timeline in light of the outcomes of the meeting:

Methodology sheets

- **By 10 December 2010:** Secretariat to adjust methodology sheets in light of current provisional agreement on the indicators and circulate to Sub-Group leaders. Sub-Group leaders will then refine the methodology sheets, with the assistance of Task Force members and the Secretariat.
- **Mid-January 2011:** Secretariat will circulate the revised methodology sheets.
- **Early February 2011:** Comments on the revised methodology sheets to be sent to the Secretariat, within three weeks of previous circulation.
- **Late February 2011** (at least two weeks prior to the 11th meeting of the Task Force): Secretariat will circulate the revised methodology sheets, after incorporation of comments received.

Outstanding indicators, proposals on contextual information, criteria and baskets

- **By 5 January 2011:** Partners and Observers are invited to submit comments to the Secretariat on the outstanding indicators (SOC1A and SOC2A), and in particular on the related proposals from the US. Comments on the proposal on contextual information from the Sub-Group leaders, and on the proposals to remove the criteria and de-link the indicators from the baskets are also kindly requested, including any proposals for how specifically to revise the criteria to fit the provisionally agreed list of indicators. The Secretariat will facilitate agreement on these issues throughout January and February, including through teleconferences between interested Partners.
- **Late February 2011:** Secretariat will circulate revised draft indicators, proposals on contextual information, criteria and baskets on the basis of comments from Partners and Observers, for discussion at the next Task Force meeting.

Next meetings

- **March 2011:** 11th meeting of the Task Force on Sustainability. Anticipated objectives are:
 - agreement of the outstanding indicators, on criteria and baskets, as well as on the methodology sheets for the indicators;
 - invitation to Partners and Observers to begin preparations for piloting the indicators; and
 - decision on consultation on the GBEP work.
- **May 2011:** 12th meeting of the Task Force on Sustainability. Anticipated objectives for the endorsement of the 11th meeting of the Steering Committee are:
 - agreement of the initial report on GBEP indicators; and
 - decision on next steps for the Task Force.