

**GBEP Working Group on Capacity Building
for Sustainable Bioenergy**

***Short Note on possible GBEP work on
“Achieving sustainable bioenergy development and food security”***

FAO
15 May 2013

Justification and Overall Goal

Current international dynamics related to biofuels at international level (e.g. in the EU) but also in some countries, some international organisations (e.g. the WB), and in some NGOs show that the food versus fuel debate is still fierce, and very often polarized. This is a likely sign that there is still a lot of misunderstanding and lack of knowledge on this issue. On the other hand, there is great interest in bioenergy development, including biofuels, as evidenced for instance during the April 2013 GBEP Bioenergy Week in Brasilia. Moreover, nowadays there are a series of tools that can help advance the knowledge and field work in that regard in the right direction. For instance, FAO is proposing a support package and technical support on food-bioenergy links at all important stages of bioenergy development:

- Situation analysis, either in a rapid but still robust way, or in detail regarding particular supply chains (BEFS analytical framework) ;
- Implementation/Operation level, either through the implementation of good practices that have been compiled, an operator level score card-type tool, and a sustainability and replicability assessment framework related to integrated food-energy systems; and
- Monitoring and evaluation, with tools that allow for the monitoring and evaluation of performance at operation, at sub-national and national levels.

There is also evidence that one can achieve both food security and sustainable bioenergy development, including regarding biofuels.

The key question then becomes. **How to resolve the current mismatch between on the one hand, lack of information knowledge and capacity on this topic – hence often fear; and, on the other hand, significant interest in the topic and the availability of tools and competences to reduce risks and harness opportunities regarding bioenergy and food security – hence allowing to move forward towards food and fuel in a meaningful way?**

This requires political, technical and financial support. This is currently achieved in three different ways:

- Information and awareness raising opportunities during international or national events;
- Projects at country level; which is already possible thanks to the availability of adequate knowledge on this topic. This work often stems from single country requests. So far this mechanism has not had big enough impacts for the lack of resources to support its implementation in enough countries and over sufficient time;
- The possibility to make existing bioenergy-food security tools and FAO competence more visible and available through their inclusion in the SE4ALL “Sustainable Bioenergy” High Impact

Opportunity (HIO). FAO co-chairs the steering committee of this HIO, and will coordinate two initiatives within it. However, while this mechanism might entail additional support, such support would materialize only at a later stage, if any.

The above mechanisms show that more needs to be done to strengthen knowledge, capacities on bioenergy-food security links, actual implementation of initiatives that combine both. GBEP could greatly help in that respect due to its political and technical credibility, and the fact that it regroups the key biofuel countries and some key international organisations involved in sustainable bioenergy work. For these reasons, GBEP might be very helpful in increasing the visibility of existing tools and addressing the lack of information, knowledge and capacities in this area. Improvement regarding these aspects are needed if one wants to achieve meaningful progress in “food and fuel” development .

On the basis of the above **FAO would like to propose that GBEP undertakes some work aimed to strengthen capacities in “Achieving sustainable bioenergy development and food security”.**