

13th meeting of the GBEP Task Force on Sustainability
FAO Headquarters, Lebanon Room D-209 Bis
Rome, 12 November 2015

Chair Conclusions

The GBEP Task Force on Sustainability (TFS) held its 13th meeting on 12 November 2015 at FAO Headquarters in Rome, under the new scope of work approved by the GBEP Steering Committee in May 2015.

Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Paraguay, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, United States of America, ECOWAS, FAO, IEA Bioenergy, SE4ALL and UNEP participated in the meeting as Partners and Observers.

Opening of the Task Force on Sustainability

The Chair of the Task Force on Sustainability, Mr. Sven-Olov Ericson from Sweden, welcomed participants and officially adopted the meeting's agenda.

The importance of having a co-chair to share the burden of this work was highlighted, and Partners and Observers were invited to propose potential candidates to cover this role. Mr. Kwabena Ampadu Otu-Danquah from Ghana expressed his willingness to undertake the responsibilities of co-chair and the Task Force supported him on this. The fact that the co-chairs will receive support from the environmental, social and economic sub-groups that will start working again in due time was also stressed. On this matter, the availability of previous leaders/co-leaders for each of these groups has yet to be confirmed.

Scope and programme of work of the Task Force

In May 2015, the GBEP Steering Committee agreed upon the new scope of work of the TFS for the production of an Implementation Guide on the use of the GBEP Sustainability Indicators for Bioenergy (GSI). TFS will not be re-opening the discussion on the indicators, related titles and descriptions but rather focusing on creating a document that complements the "Global Bioenergy Partnership Sustainability Indicators for Bioenergy" report. This guide will also clarify and provide more information on several of the identified issues within the methodologies in the first edition of the "Global Bioenergy Partnership Sustainability Indicators for Bioenergy", building on the experience gained in the implementation of the indicators and the related lessons learnt.

It was agreed that the Task Force would work primarily via email and teleconference. Physical meetings would be organized at least once a year, back-to-back to annual GBEP meetings and others as necessary, subject to the availability of funds. Issues that cut across all or several indicators will be looked at by the entire Task Force while those issues related to specific indicators will be dealt with by the relevant sub-group.

It was agreed that at this meeting the group would give priority to discussing cross-cutting issues that affect the measurement of all or most of the indicators. Conversations related to the guidance on individual indicators will take place at a later stage under the sub-groups.

Discussion on experiences with the measurement of the GBEP indicators

Before delving into a discussion on the cross-cutting issues, the Chair of the Task Force highlighted the importance of the experiences and lessons learned gained so far on the measurement of the GBEP indicators. He stressed the relevance of the current work of AG2 within the WGCB in compiling lessons learned through templates with a view to produce a living document that will inform the work of the TFS on the development of the Implementation Guide.

The Chair also asked participants for comments on relevant points or experiences from previous measurement of the GBEP indicators. What followed was a discourse on the relevance of indicators and methodologies to users as well as transparency. As emerged during the discussion, countries that implement the indicators should approach them strategically, selecting the ones that most directly apply. The country can then determine the best way to carry out the measurement of those indicators given the available resources. A Partner suggested that the Implementation Guide should provide recommendations on how to determine the pathways being assessed. From there the group segued into a debate on how countries could determine the methodologies used for each indicator. The importance of ensuring transparency in the selection of the bioenergy pathways, indicators and methodologies was emphasized.

Discussion on indicator experiences: cross-cutting issues

Three categories of cross-cutting issues have been identified thus far: integration of definitions and methodologies; how best to ensure the effective implementation of the indicators; and how to enhance the practicality of the indicators. In the first half of the meeting, participants dealt with issues from the first category, specifically the need for a more explicit definition of modern bioenergy, guidance on attribution and implementation of good practices.

One of the lessons learned from the implementation of the indicators was that there is a lack of a clear demarcation between traditional and modern bioenergy. A **definition of modern bioenergy** was proposed in the “Global Bioenergy Partnership Sustainability Indicators for Bioenergy” report but it is very open to interpretation. To inform the discussion, the GBEP Secretariat compiled a list of the various definitions of this term used by other relevant international organizations and initiatives. What emerged from that exercise was that there is no internationally recognized definition of modern bioenergy; oftentimes, this term is defined by what it is not, which demonstrates the complexity of the issue. Participants were asked whether they felt the need for a more precise definition or if the compilation of definitions should be included in the Implementation Guide as a means of helping future users develop their own working definition of modern bioenergy. In the discussions that followed, a number of positions were heard on the best way to improve upon the definition of modern bioenergy utilized in the first edition report.

It was concluded that a more precise definition of modern bioenergy was not needed and that the compilation of definitions prepared by the Secretariat would be included in the Implementation Guide. Furthermore, the need to include in the Implementation Guide a recommendation for users to contextualize the measurement of indicators and use this as a reference for relevance and for modern bioenergy related considerations was also highlighted.

Continuing with other topics in the first category of cross-cutting issues, participants then discussed **attribution**. They were asked for input on whether or not they felt it was necessary to identify and explain in detail a range of suitable approaches for dealing with the issue of

attribution in the Implementation Guide. It was proposed and agreed that this could be done through the formation of a sub-group on attribution or a technical paper produced by either an external consultant (subject to availability of funds) or contributions from the Task Force. Participants felt that it would be worthwhile to see how other countries dealt with the problem of attribution both in the templates from the Working Group on Capacity Building's Activity Group 2 and in studies on attribution that some Partners proposed to share within the group. This information could help shed light on the attribution matter and could represent the basis for the work to be done.

The last issue to be discussed from the first category of cross-cutting issues was **good practices**. When indicators cannot be measured due to lack of data, skills and/or resources, and when appropriate as a complement to the measurement of the current quantitative indicators, the implementation of relevant good practices in bioenergy production and use could be assessed, including regarding their coverage and (if possible) their quality. It was agreed that this work would be carried out in the context of the environmental, social and economic sub-groups. At that level, there could be a discussion on what these good practices would look like for each indicator or each pillar. It was generally agreed upon to include items that could be used as proxies or to provide a menu of options for future users to be used as a reference and not as a prescriptive list.

In the second half of the meeting, there was a discussion on the best ways to ensure an effective implementation of the indicators. Partners and Observers concluded that the following four recommendations should be included in the Implementation Guide: involvement of a multidisciplinary team of experts with an in-depth knowledge of the national context and of the domestic bioenergy sector; proactive engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector organizations and civil society organizations; prioritization of empirical information over model estimates that include the assumptions used; and the inclusion of the spatial extent of the assessment needs to carefully defined and care needs to be taken in extrapolating site-level information to national-level indicators. One particular area of concern was providing lessons learned on how to create an effective relationship with the private sector and get them to give people access to proprietary information. Participants agreed to draw these lessons learned from the Activity Group 2 templates and then try to give specific guidance on this.

Conclusions and next steps

The conclusions and next steps that were discussed and agreed upon are:

- The Task Force supported Mr. Kwabena Ampadu Otu-Danquah from Ghana as co-chair of the group. More expression of willingness to cover this role are welcome.
- Previous leaders/co-leaders of the environmental, social and economic sub-groups will get back to the Task Force to confirm their availability to lead the re-instated groups.
- The Task Force's work will be conducted primarily via email and teleconference in addition to meetings in person once a year back-to-back to regular GBEP meetings in Rome.
- A more precise definition of modern bioenergy is not needed and the compilation of definitions of the term provided by the GBEP Secretariat will be included in the Implementation Guide.
- Once all templates from the Working Group on Capacity Building's Activity Group 2 have been received (by March 2016), a technical report on attribution will be developed,

which will then feed into the guidance provided in the Implementation Guide. This paper could be prepared - ideally in view of the next TFS meeting at the end of 2016 - either by one or more Partners or by an external consultant. TFS members are kindly asked to express their interest in supporting this process either in-kind or through a financial contribution by contacting the GBEP Secretariat by the end of 2015.

- TFS Members agreed upon the idea of including relevant good practices under each pillar of sustainability. These good practices will be identified by the environmental, social and economic sub-groups.
- The cross-cutting issues related to the effective implementation of the indicators were all agreed upon for inclusion in the Implementation Guide.
- It was discussed and agreed to include in the Implementation Guide a reference to the linkages between the SDGs and GSIs, both in terms of how the GSIs could contribute to the SDGs and vice versa. Additional discussions will follow on this issue in light of the forthcoming discussions in the SDGs context.