

18th Meeting of the GBEP Task Force on Sustainability

Online – 12.00 - 13.30 CET time (UTC +1)

Wednesday, 28 October 2020

Co-Chairs Summary

The GBEP Task Force on Sustainability (TFS) held its 18th meeting on 28 October 2020 online due to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Philippines, Spain, Sweden, United States of America, ECOWAS/ECREEE, EUBIA, European Commission, FAO, ICRAF, IEA Bioenergy, IRENA and UNECA participated in the meeting as Partners and Observers.

Mr. Ahmed Abdelati Ahmed (Egypt), co-chair of the TFS, along with Mr. Takashi Hayashi (Japan) and Ms. Annalisa Zezza (Italy), opened the 18th TFS meeting.

Work of the TFS in 2020

Constance Miller (GBEP Secretariat) gave an overview of the work of the TFS in 2020; this included:

- The [Implementation Guide](#) for the GBEP Sustainability Indicators, which was published online in January 2020.
- An accompanying [Brochure](#) for Policy Makers was published in April 2020, as a kind contribution by the German government.
- Under the leadership of Takashi Hayashi (Japan), an addendum to the scope of work of the TFS was developed and approved for the data entry sheets for the GSI, in order to streamline indicator measurement and ensure data consistency across the set of indicators. Work has begun to prepare the sheets, in collaboration with the Secretariat and Annalisa Zezza (Italy), and with important feedback from other Partners who have implemented the GSI. A zero draft was circulated to all Partners and Observers in September 2020.

Facilitating GSI Implementation

Rapid implementation of GSI

Ms Miller also gave an overview of a proposal to provide a means to carry out a first, rapid implementation of the GSI that could provide a preliminary assessment of the sustainability performances of the bioenergy sector or a given bioenergy value chain in a short time frame. This could be used when resources (either financial, time or capacity) are not available for a more detailed implementation of the GSI but could provide the basis for a more efficient future measurement.

The visualisation of the results of such an implementation could incorporate three main aspects: the criticality of each indicator, as identified by national multi-stakeholder evaluation; an assessment of existing data and capacity to carry out a measurement, visualized by a ‘traffic light’ analogy; and the quantitative result of each indicator measurement, if it is available.

This type of approach has two main benefits, not only would countries gain a quick indication of the sustainability of the sector but would also obtain valuable information on what are the data and capacity gaps that need to be addressed in the future for critical indicators.

The rapid implementation could be facilitated not only by the data entry sheets currently being developed, by ensuring data collection is efficient, but also by a dedicated tool for speeding up both data collection and calculation.

GSI data entry sheets

[Takashi Hayashi](#) (Japan) gave an overview of the work so far carried out that led to the development of the zero draft of the data entry sheets for the GSI. The overall objective is to develop a data entry sheet that is adapted to all country contexts and their realities in terms of bioenergy pathways, and can be used by countries when measuring the GSI. The work so far carried out included identification of the data requirements for each indicator and the recognition of the common data across multiple indicators (building on the information on data consistency already presented in the Implementation Guide).

The zero draft of the data entry sheets includes two ‘basic data’ sections that include data that are common to more than one indicator: both data at the national level and data specific to a particular bioenergy pathway. So far, the data entry sheets have been developed with bioenergy produced from agricultural crops in mind, and one of the further activities will be to include other bioenergy value chains. Partners and Observers were asked to send their comments and feedback on the zero draft via email to the Secretariat using the specific template by 30 November 2020.

The work so far achieved was praised by Partners and Observers as it represents an important step towards facilitating the data collection for the GSI.

A discussion was held on the potential next steps for both the data entry sheets and the development of the above-mentioned tool. It was decided that the current sub-group of the TFS formed to work on the data entry sheets would be expanded to include both topics. In addition to the finalization of the data entry sheets work, first activities of the group under the new stream would be to: decide who will lead the group together with Takashi Hayashi (Japan); compose a scope of work; determine the form and purpose of the ‘rapid implementation’ (name to be determined); develop a firm proposal for its realization; and investigate potential funding sources. Partners and Observers are asked to express their wish to join and eventually co-lead this group by 30 November 2020. The first web conference of the group will be held in early December 2020.

Bioenergy as part of the broader bioeconomy

[Monga Mehlwana](#) (UNECA) shared some insights on the experience of bioeconomy opportunities in Africa. He addressed the fact that the market for bioenergy technologies is challenging despite the comparative advantages they hold for addressing the core SDGs, not only energy access. He asked several poignant questions about the historic and future role of bioenergy in Africa. He also highlighted some of the failures in terms of national policies, and international programmes and financing mechanisms to build a strong network to foster

innovation and to garner institutional support. He concluded that bioenergy as a concept and practice must evolve in order to remain competitive through its links with the circular bioeconomy.

[Uwe Fritsche](#) (IEA Bioenergy/Germany) also gave a presentation on the progress of the GBEP work on bioeconomy. In 2019, GBEP agreed to work on the sustainability governance of bioenergy within the broader bioeconomy and Mr. Fritsche gave a synopsis of the key issues in this area: identify pragmatic solutions to operationalize governance of sustainable biomass; gain trust in a sustainable bioeconomy, including bioenergy; and understand how international collaboration can provide a way forward. He then presented a work plan, which includes a GBEP and IEA Bioenergy working paper on “Sustainability Governance of bioenergy within the broader bioeconomy”; a further working paper on “GBEP Indicators for sustainable bioenergy and indicators for sustainable bioeconomy: Commonalities, Differences and Perspectives for Convergence”; and contribution to a tentative IEA Bioenergy/GBEP workshop on “Sustainability Governance of the Bioeconomy”.

GBEP was recognized to be the most appropriate initiative to drive international discussions on “Bioenergy in the context of the broader bioeconomy”. The proposed programme of work was supported by GBEP Partners and Observers, with the understanding that it is subject to confirmation of generous funds to be made available by Germany to the GBEP Secretariat to support the implementation of the agreed tasks.

Conclusions on next steps of the TFS

Facilitating the implementation of the GSI with data entry sheets and rapid tool

It was decided that the current sub-group of the TFS formed to work on the data entry sheets would be expanded to include the work on the ‘rapid implementation’ tool. Partners and Observers are asked to express their wish to join this group by 30 November 2020. The GBEP Secretariat also welcomes nominees to lead the group together with Takashi Hayashi (Japan) by 30 November 2020. The first web conference of the group will be held in early December 2020. In the meantime, the sub-group will also continue working on the finalization of the data entry sheets.

Bioenergy as part of the broader bioeconomy

It was decided to implement the work plan presented, including two working papers and one event, subject to confirmation of generous funds to allow the GBEP Secretariat to support the implementation of the agreed activities.