

A JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Sustainable bioenergy – vital to foster Africa’s food system

A Regional Forum called for a robust engagement of the private sector in bioenergy investment

18 March 2021 – Addis Ababa: - The 8th Bioenergy Week and Study Tour for Capacity Building forum concluded its three-day deliberations, calling for bold measures to boost investments in sustainable bioenergy supply value chain development, with a vigorous engagement of the private sector.

High-level speakers across governments, African Union, United Nations, leading policy influencers, innovators, the private sector and investors discussed key existing and emerging issues pertaining to bioenergy, aiming at fully unlocking the potential of renewable energies in Africa.

The discussion took place during a virtual forum, organized by the [Global Bioenergy Partnership \(GBEP\)](#), in collaboration with the [United Nations Economic Commission for Africa \(UNECA\)](#), the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) and the [African Energy Commission \(AFREC\)](#) of [the African Union Commission \(AUC\)](#), from 16 to 18 March 2021.

GBEP is an international initiative committed to bioenergy for sustainable development, climate change mitigation, and food and energy security. The 8th Bioenergy Week is the most recent in [a series of study tours](#) that have been organized by GBEP every year in a different region of the world since 2013.

Addressing the event, UNECA Executive Secretary, Vera Songwe, represented by William Lugemwa, Director of the Private Sector Development and Finance Division, noted that the renewable energy sector plays a fundamental role in the fight against the disastrous effects of COVID-19 and other crises through strategic investments in sustainable energy.

“Access to reliable and sustainable energy is a crucial need, and is even more important today for supporting essential services during the time of crises. Africa's private sector would be central in leading the much-needed ambitious energy transition,” she underscored.

In his address, FAO Subregional Coordinator for Eastern Africa and Representative to the AU and UNECA, David Phiri noted that as , the food systems, currently consuming 30 percent of the world’s energy, would gradually need to deliver more food with less and cleaner energy. Thus, sustainable energy sources are instrumental in achieving food security and better nutrition.

“Among the sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be reached by 2030, the world has committed to ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, under SDG7. It is worth mentioning that FAO takes SDG7 seriously, as it considers the key enabling role of energy in achieving food security and better nutrition, thus contributing to the attainment of the SDG2 on Zero Hunger. Moreover, energy prices influence food prices directly ,” he stressed.

The Ambassador of Brazil to Ethiopia and representative of the GBEP co-Chair, Luiz Eduardo de Aguiar Villarihno-Pedroso, recalled that Africa has put in place a tremendous effort to increase its energy supply to meet the needs of its growing populations and the economy.

“The government of Brazil will continue to support African nations to access affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy to enable them driver their socio-economic development as foreseen in the SDG7, where bioenergy plays an essential role in ensuring that this goal is achieved,” he added.

Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission, underscored the fact that using renewable energies are more cost-effective, viable and attractive option to tackling climate change and, thereby, improving agricultural outputs.

“AUC is collaborating with international agencies, and global and continental stakeholders to harness the abundant renewable energy resources of Africa to ensure reliable, sustainable and environmental-friendly energy to all African households and businesses,” Abou-Zeid added.

About bioenergy in Africa

Energy demand in Africa continues to grow owing to various factors, including population growth, economic development, industrialisation, climate change and trade. However, access to modern energy services is very low in the majority of African countries.

Bioenergy constitutes an essential source of energy for both households and industries. However, its current exploitation is mainly within unsustainable systems with negative impacts on lives and livelihoods, most notably in terms of health, environmental degradation and other social impacts such as gender disparity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought more urgency to address Africa’s energy access deficit. Without secure, reliable and access to quality power, the region’s health systems and related infrastructure cannot function, especially during a pandemic situation. African countries have the opportunity to build back better with resilient energy systems that not only address energy access and climate change but also spur economic growth and employment.

It is with this optimistic view that the forum was taking place to facilitate the development and modernisation of the bioenergy sector across Africa. In so doing, the forum served as a platform for strengthening cooperation between African member states and specialised institutions for increasing the provision of sustainable energy services. While demonstrating the state of global and regional policies and regulations, it displayed the status of the bioenergy sector in Africa, focusing on challenges, lessons learned and opportunities. It further discussed the role of the private sector in facilitating a viable bioenergy services and markets in Africa, as well as investments in new bioenergy technologies for local applications.

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