

# Green, Blue and Right

The FAO-OECD Expert Meeting on Greening the Economy with Agriculture (GEA) was held during 5-7 September 2011 in Paris, France

In his introductory remarks to the Expert Meeting on Greening the Economy with Agriculture (GEA), jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Organization for Economic Development (OECD), Alexander Muller, Assistant Director General, Natural Resources Management and Environment Department, FAO, pointed out that 'green agriculture' is the first step to a 'green economy', and that there is no conflict between sustainable development and the green economy. A green economy, he stressed, integrates the economic, environmental and social pillars of sustainable development.

Referring to the report of the Secretary General on the Objectives and Themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Muller said the main challenge facing humanity now is to sustain the process of poverty eradication and development while shifting gears. Developed countries should shrink environmental footprints as fast and as far as possible while sustaining human development achievements. Developing countries should continue to raise their people's living standards while containing increases in their footprints, and recognizing that poverty eradication remains a priority. Muller also briefly touched upon the 'blue economy', which refers to sustainable and equitable distribution of ocean resources.

Brice Lalonde, former French ambassador to the UN climate change negotiations, and currently the Executive Co-ordinator of Rio+20, said 50,000 people are expected to

participate in Rio+20, which would be a "round table of the planet". He stressed the importance of developing sustainable systems of production and consumption, and remunerating positive externalities. Rio+20, he pointed out, does not refer to 20 years after Rio but 20 years after 2012. By 2030, he wondered, could there be universal access to energy, could cities be made sustainable, could sustainable development be mainstreamed into UN programmes, and could the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) be further strengthened?

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To a question from the representative of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) on why agriculture is combined with forestry and fisheries, and why the blue economy is not highlighted along with the green economy, Muller clarified that forestry and agriculture are inter-linked, although fisheries are different. The FAO approach to the green economy is to see different sectors in an inter-related manner, he said.

## Green economy

Chang-Gil Kim of South Korea said while the 'green economy' focuses more on poverty eradication, 'green growth' focuses on growth in developed countries. The challenge is how to integrate both, he added.

*This article is by **Sebastian Mathew** (sebastian1957@gmail.com), Programme Adviser, ICSF*

Marita Wiggerthale, the representative of OXFAM Germany, said the approach to the green economy should be a rights-based approach. What vulnerable groups think of issues related to access to land and water should be considered. The agro-ecosystem should look at soil, water and biodiversity. Agro-business-led models should not be considered. The model of development itself has to change if we talk about the green economy, she said.

Asad Naqvi of UNEP said the green economy is not a winner for all, and it is important to come to terms with the limits of ecology. Unlike the FAO approach, the UNEP approach to the green economy is to look at different sectors separately. Agriculture was the most multifunctional of all sectors, he said, adding that 90 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) contribution of the poor comes from agriculture.

There is no trickle-down of development benefits to the poor, he said. In China, agriculture creates more pollution in waters than industry. It is important to improve productivity of small-scale farms. Naqvi highlighted how four seed companies control 50 per cent of the global commercial seed market, how 10 corporations control 82 per cent of the pesticide business and how 10 corporations control 28 per cent of the global market for processed food.

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Unrich Hoffmann of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) pointed out how agriculture contributes between 44 to 57 per cent of emissions of greenhouse gases (methane and nitrous oxide). He highlighted the importance of a paradigm shift and the need to protect grasslands for terrestrial carbon sequestration. In this context,

he stressed the importance of conserving soil.

Myrna Cunningham, Chair, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), said 36 per cent of land area in Nicaragua has been under self-governance since 1990. Culture is a fundamental aspect of development, she said, pointing out the importance of collective rights and self-governance over land, territories and resources. Cunningham said respect for traditions, ancestors and for future generations is important. Food sovereignty is important, she added, especially in regard to how food is produced and distributed. In addition, ensuring equitable access, community control over land, water, seed, fish, and so on, is also important. Respect for human rights, including indigenous rights, is equally important. Cunningham pointed to three incentives that could help the move towards a green economy: (i) valuation of traditional knowledge; (ii) respect for human rights, in particular collective human rights, especially legal security to keep territory, the ability to be informal and to be consulted in decisions; and (iii) respect and valuation of the role of women and inter-generational dialogue.

Responding to the FAO background paper, "Food Availability and Natural Resource Use in a Green Economy Context", ICSF welcomed the importance given to small-scale fisheries (SSF) as a low-input system, and the observation that future growth in fish production should come from enhanced SSF that do not harm ecosystem health, and that respect ecological limits.

ICSF further welcomed the importance attached to capacity and effort reduction, and the observation that bottom trawling is destructive and a high external input system. ICSF supported the proscription of destructive and indiscriminate fishing methods.

### Aquaculture

The scarcity scenario predicted for fish resources may not apply

to aquaculture, ICSF pointed out, stressing the importance of promoting herbivorous species in aquaculture that are either free of—or minimally dependent on—fishmeal, unlike carnivorous species such as salmon that are heavily dependent on fishmeal as feed. ICSF highlighted the role that small indigenous fish species can play in nutritional security.

While supporting the role of marine reserves in reversing overfishing pressures and habitat destruction, ICSF said such reserves, instead of being fully protected as proposed, should permit inclusive, low-impact small-scale fisheries and sustainable use of marine living resources.

ICSF fully supported the human-rights approach as proposed by Myrna, and the need to treat traditional knowledge and respect for human rights as incentives for the green economy. ICSF proposed that subsidies to adopt environment-friendly fishing methods and biodegradable gear as well as to introduce fuel-efficient marine engines to propel fishing vessels be considered as incentives for a green economy.

Svetlana Boinceau of the International Union of Food Workers (IUF) said there are about 1.3 bn people employed in agriculture who account for half the global labour force. There are 450 mn wage workers in agriculture, half of them women. The wage workers include 60 per cent of the global population of 132 mn child labourers (children in the age group of 5 to 14 years). Along with construction and mining, agriculture is one of the three most dangerous occupations in the world, she said. There are about 170,000 work-related deaths in agriculture every year, of which 40,000 are singularly due to handling pesticides. Three to four mn workers are exposed to poison. Workers are twice as likely to die in agriculture than in any other sector, Boinceau said. Only 14 countries have so far ratified the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001. The right to a living wage should be protected under the green economy, she said.

Gaetan Valoqueren, Senior Adviser to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, said it is important to protect the right to food under the green economy, especially the institutional dimensions of the right to food. He said the FAO document should provide concrete examples of countries that have made progress in implementing the right to food. In this context, he mentioned the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, and the proposed National Food Security Act as good examples from India. Agrarian reforms are important in the context of ensuring access to land and right to land, he said. Legal security of tenure is important; in this context, anti-eviction laws should be a priority. There should be demarcation of land and territory of indigenous peoples. The consequences of the implementation of the right to food approach should be clarified, he said.

Responding to the background paper “Decent Rural Livelihoods and Rights in a Green Economy and Environment”, ICSF pointed out how it does not address the need for strengthening institutions and governance in relation to common-pool resources such as fisheries. ICSF sought greater recognition of collective rights in the management of fisheries such as community-based fisheries management regimes, and cautioned against privatization of fishery resources through the introduction of the individual transferable quota (ITQ) system, as in some marine fisheries.

Teava Iro of the Titikaveka Growers’ Association, Cook Islands, said people eat less if they eat more nutritious food. Scientists should look at the prospects of reducing the output of low-nutritious food and of increasing the output of high-nutritious food, he said.

### Indigenous people

Harriet Kuhnlein, Nutritionist at the Centre for Indigenous Peoples’ Nutrition and Environment, McGill University, Canada, said how Ooligan fish, important in the diet of



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indigenous people of British Columbia as a source of vitamins A and D when fermented, was destroyed by bottom trawling when Ooligan bycatch was discarded. Local food content in diet was as high as 90 per cent in India, as against 20 percent in Germany, Kuhnlein said. She highlighted the importance of consuming less processed food, and less of long-distance food, and more of local food. She pointed out how leftover lunch is thrown away in schools all over the world and how schools should reduce, recycle and compost plate waste. She sought the labelling of food for carbon footprint.

Commenting on the background paper, “Improving Food Systems for Sustainable Diets in a Green Economy”, ICSF drew attention to several issues. Firstly, the significance of greater recognition of small indigenous freshwater fish species like mola (*Amblypharyngodon mola*) in addressing micronutrient malnutrition was raised. Conserving biodiversity was highlighted, especially to protect populations of micronutrient-dense small indigenous species like mola in the wild. The importance of recognizing and documenting traditional knowledge in regard to nutritional and therapeutic use of traditional food was highlighted.

Secondly, the need to recognize quality associated with the place of origin was raised in regard to small-scale fisheries products. Phu Quoc fish sauce from an island in Vietnam was given as an example where geographical indication (GI) appellation has benefited a product based on anchovy catch from small-scale fisheries.

Thirdly, ICSF pointed out how an ecolabelling scheme run by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) hardly helps small-scale fisheries in developing countries, and how only one small-scale fishery from a non-OECD country has benefited so far from the 15-year old MSC ecolabel. ICSF sought greater recognition of sustainable fishing methods and low-carbon-footprint fishing techniques to act as incentives, along with ecolabelling schemes

that basically reward well-managed fisheries.

Fourthly, ICSF sought to factor in reducing food miles, especially in relation to distant-water fishing operations and in relation to transoceanic multiple movements of high-value fish such as bluefin tuna for *sashimi* and *sushi*.

In the Concluding Session, Nadia Scialabba of FAO said the organization plans to treat agriculture, forestry and fisheries together in the background papers. The revised version incorporating comments from this Meeting, will be submitted to the FAO Council's 143rd Session in November-December 2011, and to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) by 1 November 2011. The papers would be made less prescriptive, and more technical. The FAO Council will be expected to come up with policy recommendations, Scialabba said. Trade-offs will be minimized and synergy will be promoted. The gender dimension will be strengthened. The focus of the papers will be on developing countries. Scialabba also mentioned recent inputs that FAO has made to the blue economy initiative at the 14th Round Table Meeting for Pacific Islands Countries in Wellington, New Zealand, during 22 to 26 August 2011. ICSF, along with the African Union, further reiterated the importance of sufficiently recognizing the role of fisheries in the background documents. 

#### For more

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**FAO/OECD Expert Meeting on  
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 Agriculture, Paris, France**

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