

Global Bioenergy Partnership: working together for sustainable development

The Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) is an international initiative established in 2006 to implement the commitments taken by the G8 in the 2005 Gleneagles Plan of Action to support „biomass and biofuels deployment, particularly in developing countries where biomass' use is prevalent“. It received support from the G20 Ministers of Agriculture in the Paris Action Plan (June 2011) as well as from the G20 Leaders in the 2013 G20 Saint Petersburg Declaration. At present, GBEP brings together 37 Partners and 39 Observers from governments, international organisations as well as private and civil society stakeholders in a joint commitment to advance bioenergy for sustainable development, climate change mitigation and food and energy security.

■ The GBEP sustainability indicators for bioenergy

The production and use of bioenergy is growing in many parts of the world as countries seek to diversify their energy sources in a manner that helps promote sustainable development. Modern bioenergy can provide multiple benefits, including promoting rural economic development, increasing household income, mitigating climate change and providing access to modern energy services. On the other hand, bioenergy can also be associated with challenges including biodiversity loss, deforestation and additional pressure on water resources and land. GBEP has developed a set of 24 voluntary, science-based sustainability indicators with the aim to guide analysis of

bioenergy at the domestic level and to inform decision-making facilitating the sustainable development of bioenergy. “The Global Bioenergy Partnership Sustainability Indicators for Bioenergy“ report, published in December 2011, provides an invaluable resource in helping countries to assess and develop sustainable production and use of bioenergy.

In order to establish the feasibility of these indicators and enhance their practicality as a tool to support policy-making towards sustainable development of bioenergy, they are being tested in several countries. To mention a few examples, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is implementing the indicators in Colombia and Indonesia with the support of the Government of Germany. The project aims to assess and enhance the capacity of the two countries to measure the GBEP indicators and use them to inform bioenergy policy-making and other stakeholders in the countries towards a sustainable development of bioenergy. The project, which is coming to an end this September, also provides lessons about how to apply the indicators as a tool for sustainable development and how to enhance their practicality.

In 2012, a pilot study was developed by the Ghanaian Government with the support of the Dutch Government. The study provided very useful information about the country's data availability and quality in relation to the measurement of the indicators. In addition, many other countries have implement-

ed, are implementing or have committed to implement the GBEP indicators.

■ Capacity building activities

GBEP is currently working on capacity building activities and projects for sustainable bioenergy, including through the implementation of its sustainability indicators and methodological framework on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These activities aim at raising awareness of the potential benefits of sustainable modern bioenergy through multiple means, including workshops, study tours and other ways to present sustainable practices and assess resources. In this context, GBEP focused on the ECOWAS region and organised, inter alia, a Regional Bioenergy Forum in Bamako/Mali in 2012, to initiate a regional dialogue and peer-to-peer learning to support ECOWAS Member States in developing the ECOWAS Bioenergy Strategy, which was adopted by the ECOWAS Ministers of Energy in October 2012. In the past two years, the Partnership has also organised two Bioenergy Weeks, one in Brazil and one in Mozambique, consisting of training sessions on specific themes related to sustainable bioenergy, where effective policy frameworks were discussed, taking into account the GBEP work on sustainability indicators. These weeks allowed a fruitful discussion among public and private actors about the main opportunities and challenges of bioenergy production and use in both Latin America and Africa.

■ The way forward

A voluntary partnership of developed and developing countries and international organisations such as GBEP is an effective and innovative vehicle for co-ordinated progress towards low-carbon, sustainable development. The Partnership will continue to promote global high-level policy dialogue on bioenergy and facilitate international co-operation on modern bioenergy in a way to achieve the opportunities and face the challenges it brings.

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