

**FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

GENEVA, 1-2 December 2009

Agenda item 10. Cross-cutting issues, interlinkages and implementation of CSD-17 decisions

Keynote address by the United States of America¹



United States Department of Agriculture

Summary

The Commission on Sustainable Development in its 17th meeting, May 4-17, 2009, agreed on a number of important measures to boost agricultural productivity, improve soil quality and ensure the safety and nutritional quality of food, in ways that are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. It was also recognized that a comprehensive approach integrating post-harvest storage and processing, infrastructure for marketing and distribution and capacity building at all levels and stages is of high priority. CSD-17 recognized the importance of farmers from farms of all sizes, farm workers, female and male, and rural communities. As many will recall, the negotiated agriculture text from CSD-17 called for measures to (a) enhance agriculture production, productivity and sustainability; to (b) create a strong enabling environment for sustainable agriculture; to (c) manage sustainably competing uses of water and land resources; to (d) develop sustainable agricultural value chains and improve farmers' and agro-industry enterprises access to and participation in markets; and to (e) provide secure access to food and social safety nets.

Throughout the CSD 16-17 cycle, the United States emphasized three critical contributors to sustainable development. We highlighted the role of research and education in discovering ways to address problems and to prepare the next generation. We also focused on the importance of empowering people and communities so they can work together to meet current and future demands. And we clearly acknowledged that communication and information technologies powerfully facilitate progress. Undergirding all three of these factors is our commitment to ensuring that women fully participate in all that we do. At this time, I will report on some of the follow-up activities undertaken by the United States and its partners to address the recommendations of the CSD-17 Agriculture Report.

Sustainable Agriculture

By way of background, agriculture and forestry are a major U.S. industry, providing significant economic benefits from both domestic and export sales. The value of agricultural production is concentrated in a few U.S. regions: the Midwest, the Mississippi Delta, California, and the Atlantic Coast. In addition, agriculturalists and foresters manage extensive acreage in the United States and,

¹ The text is presented as received from the author.

thus, exert significant impacts -- both positive and negative -- on the natural environment and on communities. For example, non-Federal agricultural and forest lands occupy 1.4 billion acres or nearly 70 percent of the contiguous United States. U.S. land types include forests (28 percent), croplands (20 percent), urban, suburban and rural residential areas (6 percent), miscellaneous other uses (7 percent), and special uses -- primarily parks and wildlife areas (13 percent). (See <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/sb973.pdf>)

In addition to supporting the agriculture and forest sectors, farms and forests also provide a range of ecosystem services, including wildlife habitat and corridors, that support healthy wildlife populations, filter groundwater supplies, regulate surface water flows, sequester carbon, and provide open space and scenic vistas that improve quality of life for people. Increasingly, methods of valuing and accounting for ecosystem services associated with landscapes and their management are being developed and implemented (see <http://www.fs.fed.us/ecosystemservices>).

U.S. agriculture has continued to increase in productivity so that demands of a growing global population for food, fiber, and, more recently, biofuels, may be met without bringing new lands into production and without increasing most agricultural inputs. At the same time, farming and ranching may include activities that can have negative environmental consequences. Crop and animal production can affect water and air quality, water flows, and wildlife habitat. Fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides and livestock waste can enter ground and surface water, adversely affecting water quality. Overgrazing and cropping fragile lands can increase particulate matter in the air. The conversion of grasslands to cropland can increase soil erosion and reduce wildlife cover” (see “Conservation and the Environment”, 2007 Farm Bill Theme Papers, USDA -- <http://www.usda.gov/documents/FarmBill07consenv.pdf>).

USDA promotes sustainable development related to agriculture, forestry, and communities by working with farmers and forest managers of all sizes, organizations, individuals, and state, local and tribal governments to:

- Emphasize farm and forest management and practices that are profitable, ecologically sound, and good for communities.
- Conserve important farm-, range-, and forest lands and protect them from conversion.
- Provide incentives and know-how to keep environmentally sensitive farmland covered with grasses and trees.
- Help citizens care for their neighborhood gardens, community trees and forests, and other green spaces.
- Help farmers get the most value for their products through farmers markets, direct marketing techniques, and organic market expansion, along with export and other markets.
- Connect small business owners -- including farmers -- to the latest technologies and resources.
- Foster start-up of micro- and small enterprises through grants and loans.
- Work with communities to identify options and plan their futures.
- Create regional partnerships to connect urban and rural consumers and producers.

- Target information and education to families, consumers, ranchers, woodlot owners, and local government officials through a national network of extension agents.
- Link rural communities across long distances to vital services using the latest technologies.
- Reduce hunger; improve nutrition and food quality, and build community food systems, linking local farmers and markets.

Selected USDA Sustainability and Stewardship Programs and Activities

- *USDA Council for Sustainable Development* -- facilitates inter-agency collaboration on the economic, environmental and social sustainability of food, fiber, agricultural, forest, and range systems. Provides a Departmental platform to discuss vital issues, set priorities, and share best practices. (See <http://www.usda.gov/oce/sustainable>.)
- *Science for Sustainability Research, Education and Extension:*

Research for Agricultural Systems and Sustainability:

http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/programs/programs.htm?NP_CODE=207

http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/programs/programs.htm?NP_CODE=305

<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1134>

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/ceap> -- Conservation Effects Assessment Project is a [multi-agency](#) effort to quantify the environmental benefits of conservation practices used by private landowners participating in selected USDA conservation programs. The project consists of three components:

- (1) [National Assessment](#) - Providing national summary estimates of conservation practice benefits and assessing the potential for USDA conservation programs to meet the nation's environmental and conservation goals. [Cropland](#), [wetlands](#), [wildlife](#), and [grazing lands](#) will be assessed.
- (2) [Watershed Assessment Studies](#) - Basic research on conservation practices in selected watersheds nationwide to provide a framework for evaluating and improving performance of national assessment models.
- (3) [Bibliographies and Literature Reviews](#) - Current literature on conservation programs. Four literature reviews are being developed that will document what is known and not known about the environmental benefits of conservation practices and programs for cropland, fish and wildlife, wetlands, and grazing lands.

(See <http://www.ars.usda.gov/pandp/locations.htm?modecode=02-02-00-00>.)

- *Sustainable Agriculture Information Resources:*
http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index
<http://attra.ncat.org>
- *Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)* program has helped advance farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound, and good for communities through a nationwide research and education grants program. SARE administers a competitive grants program and publishes a variety of print and electronic resources for farmers, agricultural educators, and consumers. (See <http://www.sare.org>.)

- *National Multi-stakeholder Roundtables* on forests, ranges, minerals, and water:
<http://www.sustainableforests.net>
<http://sustainablelandlands.warnercnr.colcstate.edu>
<http://www.unr.edu/mines/smr>
<http://acwi.gov/swrr>
- *Biobased Products Policy* to increase utilization of biobased renewable products by USDA and throughout the Federal Government by designation of eligible products:
<http://www.usda.gov/procurement/biobased/index.htm>
http://www.usda.gov/procurement/programs/biobased/biobased_finalrule.pdf
http://www.usda.gov/procurement/programs/biobased/awarenessbrochure_may2006.pdf
- *Farm and Forestland Conservation Programs* to reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, protect farm and forest lands from conversion, and respond to forest health threats: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs>
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject-copr&topic=crp>
<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf>
- *Integrated Pest Management (IPM)* reduces use of agricultural pesticides:
<http://www.ipmcenters.org>
http://ars.usda.gov/research/programs/programs.htm?NP_CODE=304
<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/fundview.cfm?fonum=1114>
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nutrient.html>
- *Agroforestry*. USDA's National Agroforestry Center accelerates application of agroforestry through a national network of partners. The network conducts research, develops technologies and tools, coordinates demonstrations and training, and provides useful information to natural resource professionals. One of its focus areas includes tree planting -- the right trees planted in the right places for the right reasons to add value to land-use systems. The Center's Working Trees theme promotes development of sustainable agriculture and communities. (See <http://www.unl.edu/nac>.)
- *Sustainable Forestry*. Certification programs were established to coordinate development of forest management standards for different bioregions, certify sustainable forest management practices, prevent illegal logging, and communicate these practices to consumers and influence their purchase decisions. Supporting organizations include the Forest Stewardship Council (<http://www.fscus.org>), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (<http://www.sfiprogram.org>), Rainforest Action Network (<http://ran.org>), and World Wildlife Fund ([http://www.panda.org/what we do/footprint/forestry](http://www.panda.org/what_we_do/footprint/forestry)).
- *National Network of Sustainable Living Education*, U.S. Cooperative Extension System
http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/nre/in_focus/susdev_if_living.html

The National Network for Sustainable Living Education (NNSLE) was formed by Extension in 2004 to exchange information, develop core curricula, and cohesively integrate existing natural resource programming with sustainable living education. Currently, NNSLE is a coalition of USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and 70+ faculty at 28 land-grant universities. The NNSLE members published a public guide to Living Sustainably <http://www.cof.orst.edu/cof/extended/sustain/>, developed and taught training modules, published in refereed professional journals, created a searchable database of Extension sustainability materials

<http://www.anrep.org/tools>, outlined guidelines for a green camps certification, and offered webinars on climate change education. Several new products are under development: 1) Walk Our Talk: What does sustainable living look like in the county Extension workplace?; 2) Low Carbon Neighbor--a multi-week workshop designed to support small, cohesive neighborhood or workplace groups wanting to explore life choices; 3) On-line Living Sustainably Course; 4) Climate Change Guide; and 5) eXtension Community of Practice on Sustainable Living.

Global Partnership on Nutrient Management

The first meeting of the partners of the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management was held in The Hague on October 22-23, 2009, hosted by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (VROM), of the Government of the Netherlands. It was a productive and promising first meeting where the global landscape of nutrient issues, practices and research across the world's regions was discussed. Also agreed was a draft Action Plan for the Partnership along with a number of initiatives for the Partnership to foster in the short term. A steering committee was established to give structure and guidance, and opportunities identified for regional partnership meetings on the way to a full meeting of partners in Delhi in December 2010. The challenge will be to move from establishing a web based platform as an effective information tool – the immediate focus of activity – to using the Partnership to broker and foster concrete interventions and capacity building, including strengthened assessment. The meeting fostered an emerging 'community of nutrient stakeholders'. Interventions and activity will need to be complementary and focused going forward taking advantage of the role and expertise of key agencies and organizations in the nutrient field.

The U.S. Government and the Rome Food Summit

The United States joined others in adopting the Summit declaration. This represents a global consensus on a new approach to alleviating hunger and under-nutrition by harnessing the tremendous potential of agriculture to drive economic growth—entirely consistent with CSD-16-17. At L'Aquila the United States joined the G-8 in support of five principles for sustainable agricultural development. Now, for the first time, the entire membership of the UN has affirmed these basic principles—the Five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security – that will shape and drive our actions for years to come.

The international community now shifts its focus to support country-led plans that channel resources to well-designed and results-based programs and partnerships. This approach to poverty and hunger involves both direct immediate action and medium and long term agriculture development. We've agreed that our efforts must be as comprehensive as the problems are complex, encompassing the entire range of agricultural activities—from lab to farm to market to table. Within this comprehensive approach we must give special attention to the needs of smallholder farmers, fisherfolk, and pastoralists, and the ultra-poor. In all our efforts we must give particular attention to women because we recognize that women feed the world.

As part of this comprehensive approach, our efforts must also continue to be responsive to emergencies and crisis situations, such as the one now threatening food security in the Horn of

Africa. Humanitarian assistance, while addressing the immediate impacts of hunger, must also lay the foundations for longer-term solutions to food insecurity by protecting agricultural livelihoods, assets and investments that might otherwise be lost.

Such a comprehensive model already exists at the regional level. In 2003, African leaders made an historic pledge to increase their own investments in food security and agriculture-led growth through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program—or, CAADP. By asserting responsibility for their own development needs, the leaders of Africa helped to launch a new model in which development is a shared commitment based on the needs of the people rather than the capabilities of donors. Recently, in Abuja, the USG and others committed to what amounts to a code of conduct in support of the implementation of CAADP. This code will help to ensure that our global commitments translate into *coordinated, sustained investments in country-owned agriculture and food security plans* within African countries and sub-regions.

In the Summit declaration, we also recognize that partnering with multilateral institutions, including a reformed FAO and a revitalized Committee on World Food Security will help provide strategic coordination and support at national, regional and global levels. The U.S. will invest in--and encourage others to contribute to--multilateral institutions that support agriculture-led economic growth.

For example, G20 leaders called for the establishment of a multi-donor trust fund—the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program—at their September Summit in Pittsburgh. The trust fund will provide critical financing for investments in country-led strategies and will draw on the expertise of institutions such as the World Bank, WFP, FAO, the African Development Bank, and IFAD. We look forward to working with potential recipient countries, development partners and civil society to operationalize the fund in the near future.

Lastly, we underscore the fact that the Declaration’s shifts in focus and action are enduring. We—both donor and developing countries—commit ourselves to timely and sustained action, and welcome the declaration’s emphasis on mutual accountability.

The Obama Administration’s response to global hunger and food insecurity wholeheartedly embraces the principles contained in the Summit resolution we have adopted in Rome, while at the same time, maintains our commitment to emergency food assistance.

In addition to maintaining the U.S. commitment to emergency and humanitarian aid, the United States stands behind our pledge and we will invest \$3.5 billion of the \$22 billion committed by donors at L’Aquila and Pittsburgh, to catalyze agriculture-led economic growth in an environmentally sustainable fashion.

Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages for Sustainable Development, Vibrant Markets, and Food Security

At CSD-17, the USG and others sponsored enhanced emphasis on links between countrysides and their communities. On October 29, the USDA and Civil Society and International Organization partners held a seminar on this topic with speakers from FAO and UN Habitat along with Deputy

Secretary of Agriculture Merrigan and others. At this meeting, interests in farm to school programs, green markets, and food policy advisory councils integrating rural, peri-urban and urban interests arose. Highlighting ecosystem benefits, Secretary Vilsack and NYC Mayor Bloomberg recently announced a \$2 million federal grant to create green jobs as part of the Million Trees NYC Campaign as urban forests and horticulture projects are undertaken. We invite others to acknowledge the important environmental, social and economic connections between rural and urban consumers, producers and citizens.

Carol Kramer-LeBlanc
Director for Sustainable Development
Office of the Chief Economist
U.S. Department of Agriculture