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Special Event – concept note

Natural resource management for food security in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda: empowering small scale food producers and food insecure communities to be agents of change

Friday 11th October

9.30-12:30

Plenary

Purpose

The importance of the linkages between the environment and food security from a people-centred perspective was widely discussed at Rio+20, while the linkages between the environment, poverty and food security are currently being debated as part of the Post-2015 process. The purpose of the Special Event is to raise awareness of the key role that rural communities, and especially smallholder farmers, can play in the sustainable management of natural resources that are critical for global food security, and how this role can be supported through the Post-2015 agenda.

The event will promote a better understanding of the profound synergies and potential trade-offs between food security and sustainable natural resource management, taking into consideration the impact of climate change. It will also underline the need to empower small scale food producers and food insecure communities to act as agents of change in building sustainable and resilient food systems. The Special Event will therefore contribute to these issues being more thoroughly addressed in discussions shaping the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Rationale

Sustainable natural resource management, healthy ecosystems and food security are closely interconnected. Effective management of natural resources and healthy and resilient ecosystems are essential to ensure long-term food security. Healthy ecosystems provide key services to agriculture, such as soil formation and fertility, erosion control, nutrient cycling, genetic materials and pollination. Agricultural ecosystems, including oceans, forests and pasturelands, can generate essential products and services such as biodiversity conservation, land, water and climate regulation, while at the same time providing income and food.

Today, many of the actors managing natural resources and ecosystems are poor and reside in already degraded natural environments, whose fragility increases their exposure to shocks. Extreme poverty and vulnerability can lead to unsustainable patterns of natural resource use, further accelerating environmental degradation and increasing vulnerability. Degradation of natural ecosystems, land and soils, water stress, extinction rates, and declines in wild fish populations are an increasingly important threat to food security across rural communities.

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Population groups living in such environments typically include smallholders, pastoralists, forest communities, indigenous peoples, and artisanal fisherfolk. There is a profound connection between the capabilities and resilience of these groups as food producers and consumers, and as managers of natural resources and ecosystems. In many contexts, small scale food producers and managers of natural resources lack the knowledge, market access, institutional and policy space to effectively play their roles. Climate change multiplies these challenges.

Enabling small scale food producers, as well as food insecure communities to be agents of positive change in ecosystem management, requires renewed policy attention and operational and programmatic support.

Addressing the nexus of environmental and food security issues requires a comprehensive policy and programme approach across sectors and stakeholders. Such an approach entails evidence-based policies grounded in better vulnerability assessments, trend forecasting, targets, indicators, data and analysis. Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture, land degradation and desertification, biodiversity loss and improve water management include reduced food losses and waste and more efficient and better agronomic practices and technologies. Social protection policies and programmes and preparedness for natural disasters have critical roles to play. Cross-sectoral coordination and enhanced capacities of concerned institutions and stakeholders are a precondition for this agenda.

Format

The Special Event will be a multi-stakeholder facilitated discussion and will provide CFS stakeholders with the opportunity to discuss the following guiding questions:

- What are the main policy and institutional success factors, as well as possible obstacles, to strengthening the capabilities and resilience of small producers and other vulnerable resource managers in managing ecosystems?
- What partnership models have potential to enhance integrated governance of the environment and food systems, particularly in fragile environments?
- What are possible entry points in the Post-2015/Sustainable Development Goals processes for CFS stakeholders to contribute to the discussions shaping the Post-2015 Development Agenda?

Panelists representing different CFS constituencies will provide their perspectives on these guiding questions (30-45 minutes total). This will be followed by a dynamic facilitated multi-stakeholder discussion (2 hours) and a wrap-up with key conclusions (15 minutes). The agenda and list of panelists will be further developed in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders.

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in the six official FAO languages.