



Stability of Food Security in a Green Economy Environment, FAO WD 3

FAO/OECD Expert meeting on Greening the economy with agriculture, Sept 5-7, 2011, Paris
OECD Headquarter

Comments by Thomas Kützemeier, www.mcongressconsult.de

General:

Congratulations on the document which is very concise and describes processes taking into account relevant information from a number of sources. I would support most of the observations. The FAO is an international technical body that is striving for consensus and therefore some of the issues are mentioned in a rather reluctant manner. However, the main problems are obviously on the political level. As an independent consultant, I take the freedom to raise some issues more directly:

Regrettably, there is a lack of political willingness to adapt national policies dramatically because politicians are elected for a limited time only and want to be re-elected. During such short time you will want to make sure that the economy runs successfully and it will be very difficult to modify policies in regard to biofuels with all their serious impact on food markets and prices.

With a view to the five action areas in the core document I would like to recommend prioritization on more sustainable policies since biofuels are bad investment in terms of fighting climate change. However, the economic reasoning is very strong and will remain strong as long as biofuels are subsidized. It is the same story with palm oil as referred to in para 58 on the production of biodiesel in Malaysia. To my view, the development of second generation biofuels should be considered as the document recommends. Nevertheless, the competition for land and water will continue. The 2^o Limit will not be achieved as science tells us. Therefore a complete system change becomes not only an option but a inevitable requirement.

Para 24 talks about the problems women in developing countries are facing. No recommendations are suggested. To my knowledge micro-credits are an instrument that works successfully in India and Bangladesh and should therefore be considered. As the farmer from Malawi stated during the BIAC luncheon, women there are lacking capital. Micro-credits may be part of the solution.

Para 35 states that instability in food systems can lead to unsustainable use of natural resources. Industrial Fishing all over the world tends to over-exploit fish stocks. We all know the reasons. It is not only developing countries, it is mostly developed countries and the driving force is purely economic. The only way out is setting mandatory and controlled quotas including a sanction system.

Box 1 describes the Resilience Index by Livelihood Strategy Groups in Kenya. I think what is really important is the intent to empower communities to effectively manage their own development. In that area in Kenya, a lot of things have been done that are partly relatively simple such as breeding of hybrid poultry with more weight than traditional breeds or the development of new products like jams from paw-paw which can be sold on local markets at profitable prices.

In para 44 the need is described to make food systems more resilient against extreme weather events like droughts or floods. But it is also mentioned that agriculture is partly directly and indirectly responsible for climate change because of deforestation, degradation and land use changes.

The strategy is simple, who restores forests, stabilizes all other eco-systems. The goal however is challenging.

Under para 46 the document talks about the loss of land and water. I think we have to think more intensely about the desalination of sea water. Water scarcity will force us to invest in such technologies.

Para 81 refers to potential advantages for the northern hemisphere in regard to food production and show doubts about the increase in trade. But in fact that will happen; we do already grow foods like strawberries in areas that were much too cold over the past decades. So this trade will happen inevitably and we have to face the risks of such new trade opportunities.

On the other hand actual pictures on all media demonstrate the need to change systems radically: Sacks of grain, peanut butter snacks and other food staples meant for starving Somalis are being stolen and sold in markets, an Associated Press investigation has found, raising concerns that thieving businessmen are undermining international famine relief efforts in this nearly lawless country.

So it is obvious that securing food means not only food aid measures in particular emergency situations but also military supervision of distribution to the intended recipients.

Another important issue is described in para 98 in regard to dumping of subsidized foods by developed countries in developing countries. That regularly kills the small efforts of non-subsidized farmers in poor countries.

Para 106 mentions the use of agroforestry systems without describing the issue very thoroughly. However, farmers in Niger re-greened 5 m hectares of agroforest that had been completely transformed into desert land. The same happened in Burkina Faso to 160.000 ha and in Mali to 450.000 ha. This regreening activity was initiated by FAO.

<http://www.africa-regreening.blogspot.com/>

These efforts and the Sahel success story demonstrate how degraded land can be reclaimed by agroforestry and other sustainable practices. This has also been recognized by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon upon the World Desertification Day on June 17.

From the European point of view. Africa seems to be far away but globalization makes the world a village and fighting climate change is a global task. It can be argued that agroforestry represents the agriculture of the future as it produces "multiple wins": enhancing food security, adapting to climate change, improving drought resilience, sequestering carbon, increasing

biodiversity, etc. It is interesting to note that agroforestry systems are also found in Europe. For instance in Spain and Portugal millions of hectares are covered since centuries by old agroforestry systems, which continue to be maintained.

On the invitation of the German Federal Minister of the Environment, Norbert Röttgen and the President of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Ashok Khosla, ministers and high-level representatives of industry and civil society attended the "Bonn Challenge Conference on forests, climate change and biodiversity" Sept. 2, 2011 to discuss the global restoration of forests. The conference set itself the goal of restoring 150 million hectares of lost and degraded forests by 2020 with globally concerted action.

To my view, these adorable two approaches should be combined where found appropriate.

Box Nr 5 describes Biogas programs which may be an interesting idea. However, I found safety warnings from engineers in the Internet because small-scale biogas digesters seem to be an example of immature technology: these digesters may pose people at risk due to uncontrollable high pressure. FAO should consider carefully before making recommendations.

Having regard to futures and other monetary instruments it seems that these options need to be carefully investigated. They may work but recent past has seen cases where futures did not work, e.g. in the area of milk. One problem may be the fact that there is no real move of goods. But obviously, the idea of more transparency in terms of "cheapest to deliver" sources as described under para 121 is key to market shortfalls for rice and other commodities.

Finally, Research and Technology must be linked to farmers traditional knowledge. That is vital as has been demonstrated in many cases. There are new technologies available to-date from modern biotechnology, nanotechnology and others. Options that emerge need to be scrutinized carefully. Not every option will turn out to be a sustainable success on the long run.

Th.kuetzemeier@mcongressconsult.de

Mcongressconsult GmbH

In der Wehrhecke 30

53125 Bonn

Germany

Phone +49.228.20949924

Cell-phone +49.172.8666455