



**UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
DIVISION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Summary Report of  
Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Implementing Sustainable Development**

1 February 2010, New York

**Background**

1. The Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized a Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Implementing Sustainable Development on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.
2. This dialogue was noteworthy for two reasons: (i) it was the first time that such a dialogue was organized outside the regular session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD); and (ii) in addition to the stakeholders who normally participate in the formal CSD sessions, many other implementing partners contributed to the discussions and shared their experiences with regard to implementation of CSD decisions.
3. A key objective of this dialogue was to provide further impetus to the implementation of CSD-17 decisions, since progress in agriculture sector is vital to achieving many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This involved raising awareness about innovative methods and tools for strengthening farmers' capacities; promoting the need to develop partnerships and a fast-track strategy for the scaling up of successful practices.
4. The dialogue was organized in two sessions. In the first session, governments and various implementing partners informed the meeting of policies and actions being implemented by them within the framework provided by CSD-17 decisions. The focus of the second session was on strengthening international cooperation and partnerships for implementation of the CSD-17 decisions.

**Summary of Discussion**

5. While welcoming this initiative, many stakeholders expressed the need to intensify efforts in support of implementation, reaffirming that CSD remains the leading forum within the UN system to follow up the implementation of sustainable development agenda. Ensuring the implementation of its own decisions will make CSD stronger in championing the cause of sustainable development. Key conclusions emerged from this dialogue are summarized in the succeeding paragraphs.
6. The importance of sustainable agriculture in the context of multiple crises was underlined in order to reduce poverty and achieve food security. It was noted that recent financial crisis had hit the poor people in a number of different ways; notably there is less capital for agriculture leading to lower public investment. Moreover, small farmers who already have invested in agriculture expansion are facing high debt burden. Having an access to adequate means of

implementation can help them to come out of the poverty trap by enhancing agricultural productivity on their farms.

7. It was recognized that agriculture is part of the solution and not part of the problem. While the need for increasing investment in agriculture can't be underscored, it is equally important that the smallholder farmers and women are empowered to make agriculture productive and sustainable. Transparent and improved governance structures can help in achieving this objective.

8. Given that poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon, improved land governance has proven to be an important instrument for reducing poverty. Moreover, providing secure and equitable access to land resources through improved pro-poor land governance is critical in addressing the challenges posed by climate change, desertification and land degradation.

9. Integrating climate change into development strategies at all levels is necessary. At farm level it is necessary to improve crop and livestock selection; at basin level water allocation policies are necessary together with investment in infrastructure and change in land-use; at national level agriculture and water policies need to be adopted together with increased investment and tax policies; and at regional and global levels trade policies and climate policies need to be aligned with the global trading regimes.

10. Synergies between climate change mitigation and food security need to be maximized through expanding low energy-intensive irrigation, changing from bare to improved fallow land and exploring agro-forestry options that increase food production.

11. The population growth, which is estimated to reach 9 billion by 2050 together with existing land degradation patterns, water scarcity and climate change, will put further pressure on food production. It was noted that CSD-17 decisions provides integrated framework to meet short and long-term dimensions of this challenge, while reinforcing the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) produced by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF). The planned revision of CFA should take into account the roadmap provided by CSD-17 decisions.

12. The World Bank reported that it has established the Global Food Crisis Response Program to address high and volatile food prices, support governments in designing sustainable policies that mitigate the adverse effects of volatile food prices on poverty and support broad-based growth in productivity and market participation in agriculture to ensure an adequate supply response as part of sustained improvement in food supply. In this regard, the World Bank has mobilized resources from several sources with strategy for rapid disbursement. The Program works in close cooperation with the HLTF and host country governments.

13. The African agriculture sector is dominated by poor smallholder farmers engaged in subsistence agriculture, low and stagnant labor productivity and minimal mechanization. African farmers can reverse the current situation if they have an easy access to credit services and inputs such as seeds and fertilizer. This however needs to be complemented by increased investment in rural infrastructure and agricultural research and innovation together with access to international markets. Improving the local investment climate holds key to attract private sector investment in Africa.

14. CSD-17 decisions agreed on 278 policy actions. All of these may not be relevant to all countries. Thus, their implementation should be prioritized given the specific needs and preferences of the country. More generally, countries should start implementing actions that will contribute to: increased funding in agriculture and investment in agricultural-related infrastructure; improved agricultural productivity and access to markets; and enhanced food security. Integrating climate change into development strategies at all levels remains key priority.

15. The most effective and sustainable actions are those that are country-led and nationally owned. In this regard, the first step is to integrate agreed decisions into national development plans and strategies. Appropriate monitoring mechanisms supported by verifiable monitoring indicators are needed to enhance the effectiveness of implementation.

16. Providing means of implementation were considered to be of paramount importance, including new and additional resources, to advance the implementation of agricultural development agenda. It was noted that aid to agriculture has declined in the past 15 years. National level budgetary allocations also show declining trend from 11 to 5.4 per cent. In the case of Africa, so far only 9 countries have met the target set in the Maputo declaration (allocating 10 per cent of national budget to agriculture and rural development). Reviving the growth in agriculture sector require both donors and governments to honor their commitments.

17. The role and importance of research, education and extension was underscored in achieving sustainable agriculture and rural development. In this regard, the need to improve linkages among research institutions, knowledge generation in schools and universities, and diffusion of knowledge was strongly emphasized. It was demonstrated that how virtual online extension networks and smallholders can work together in bridging the capacity gaps by taking advantage of modern information and communication technology. North-South and South-South cooperation was also reiterated to be an important instrument for capacity building of farmers in developing countries.

18. Partnerships can accelerate implementation by, *inter-alia*, strengthening local capacity building and making communities more resilient and enabling them to cope with environmental changes in a sustainable manner. The SARD Initiative and the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food provided excellent examples related to agriculture development and water management. The International Land Coalition provided insightful lessons learned from national-level dialogues on LAND partnerships. The Sustainable Development Knowledge Partnership is aiming to strengthen capacities of policy makers and practitioners by placing available knowledge at their disposal in a user friendly manner using means such as: publications, a web portal, a sustainable development assessment, workshops and conferences, and possible regional capacity building centers.

### **Some Examples of Actions Taken since CSD-17**

19. Many stakeholders mentioned specific initiatives and programs undertaken to advance the implementation of agriculture and rural development agenda. Some of these activities may or may not have been directly triggered by the CSD-17 outcome, but do complement the spirit of CSD-17 decisions.

- a. The European Union has established the €1 billion Food Facility and the initiative has proved extremely effective around the world because it is built on each agency's

comparative advantages and needs assessment analysis. Nearly all of the €1 billion has been committed by now and many projects have become operational and will be implemented further in 2010 and 2011.

- b. In line with the decisions of CSD-17, progress was achieved through regional success with the CAADP supported by NEPAD, through the mobilization of resources in L'Aquila, and with the revitalization of the FAO Committee on World Food Security.
- c. IFAD is working in the Mekong sub-region with the Asian Development Bank to link smallholder growers of cassava to agro-industrial processors in Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and Vietnam. In developing sustainable agricultural value chains, IFAD is seeking strategic linkages with the private sector, foundations, and the public sector for business development opportunities for smallholder farmer and rural small-scale enterprises. It is working with others to establish the African Agriculture Equity Fund that will provide equity financing for priority investments in production and distribution in specific food value chains, as well as rural credit institutions and agricultural insurance.
- d. The Agriculture and Agro-industry department of the African Development Bank manages a portfolio of around 230 operations of around 3 billion USD in 30 African countries and there are about 84 agricultural and rural infrastructure projects in pipeline such as water development and storage, rural and community roads, natural resources management, institutions building, increasing agricultural productivity. The Bank also established Congo Basin Forest Fund (\$200 million) in 2008 which intends to alleviate poverty and address climate change challenges by reducing the rate of deforestation in the Congo Basin.
- e. UN-Habitat carried out studies to demonstrate how: (i) proper management of drylands could alleviate some of the pressing challenges; and (ii) to promote linkages among integrated management of land and water resources, environment, and climate change. It was reported that collective efforts within the Arab region have succeeded in increasing agricultural productivity, fisheries capacities and arable land; in providing extension for farmers through databases, and creation of new legal frameworks supporting sustainable agriculture.
- f. The "Farming First" coalition illustrates an excellent example of partnership, joining farmers, business and industry and the scientific and technological community for practical application of sustainable agriculture on the ground. Agricultural biodiversity will feature as an important component in the access and benefit-sharing regime that will be adopted at the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity this year.

### **Elements of Fast Track Strategy**

20. There was a general consensus on the need to develop a fast track strategy to advance the implementation of CSD decisions in general, and for scaling up of successful practices, in particular. Key elements of such a strategy may include the following.

*Establish priorities:* Select strategic decisions/actions that are considered most important from the national development perspective. These actions should be able to yield

multiplier effect and trigger positive policy responses not only within the agriculture sector but across other economic sectors as well.

*Translate decisions into action plans:* This require integrating relevant decisions into national development plans and strategies. The Secretariat can assist in preparing the guidelines as how this should be done, if mandated to do so.

*Revive the idea of national sustainable development round tables:* This idea was initiated in 1990s, but later discontinued. Its revival will ensure that national planning processes do take into account the global policy decisions on sustainable development. It can also assist in monitoring the implementation.

*Scale up successful practices:* A considerable amount of knowledge exist on sustainable agricultural practices, ranging from natural resources management to farming system methods to policy reforms. These practices should be widely disseminated together with provision of technical assistance and support for their scaling up. Towards this aim, *eXtension* idea can play an important role.

*Develop synergies:* This require identification of areas amenable to joint commitments (i.e., ones that benefit both developed and developing countries), such as in the case of enhancing agricultural productivity in drylands areas.

*Annual review:* The CSD should allocate time for annual review of progress on CSD decisions as part of its regular work programme. This will build continuous momentum in support of implementation.