

Summary of the Peer - Review Workshop

Renewable Resources and the Sustainable Development Goals Forum

- Place: German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Berlin
- Date: 20 November 2014
- Time: 09.00 - 15.30
- Agenda: See Agenda (Annex 1)
- Participants: See List of Participants (Annex 2)
- Topic: The role of biomass in the Sustainable Development Goals

Biomass for food, feed, fuel and material purposes is central to achieving many of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Yet, the conditions for its sustainable production and consumption are largely neglected by the current set of SDGs that is going to be negotiated during 2015 by the Member States of the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders. To raise awareness for the role of sustainable biomass production and consumption – and the associated opportunities and challenges – it will be crucial to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda will promote a truly people-centred and planet-sensitive development. This will be important not only during the SDG negotiations, but also when implementing and monitoring the goals at global, regional and national level.

The *Renewable Resources and the Sustainable Development Goals Forum*, which is part of the IASS Global Soil Forum, aims to raise awareness for this topic in the discussions and negotiations of the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda. To this end, the Forum organized a peer-review workshop to discuss and further progress its work together with different stakeholders (see Annex 2 - List of participants). Basis of the discussions were the draft discussion paper on *The Role of Biomass in the SDGs* and the draft concept note on *Governance Lessons learned from the MDG process*.¹ Discussions, hereby, focused primarily on the former document (see Annex 1 - Agenda).

This document presents a summary of the discussions of the workshop. Main points of the workshop have been clustered into thematic areas, which are presented below. The project team wishes to thank all participants for the lively debates during the workshop.

¹ Both documents can be requested from Ira Matuschke (ira.matuschke@iass-potsdam.de)

Opportunities and challenges of biomass production

Biomass presents an excellent case to show that the SDGs need to be assessed in a holistic way. If the goals and targets are not considered in a comprehensive manner, conflicts over natural resources - like land and soils - and incoherent policies may evolve, which may render the implementation of the SDGs difficult, if not ineffective. For example, an increased demand for food to improve food security (Goal 2) may lead to the expansion of agricultural land into forests. Looming land scarcity and rising land use competition may put sustainable agriculture at risk. Deforestation in turn may negatively impact on climate change (Goal 13) and may endanger the livelihoods of those that depend on forests, leading to an increase in poverty (hereby relating to Goal 1). Hence, a Nexus perspective is of the essence when analysing the contribution of biomass for non-food, non-feed purposes to the post-2015 development agenda.

The specific focus of the Forum is on biomass for fuel and material purposes and its impact on the other dimensions of biomass and the natural resource base. The production of biomass for fuel and material purposes, if not considered within the nexus, has ecological, social and economic implications. The Working Paper on *The Role of Biomass in the SDGs* addresses a variety of such implications ranging from biodiversity loss and increased Green House Gas (GHG) emissions in the ecological dimension, to decreased food security and increased gender inequality in the social dimension, to greater income generation opportunities in the economic dimension. The Working Paper focuses primarily on challenges and opportunities associated with the production of biomass for fuel and material purposes, including possible impacts on food production and other types of biomass use. When discussing these and other implications, it was repeatedly highlighted that any assessment must differentiate between the types and uses of biomass. For example, opportunities and challenges of biofuels are different from those encountered if biomass is used for industrial purposes or serves as a carbon sink. A differentiated perspective is also needed when analysing the context-specific conditions in which biomass production and consumption take place: Questions like who produces and consumes and in which location are of relevance in this regard. On top of the questions of who produces what and where, one must also address the questions of who benefits from production, and how are those benefits distributed and shared. For example, access by women to productive resources, like land, to produce biomass is subjects that need to be considered when looking at biomass production. The discussions emphasised that rights-based approaches, and hereby in particular the Right-to-Food, are non-negotiable building blocks when discussing sustainable biomass production and consumption. Contextual conditions of biomass production and consumption require in-depth analyses that cut across different scales. A case in point is access to land, water and other resources pivotal for biomass production. Access to those resources will differ from one locality to another. However, neither the factors determining access, nor its consequences are strictly local.

It was concluded that the SDGs need to be considered in a holistic framework. If not considered in an integrated, in a Nexus perspective trade-offs between securities may occur.

Implementation, monitoring and accountability

Based on the conclusions made in the first part of the workshop, participants agreed that biomass production and consumption needs to be discussed beyond the current silos of debates. (The question that arises on how beyond the silo thinking is to be translated into silo policies). The implementation and monitoring of the SDGs will be of central concern in the post-2015 agenda. Measuring progress will also depend on the availability, access to and quality of data that go beyond silos. Within this debate the role of biomass and its possible ecological, social and economic implications will have to receive continued attention. In general, it was widely agreed that in order to have a significant impact on our development trajectory, and to avoid the many pitfalls identified in our discussion on challenges surrounding biomass production and consumption, a genuinely holistic approach – such as the Nexus - will be pivotal. Silo policies may lead to policy incoherencies.

The task to translate the SDGs into actual strategies and programmes, and to put these into action, will be the responsibility of individual countries as well as the global community. Individual countries and regions will have to interpret the SDGs with indicators suitable in their respective social, economic and environmental contexts. Indicators such as those produced by the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) could be useful in this regard. At the same time, sustainable development, including biomass production and consumption, will only be within reach as long as national actions are aligned with those of other countries and regions. The below mentioned section on cross-country linkages in the context of international trade and investment is a case in point; showing that national programmes must be understood in their interaction with programmes at other scales.

In consideration of unavoidable trade-offs and the incompatibility of several biomass related SDG targets, there should be a priority setting. Biomass for food purposes remains the top priority (with a strong focus on the Right to Food). A second dimension of priority setting could be related to the scales of planning, decision making and action. In this regard, the SDG targets should prioritise local production and consumption of biomass over biomass produced in location at large distance. Local scale planning and production is seen to allow for a limiting of those environmental, social and economic externalities that reach beyond the immediate grasp of stakeholders.

The 'right' scale for implementation, monitoring and governance of SDG targets will differ from case to case. Other than the above mentioned local solutions approach, there will be other biomass related targets which require coordination and cooperation over larger scales, be that national, regional or international. This applies, for instance, to targets whose accomplishment requires large amounts of financial and technological means as well as include capacity-building. Another example for targets that require solutions beyond the local scale are those SDG targets that will have consequences beyond the jurisdiction of a single country or region. The process of differentiating between targets that can be addressed domestically from those that require international cooperation and coordination could become matter of political debate.

The SDGs in their current formulation leave ample room for interpretation. For the goal of sustainable development this room is an opportunity and challenge. The open framing of the SDGs represents a window of opportunity as it allows for ambitious programmes. For example, developing economies could set goals in such a way that it prevents them from getting locked into consumption and production patterns which have historically proven unsustainable. Countries could also aim for ambitious actions towards changing prevailing production and consumption patterns in order to counteract resource overuse and degradation both at home and abroad. Reducing the ecological footprint will be crucial to ensure staying within global planetary boundaries. Implementing the SDGs will also require governance structures to monitor them and holding countries accountable to them. Governance mechanisms that allow for a continuous assessment of the successes and failures of the targets at national, regional and global level are needed. While it remains up for discussion whether such mechanisms should be based on indicators or other alternative assessment approaches beyond indicators, it is largely agreed that it will be most feasible to resort to an inventory of existing approaches of sustainability governance rather than to 'reinvent the wheel'. Reviewing existing approaches will help identifying what it takes to ensure a functioning monitoring and governance process. A lesson learned from the Millennium Development Goals is that the SDG assessment mechanism should at best allow for a constant re-evaluation, and if needed adaptation, of its targets based on their performance over time and across different contexts.

A final point is policy consistency both within a respective country as well as internationally. In other words, even if the SDGs are translated into ambitious and coherent targets there is still the major problem that these targets will be introduced into a broader institutional and political economic system that is at least partly characterised by priorities which may counteract the SDGs. The below mentioned role of international agreements on trade and investment is, once again, a case in point. In order to increase the SDGs' impact, policy-makers and other stakeholders involved in the SDG process should pay close attention to potential policy inconsistencies.

In sum, effective monitoring, reviewing and accountability mechanisms will play an essential role in implementing the SDGs. In the case of biomass production and consumption, these mechanisms need to take an integrated perspective at local, national, regional and global levels - beyond silos - in order to ensure that the implementation of the SDG leads to a shift to a more sustainable global development trajectory.

International trade and investment

A perspective that crosses different scales is the dimension of international trade and investment: Trade and investment could serve as means of implementation in the context of SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. In fact, Goal 17 of the current set of proposed SDGs on means of implementation and a global partnership has one target (Target 17.11), which explicitly states that there should be a significant increase of "exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by

2020". However, particularly in least developed countries, exports of food and agricultural raw materials can play an important role (UNCTAD, 2014; p. 8), and could therefore become drivers of unsustainable developments. The SDGs in their current framing could be interpreted to promote export-orientation among developing countries, thereby possibly leading to a shift in the production of biomass in its different dimensions and / or the expansion in agricultural area. Questions that were raised by the participants in this respect were how trade and investment can stimulate sustainable development and how trade policies of one country can influence conditions in other countries. It was also stressed that even though land is an asset that is fixed in one location, it needs to be considered on a global scale and within the context of trade and investment.

Sustainable consumption

Sustainable consumption was also a part of the discussions. Who consumes what under which conditions were questions that were picked up by the participants. The questions on waste reduction and reducing consumption were also raised by the participants. Participants agreed that whereas biofuels and biomaterials deserve much critical attention in this regard, attention should also be placed on reducing meat consumption, because the criticisms on livestock production are similar to the criticisms associated with an increased use of biomass for fuel and material purposes, namely that production can induce land use change and land take, can endanger food security, lead to biodiversity loss and increased GHG emissions.

Terminology and data

The discussions had shown that in order to analyse the role of biomass in an all-encompassing way, approaches are required that cut across disciplines. Transdisciplinary multi-stakeholder forums are one way to approach this task, because they bring together relevant stakeholders from all areas, e.g. academia, civil society, and public and private sector. While an analysis of the role of biomass benefits from integrating many perspectives, the focus of the analysis and the terminology used must be clearly defined.

This particularly applies the term *biomass*, which comprises a variety of dimensions, each of which associated with a set of opportunities and challenges. Biomass production is context specific, e.g. dependent on seasonal conditions and the availability of infrastructure and extension services. The same holds for biomass consumption, which does not necessarily take place in the context and location of where biomass is produced. Collecting data on biomass and projecting its demand needs to take place with these contexts in mind. The human appropriation of net primary production (HANPP) provides a useful measure of human intervention into the biosphere, and could be used to analyse the impact of biomass production (in all dimensions of biomass). Therefore, a clearly defined terminology and problem description are important not only for empirical assessments, but also to communicate the role of biomass in the SDGs, and sustainable development in general, to policy-makers and other stakeholders.

Conclusions

Three main conclusions can be drawn from the peer-review workshop:

- The SDGs need to be assessed in a holistic way in a nexus framework. If the goals and targets are not considered in a comprehensive manner, conflicts over natural resources - like land and soils - and incoherent policies may evolve, which may render the implementation of the SDGs difficult, if not ineffective. If an integrated perspective is not taken, this may have far reaching ecological, economic and social consequences.
- Effective monitoring, reviewing and accountability mechanisms will play an essential role in implementing the SDGs. Owing to its complex nature, in the case of biomass production and consumption, these mechanisms need to take an integrated perspective at local, national, regional and global levels - beyond silos - in order to ensure that the implementation of the SDG leads to a shift to a more sustainable global development trajectory.
- Special focus needs to be put on the local and national level, where monitoring, reviewing and accountability mechanisms will be most relevant and enforceable.

Annex 1: Agenda of the Peer-Review Workshop

DRAFT AGENDA

Peer - Review Workshop

Renewable Resources and the Sustainable Development Goals Forum

**20 November 2014, 09.00-15.30, Room 1.3.280
German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Berlin**

ITEM 1: Welcome and Introductions (09.00 - 09.30)

- Welcome by Jes Weigelt, Project leader, Renewable Resources and Sustainable Development Goals Forum

ITEM 2: The role of biomass in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (9.30 - 12.30)

- ***The SDGs and biomass: An overview (9.30 - 10.00)***
 - Discussion
- ***Exchange of views and experiences on two thematic areas (10.00-12.30)***
 1. Opportunities and challenges of biomass in the SDGs

Coffee break (11.00-11.30)

2. Sustainable biomass production and consumption in the post-2015 development agenda

Lunch (12.30-13.30)

ITEM 3: Wrap up of the discussions from the morning (13.30 - 14.15)

ITEM 4: Next steps (14.15-15.15)

- Multi-stakeholder processes for the sustainable production of renewable resources – outlining the approach of the project
- Possibilities for further involvement

ITEM 5: Conclusions (15.15 - 15.30)

- Concluding remarks by Jes Weigelt, Project leader, Renewable Resources and Sustainable Development Goals Forum

Annex 2: List of participants

Name	Affiliation
Beringer, Tim	PIK
Beuchelt, Tina	ZEF
Brandner, Michael	Biovision
Callenius, Carolin	Brot für die Welt
Dhingra, Sunil	TERI
Götz, Ariane	IASS
Hoff, Holger	SEI
Kaphengst, Timo	Ecologic
Lobos Alva, Ivonne	IASS
Matuschke, Ira	IASS
Morese, Michaela	FAO
Müller, Alexander	IASS
Nakada, Shunichi	IRENA
O'Brian, Meghan	Wuppertal Institute
Reichert, Tobias	Germanwatch
Rudloff, Bettina	SWP
Rughani, Deepak	Biofuel Watch
Sass, Fanny	IASS
Schiller, Saskia	BMEL
Schmidt, Oscar	IASS
Seven, Jan	Umweltbundesamt
Sikor, Thomas	University of East Anglia
Weigelt, Jes	IASS