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Bioenergy production may have significant implications for all four dimensions of food security (availability, access, stability and utilization). For instance, it may result in increased competition for land and water resources, leading to higher and less stable food prices. At the same time, however, it may create new employment and income-generating opportunities, with potential benefits for rural development and food security.

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BEFSCI

Bioenergy and Food Security
Criteria and Indicators

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Federal Ministry
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Safeguarding food
security in sustainable
bioenergy production



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The complex interrelationships between bioenergy, poverty and food security are currently being analyzed in the context of the FAO's Bioenergy and Food Security (BEFS) project, which is in the process of field-testing and refining a methodology to assess the impacts of bioenergy production on food security.

Building on the findings of BEFS and on FAO's comparative advantage, the Bioenergy and Food Security Criteria and Indicators (BEFSCI) project aims to develop detailed principles, criteria and indicators on sustainable bioenergy production that safeguards food security. A first draft of these principles, criteria and indicators will be discussed at two technical consultations that will take place at FAO Headquarters in Rome in November 2009 and in early 2010. These will then be validated through international, multi-stakeholder consultations to be held at FAO Headquarters and Regional Offices during 2010, and subsequently field-tested in three qualitative feasibility studies.

The activities described above will lay the foundation for an inter-governmental process to be convened and led by FAO as a follow-up to this project, with the aim of seeking international consensus on the principles, criteria and indicators identified under this project.

The BEFSCI project will also inform and feed into on-going discussions and work on food security-related principles, criteria and indicators under other bioenergy initiatives, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB) and the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP).

In addition, the BEFSCI project might inform the reporting process on food security under the new EU Renewables Directive (which includes a 20% biofuel target by 2020), as well as the on-going work of both the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) towards the development of sustainability standards for biofuels.

In order to achieve the objectives described above, the following activities are foreseen under three phases of the befsci project:

PHASE 1

1.1 Review of the food security-related principles, criteria and indicators that have been developed under existing sustainable bioenergy initiatives, as well as for related industries, particularly in the agricultural and forestry sectors.

1.2 Identify draft principles, criteria and indicators on sustainable bioenergy production that safeguards food security, drawing inter alia from the findings of activity

PHASE 2

2.1 Develop further the draft principles, criteria and indicators identified under activity 1.2, through two technical consultations at FAO Headquarters. A multidisciplinary group of experts on bioenergy

sustainability and food security from UN agencies, universities, research institutes and NGOs will be invited to participate.

2.2 Discuss and finalize the principles, criteria and indicators developed under activities 1.2 and 2.1, through multistakeholder consultations at FAO Headquarters and Regional Offices. Representatives from governments, farmer organizations, corporate sector and civil society will be invited to participate. During these consultations, information will be shared on the status of international biofuel sustainability principles/standards regarding aspects not related to food security.

PHASE 3

3.1 Field-test and then refine the criteria and indicators identified under activities 1.2 to 2.2, through qualitative feasibility studies in three pilot countries.

3.2 Disseminate the project results and present proposals for follow-up activities with international organizations, interested governments and the donor community.

3.3 Lay the foundation for an inter-governmental process to be convened and led by FAO in order to seek international consensus on the principles, criteria and indicators identified under this project.



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