

## ***FAO uncovering links between bioenergy and food security in Thailand***

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The ability to access the means to acquire appropriate food for a nutritious diet is the cornerstone of food security. Yet last year the food crisis that beset the world via soaring food prices posed a serious threat to this seemingly simple and self evident principle, particularly for people in the developing world. Bioenergy and liquid biofuels were fingered as a key cause of the crisis. And, while estimates of the actual influence of bioenergy demand varied, often wildly, there was little doubt the growing demand for bioenergy was one of the factors propelling food prices higher.

Recently, prices for food, feed and fibre have subsided from the highs witnessed last year. But despite this easing, FAO has continued to champion efforts to ensure that the world is better prepared to tackle future threats to food security. FAO's Bioenergy and Food Security (BEFS) project is one such effort that aims to bolster the capacity of developing countries to mitigate the impact of bioenergy on food security. Under the project, FAO has developed a quantitative and qualitative framework to analyze the interplay between land availability, bioenergy production potential, food security and poverty alleviation. The main result is an approach for policy makers that will encourage more informed decisions about the merits of specific bioenergy policies.

Thailand, with its diverse agricultural economy and growing biofuels industry, was chosen as a pilot country for the BEFS project in Asia. FAO RAP has been working closely over the past year with various Thai-based organizations to apply the BEFS framework to the Thai context.

A pivotal element of the BEFS project in Thailand is the development of specific future bioenergy scenarios for the country that will be charted with FAO's Commodity Simulation Model (COSIMO)

partial equilibrium model. In June 2009, a team of trainers from FAO headquarters in Rome conducted a training session on the COSIMO model for staff from the Thai Government's Office of Agriculture Economics (OAE). Then, in July 2009, OAE held a special bioenergy scenario development meeting involving 20 participants from a range of public and private bioenergy-focused organizations. Participants enthusiastically discussed the possibilities for bioenergy development in Thailand over the next decade. OAE intends to refine the scenario parameters over the coming months and model their implications for agricultural markets and the broader Thai economy.

To complement the modeling work being undertaken by OAE, a number of thematic studies have also been implemented to highlight different aspects of the bioenergy-food security equation. The Joint Graduate School of Energy and Environment of King Mongkut Institute of Technology is developing detailed life-cycle assessments of different biofuel feedstocks. The Thai Rural and Social Management Institute is assessing a range of small-scale rural bioenergy projects in Thailand to uncover challenges to replicating successful, self-sufficiency-oriented bioenergy projects in other rural communities across the country. Finally, Professor Sombat Chinawong from Kasetsart University, is documenting the zero-waste biomass utilization system to present an alternative model for future bioenergy development in Thailand.

FAO RAP anticipates that most of this work will be completed before the end of 2009. The findings will be brought to the attention of the Thai Government policy makers and the broader public at the BEFS National Workshop, scheduled for February 2010 in Bangkok.

