Preamble

Today, almost one billion people are hungry. Another billion is malnourished, lacking essential micronutrients. Of course it is not only greater availability of food which is needed, but also economical and physical accessibility. Still, food production has to increase, both in quantity, quality, and diversity, especially in developing countries. Both population and income growth will drive an increasing demand, especially in developing countries. Assuming continuation of these trends, FAO estimates that production has to increase by 70 percent between now and 2050, especially in developing countries. Food systems have to satisfy this growing demand, both in quantity, quality and diversity.

At the same time food production and consumption already exerts a considerable impact on the environment. It is an important source of greenhouse gases. Agriculture is responsible for 70 percent of water withdrawal. It is an important driver of deforestation and loss of biodiversity. Fisheries, that provide unique protein and fatty acids, are fully dependent on healthy ecosystems, but unsustainable practices often result in major negative impacts on the aquatic environment and its resources. The global food system is currently very dependent upon fossil fuels, which contributes to GHG emissions and may also increase input costs to the extent that they become unaffordable for increasing productivity.

Food systems rely on resources which are becoming ever more fragile and scarce. These include especially land, water, biodiversity, and fossil fuels. Therefore food systems have to become more efficient in their use of these resources and reduce food waste, at every stage, from primary production to transformation and consumption.

All food systems have to face this same challenge of increasing efficiency in the use of resources in order to become more sustainably productive. They shall aim to produce more output per unit of input, either land, water, energy or nutrient. Food systems are very diverse, including from an overall economic and social point of view. In particular the importance of the various stages of transformation depends on products and countries. Their environmental, economic and social impacts are also very diverse. Therefore the programme shall be adapted to various local and regional specificities and take into account different levels of development.

Goals and objectives

The goal of the sustainable food systems programme is to continuously improve resource efficiency and reduce pollution intensity of food systems from production to consumption while improving food and nutrition security. The program will address these issues primarily at national and regional levels, all along food chains in line with national and regional
priorities. To do so it will involve all concerned stakeholders, including governments, farmers, fishermen and fish farmers, agro-industry, retailers and consumers taking into account the specific needs of indigenous people and women.. This programme will be a voluntary one, in which individual stakeholders can select which activities they wish to engage in.

Specific goals and objectives will include to:

- Identify, clearly define, mainstream and scale-up techniques, practices, policies and actions that increase sustainability/resource efficiency at every stage of food chains and enabling conditions and tools to promote them;

- Develop knowledge-based tools to assess and monitor sustainability of food systems, including life-cycle methodologies and data needs;

- Consider ways and tools to recognise, give value to and promote sustainable production and products, including market-based mechanisms;

- Develop and implement ways (for example partnerships, joint activities and information transfer) and tools to communicate information on sustainable consumption and production to actors along the supply chain including consumers and other interested stakeholders, with a view to establishing guidelines in order to increase transparency.

Activities

Four activity clusters have been identified by stakeholders (governments, business and NGO’s) at a scoping meeting organized by UNEP in November 2010.

Activity Cluster 1: To re-focus and re-orient more effectively existing information platforms on sustainable agriculture and agri-food products including fishery products to be shared more widely, with producers, consumers and other interested stakeholders through: a) the provision and dissemination of information to increase the efficacy of extension services in order to support the uptake of sustainable practices and b) the development of global partnerships to compile open-source inventory of life-cycle data of food products. Together these could encourage the development of a common protocol for data collection to support design of sustainable food systems, explore and develop the business case for the shift towards SCP in the sector and fulfil the demand for data on carbon, water, nitrogen, footprints and other relevant impacts for eco-labelling and eco-design of food products.

Activity Cluster 2: To deliver meaningful and reliable communication about agri-food products to create markets and incentives to foster sustainable consumption and production patterns by a) the design and provision of a broad set of principles that can guide the development and assessment of sustainability “claims” and b) the identification of leverage points within

Draft, 20th April 2011
supply chains to direct the choices and behaviour of consumers towards more sustainable agri-food products and diets\(^1\).

Activity Cluster 3: **To create enabling conditions for the uptake of SCP in food systems** through:

a) capacity-building provision to governments and policy makers particularly in developing countries for institutionalisation of SCP in order to facilitate (i) the uptake of practices, techniques and technologies that increase sustainability in production, processing, and for the mitigation of negative externalities; (ii) the building of capacity for regulatory frameworks, enforcement, Environmental Impact Assessments and provision of more effective incentive structures; and (iii) regional and international cooperation to promote sustainable resource management and expand markets for products from sustainable production systems;

b) promote the building of Public Private Partnerships to, for example, expand access to finance for agri-food stakeholders developing more sustainable production practices, demonstrate and replicate sustainable supply chain activities and to develop and deliver targeted information to education programmes on SCP to both the producers and consumers. Activities will seek to utilize existing institutions as platforms, in order to build their capacity to address these challenges and deliver support at national and regional levels to test new approaches and techniques.

Activity Cluster 4: **To promote resource efficient production methods through market-based approaches** by: a) strengthening and developing links along the supply chain between producers and consumers for more sustainable products in particular between developing countries and interested regional and developed country markets (e.g. match-making, capacity building, financing) b) improving access to and scaling-up the use of proven tools including effective, and reliable voluntary certification and standards including their mutual recognition and equivalency, and c) identification and piloting the viability of innovative market mechanisms for environmental services in the agri-food supply chain, and scale-up (e.g. the role of Payments for Ecosystem Services).

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\(^1\) Sustainable Diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources. FAO. International Symposium “Biodiversity and Sustainable Diets”. FAO. Rome. 3-5 November 2010

http://www.fao.org/ag/humannutrition/25915-0e8d8dc364ee46865d5841c48976e9980.pdf
Delivery Mechanisms of the Programme

The programme will be delivered using existing capacities and institutions involved in sustainable production for effective implementation and roll out. It will build upon experiences and lessons learned from initiatives of the private, public and academic sectors. It will in particular draw upon FAO’s programmes for sustainable intensification of crop production, increased sustainable livestock production and sustainable management and use of fisheries and aquaculture resources and UNEP’s activities on resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production in the agri-food sector. It will enhance public-private and business-to-business partnerships aimed at improving sustainability of food chains. It will identify and up-scale regional and local multi-stakeholder partnerships designed to increase resource efficiency, reduce pollution, food waste and other unintended negative impacts, and maximize productivity and the welfare gains from food production activities.

Leading Actors

The Programme would bring together leading actors from relevant UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations, national governments, and civil society organizations including representatives of farmers, agro-industry and consumers. FAO as the specialized UN agency for food and agriculture would assume the international lead coordinating role, in close partnership with UNEP, and take responsibility to implement the programme in close cooperation with other lead actors, including, DESA, UNIDO, UNCTAD, IFAD, UNDP, CGIAR and regional organisations and monitor and report results towards the international community including in FAO’s committees on agriculture and fisheries (COAG and COFI).

The Agri-food Task Force on SCP will be a key implementation mechanism, identifying, catalyzing and helping to operationalise partnerships between UN agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, national governments, the private sector and civil society organizations to contribute to the goals of the programme.

Metrics of success (indicators to measure progress)

The programme will develop activity based success metrics which show a direct contribution to increases in resource efficiency, decoupling of production and consumption from other environmental impacts, increases in food security and the provision of sustainable livelihoods. Those metrics will reflect changes in the capacity of relevant actors in the supply chain, to implement policies and actions promoting the shift to SCP. The metrics will among others involve quantifying the number and size of projects in the programme, the number of products and markets influenced by it, and the extent to which it scales up and replicates successful capacity building activities, policies, actions and investments in SCP. These metrics will be developed with close reference to the activities in the four clusters of the programme.

Draft, 20th April 2011
Technical and financial resources (means of implementation)

Technical resources required for the effective implementation of the proposed programme modules are available in existing initiatives, programmes and networks, yet need improved coordination for achieving synergies and scaling-up. Much can be done with existing resources and through a multi-stakeholder, multi-partner approach, focused on adjusting existing supply chains, or creating new, more resource efficient and equitable ones. This approach could leverage additional funding from various partners including the private sector to expand the overall programme to realize the full potential of partnerships and synergies within it.