



The FAO-UNEP Sustainable Food Systems Programme

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) has been on the international agenda since Agenda 21 (1992) identified unsustainable patterns of production and consumption as the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment. The 2002 Johannesburg Summit called for a ten-year framework of programmes in support of national and regional initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production.

FAO and UNEP have formed a joint Sustainable Food Systems Programme to improve resource use efficiency and reduce the pollution intensity of food systems from production to consumption, while at the same time addressing issues of food and nutrition security. The programme brings together a broad coalition of concerned stakeholders, including governments, food and fish producers, agro-industry, retailers and consumers.

Background

The demand for food is expected to increase by over 60% over the next 40 years, as the global population reaches 9 billion. But nearly a billion people are already food-insecure, unable to produce or buy sufficient quantities of nutritious food. And a further number suffer the consequences of over-consumption, with obesity rates reaching record levels.

Food production and consumption is highly resource-intensive. All food systems rely in some way upon natural resources such as water, biodiversity, healthy and fertile soil, or the sea. However, in many cases resources have been depleted; climate change may further limit their continued exploitation. In addition, significant amounts of energy are used in producing agricultural inputs, and in post harvest processing, transport and distribution of food. Large-scale conventional agricultural production consumes the lion's share of available fresh water, and may be responsible for deforestation, biodiversity loss, land degradation and conversion of natural habitat. Unsustainable fishery practices result in more than 75% of world fish stocks being reported as already fully exploited or overexploited. As well as being a major user of natural resources, the global food system also wastes them; losses and waste can reach up to 30% of all the food produced.

A growing population, a degraded natural resource base, losses and waste, and climate change combined present a serious threat to the global food system.

The FAO/UNEP Sustainable Food Systems Programme:

Increasing concerns about resource usage, and the underlying problems of food insecurity and malnutrition, highlight the need for food systems to become more efficient. This has led to sustainable consumption and production (SCP) initiatives associated with the food sector becoming one of the key elements of the Commission for Sustainable Development's SCP agenda in preparation for Rio+20. In response to this, the FAO/UNEP sustainable food systems programme was formed.

The FAO-UNEP Sustainable Food Systems Programme (SFSP) is a unique collaboration between the leading intergovernmental agencies in the areas of food, agriculture, and the environment. The objective of SFSP is to spearhead efforts to improve resource use efficiency and reduce the pollution intensity of food systems from production to consumption, while at the same time addressing issues of food and nutrition security.

The SFSP brings together a broad coalition of concerned stakeholders, including governments, food and fish producers, agro-industry, retailers and consumers. Activities are being designed in response to stakeholders' stated needs, and individual stakeholders and development partners can select which activities they wish to engage in.



The programme includes the following four “clusters” of activities and outcomes:

- Activity Cluster ONE: “Develop and enhance information platforms on agri-food products and sustainable food systems” for extension and knowledge sharing amongst producers
- Activity Cluster TWO: “Reliable and sustainable communication of food products throughout the supply chain” (sustainability claims and informing consumer choice)
- Activity Cluster THREE: “Creating the enabling conditions for uptake of sustainable production practices at the national level and through the building of partnerships” (primarily policy level support and match-making)
- Activity Cluster FOUR: “Market based mechanisms for sustainable food consumption and production throughout the supply chain” (supply-chains, certification, PES, etc)

Programme Delivery and the Agri-food Task Force on SCP:

To ensure effective implementation and roll out, the programme will be delivered using the existing capacities of FAO and UNEP in sustainable food production and consumption. In addition to drawing upon the organizations’ respective bodies of knowledge and expertise, it will build upon experiences and lessons learned from initiatives in the private, public and academic sectors.

The programme will be implemented through the *Agri-food Task Force on SCP*. The Task Force will be responsible for building the necessary partnerships between UN agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, national governments, the private sector and civil society organizations to contribute to the goals of the programme. The Task Force will seek to ensure that all proposed activities draw upon existing initiatives, programmes and networks, to achieve synergies and scaling-up of work already on-going. The underlying goal of the Task Force is to pragmatically address today’s challenges in the agri-food sector through its activities and to effect a paradigm shift towards more sustainable food systems.

The Task Force, launched in 2010, is presently made up of 14 national governments, UN agencies and programmes (UNEP, FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNIDO), eight civil society organizations, and three international business organizations representing 325 firms. Four working groups are leading the implementation of the four activity clusters of the programme.

The Task Force works to facilitate the transition to more sustainable and resource efficient production and consumption patterns in the agri-food sector through projects that strive to meet its three main objectives:

- 1) To design, pilot, and/or scale up *innovative policies, market based mechanisms and financial tools that provide the incentives* for more resource efficient production and consumption in the agri-food sector
- 2) To *create knowledge platforms and offer technical assistance* to policy makers, industry, and wider civil society, to build capacity to adopt more sustainable agri-food production systems and consumption patterns
- 3) To *develop and support partnerships (including public-private and business-to-business)*, joint activities and information transfer within supply chains for the purpose of fostering SCP within the agri-food sector

For more information :

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