

Dear Secretariat,

Your 28 February mail (below), asks us to flag any remaining issues by 13 March, accompanied by suggestions for alternative text. I have some suggested text for the 2 paragraphs on biofuels and food security.

These currently read:

Achieving both food security and energy security can be an opportunity as well as a challenge. Addressing the interlinkage between SDG 7 “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all” and SDG2 calls for carefully considering possible competition between biofuel crops and food crops the multiple and complex links between biofuels and food security, including – in some cases- competition between biofuel crops and food crops. Assessments should be multi-faceted and contextualized, and an integrated, evidence-based, gender-sensitive and environmentally-sound approach is required in biofuel policy-making and investments..

To address possible trade-offs towards sustainable development, all relevant stakeholders in biofuel development should ensure that food security and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security are priority concerns, with a special focus on women and smallholder producers given their vulnerability. The CFS policy recommendations “*Biofuels and food security and nutrition*” offer a number of recommendations to Members and stakeholders to guide priority setting and integrated policy programming. Other CFS products, such as the VGGT, also provide guidance to ensure that biofuels policies are coherent with food security.

This draws on the sentiments of the HLPE report of June 2013, but my concern is that this phraseology is now rather too defensive, and too focused on ‘biofuels’ rather than on the broader ‘bioenergy’ in the context of SDG7. The SDG7 was formulated 2 years after this HLPE report was published. The HLPE report has the title ‘biofuels and food security’, but the content and especially chapter 5 takes a broader view of the needs of developing countries in the energy sector (as is the focus of SDG7). For example page 93 of chapter 5 of the HLPE report re-states that ‘In many developing countries, biofuels for transport are only a subcategory of the wider question of bioenergy’, and goes on to develop that especially in sections 5.5 and 5.6 of the HLPE report. Below I suggest some re-phrases (in blue), and then give some background on why these may be helpful in getting CFS messages across to the HLPF.

Achieving both food security and energy security is an opportunity as well as a challenge. Addressing the interlinkage between SDG 7 “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all” and SDG2 calls for carefully considering possible competition between **bioenergy** crops and food crops the multiple and complex links between biofuels and food security, including – in some cases- competition between biofuel crops and food crops. Assessments should be multi-faceted and contextualized, and an integrated, evidence-based, gender-sensitive and environmentally-sound approach is required in biofuel policy-making and investments. **In short, bioenergy policies must be integrated into national sustainable development policies and plans.**

To address possible trade-offs towards sustainable development, all relevant stakeholders in biofuel development should ensure that food security and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security are priority concerns, with a special focus on women and smallholder producers given their vulnerability. [Explicit consideration of the impact of bioenergy policies on all SDGs, and on ecosystems and their functions is needed.](#) The CFS policy recommendations “*Biofuels and food security and nutrition*” offer a number of recommendations to Members and stakeholders to guide priority setting and integrated policy programming. Other CFS products, such as the VGGT, also provide guidance to ensure that biofuels policies are coherent with food security. [Bioenergy has the potential to increase local energy supply, a critical enabling factor for rural economic growth, poverty reduction and food security.](#)

Background on why these suggested amendments are appropriate, ie this slightly more positive tone - together with the indication that CFS concern is now on the broader issue of ‘bioenergy’ rather than on the narrower ‘biofuels’ - follows:

1. Poor rural and urban people in developing countries need access to energy to fuel their livelihoods. Energy is required not only for basic household use, but also for water pumping, land preparation, post-harvest management, processing, packaging, transportation and many other activities. Several types of clean, efficient and affordable renewable energy solutions can address these needs, but a key renewable source to contribute to rural development is bioenergy.
2. An appropriate approach to promote bioenergy should ensure direct and significant contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and many of its SDGs. In addition to SDG7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), bioenergy policy should directly contribute to seven other Goals: SDG1 (No poverty); SDG2 (Zero Hunger); SDG3 (Good Health and Well-being); SDG5 (Gender Equality); SDG13 (Climate Action); SDG15 (Life on Land) and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This is the reason for the third and fourth suggested changes, above.
3. There have been many meetings, conferences and publications since 2013 on the significance of bioenergy. FAO of the RBAs, has often been a leading figure (such as the items on the Bioenergy and Food Security, BEFS, and the Global Bioenergy Partnership, GBEP, web sites of FAO). For example, a major conference after HLPE (2013) underlined some of these issues in 2015:

Conference on Bioenergy and Development: the Investment Case for Sustainable Production Systems, October 2015, co-organized in Berlin, by ICRAF and the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), in partnership with IFAD, GIZ, BMZ, Germany’s Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), IRENA, FAO, IEA and other key global stakeholders. This conference discussed the role of bioenergy in the energy-mix that is required to satisfy growing energy demands while at the same time contributing to decarbonizing the global economy and ensuring sustainable development. It was concluded that, under the right conditions, various forms of bioenergy have the potential to contribute to the energy-mix required for achieving sustainable development and contributing to overcoming poverty, especially in rural areas.

4. IFAD has made a number of statements on bioenergy; for example the IFAD Strategic Framework 2011-2015 *‘Under appropriate conditions, biofuels offer significant market opportunities for small agricultural producers and poor rural communities. It also requires sustained efforts to facilitate positive complementarities between food security and cultivation of biofuels. Biofuels can also increase energy supply in rural areas, a critical enabling factor for rural economic growth and poverty reduction’*

IFAD subsequently designed with the CGIAR Centre, ICRAF (World Agroforestry Centre) a *Programme for the Development of Alternative Biofuel Crops*. This grant funded programme involved several studies and pilots developed in India, Brazil and Kenya. The Programme demonstrated that the production of biofuels (and other bioenergy products) from native oilseed trees within agroforestry systems is not only economically viable, but also has a positive social and environmental impact greater than traditional models based on monoculture of annual (and often food) crops. The current IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 mentions ‘local energy generation’ in the context of its focus on rural infrastructure.

Points 1, 3 and 4 are the reasons for my second (replacing biofuels with bioenergy), and my final (fifth) suggested change (the addition) above. I hope that you find this mail useful and constructive.

regards,

Dr. Rod Cooke

CFS Advisory Group member, representing the CGIAR System Organisation