

## ОТАНДЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ШЕТЕЛДІК САРАПШЫЛАРДЫҢ ПІКІРЛЕРІ, ӨТІНІШТЕРІ, ТҮСІНДІРМЕЛЕРІ МНЕНИЯ, ОБРАЩЕНИЯ, КОММЕНТАРИИ ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННЫХ И ЗАРУБЕЖНЫХ ЭКСПЕРТОВ OPINIONS, REFERRALS AND COMMENTS OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN EXPERTS

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### GREEN ECONOMY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) will convene in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012. As mandated by UN General Assembly Resolution 64/236, the principal objective of the Conference is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development; to assess progress made to date and consider remaining gaps in the implementation of agreed commitments; and to address new and emerging challenges. The Conference will also consider two important themes: Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication, and the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development.

With green economy now firmly established on the international policy agenda, it is important to review and clarify the linkages between a green economy and sustainable development.

**Sustainable development** is the management and conservation of natural resources and the introduction of technological and institutional change to ensure meeting basic human needs for present and future generations. It emphasizes a holistic, equitable and far-sighted approach to decision-making at all levels and rests on integration and a balanced consideration of social, economic and environmental goals and objectives in both public and private decision-making. Such sustainable development (in the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors) conserves land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, is environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable.

**The concept of green economy** focuses primarily on the intersection between environment and economy. Although the concept has no internationally agreed definition, all stakeholders concur with the fact that green economy implies “doing more/better with less.” The main hypothesis is that the environmental and social goals of a green economy can also generate increases in income, growth and enhanced well-being. The concept of a green economy does not replace sustainable development but is a means to achieve sustainability, not only ecologically and economically, but also socially.

The pursuit of economic growth and the drive towards ever-increasing consumption has had devastating impacts on the global environment, exploiting natural resources with little regard for environmental impact, and valuing short-term financial gains over the long-term benefits of preserving some of our most precious and valuable ecosystems. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment concludes that in the past 50 years, “human beings have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period in human history.” The report states that the level of ecosystem degradation, if left unchecked, poses a major threat to the wellbeing of future generations.

There are a number of options for reversing and reducing ecosystem degradation, and what they all have in common is an understanding that our global economic system needs to value and invest in the environment and ecosystem services upon which all human and economic activity ultimately depends. In other words, we need to build a “green economy.”

Most developing countries, and certainly the majority of their populations, depend directly on natural resources. The livelihoods of many of the world's rural poor are also intricately linked with exploiting fragile environments and ecosystems. According to the World Bank, well over 600 million of the rural poor currently live on lands prone to degradation and water stress, and in upland areas, forest systems and drylands that are vulnerable to climatic and ecological disruptions.

As the single largest sector using 60 percent of world's ecosystems and providing livelihoods for 40 percent of today's global population, the food and agriculture sector is critical to greening the economy. Greening the economy with agriculture implies increasing food security (in terms of availability, access, stability and utilization) while minimizing the use of natural resources, achieving improved efficiencies through the introduction of new agricultural technologies throughout the food value chain.

### **Ecological scarcity and poverty**

Linking sustainable agriculture to poverty eradication is crucial to ensuring food security and enhancing livelihoods, while restoring, safeguarding and developing natural capital. Seventy-five per cent of the world's poor still live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for nutrition and livelihood support. Promoting more effective, sustainable agricultural practices among poor farmers is even more urgent today given the need to adapt to climate change, which can have devastating effects on national efforts to ensure food security. The recognition of the environment and ecosystems as "stakeholders" in our economic system is an underlying principle of the green economy concept, as is the need to develop knowledge-based agriculture that explicitly recognizes the contributions of ecosystem services.

Increasing depletion of natural resources is an indication that we are irrevocably damaging ecosystems too rapidly, and the consequence is that current and future economic welfare is affected. As in the case of climate change, the link between ecological deterioration and poverty is well-established for some of the most critical environmental and energy problems. For example, for the world's poor, global water scarcity manifests itself as a water poverty problem. One in five people in the developing world lacks access to sufficient clean water, and about half the developing world's population, 2.6 billion people, do not have access to basic sanitation.

More than 660 million of the people without sanitation live on less than US\$2 a day, and more than 385 million on less than US\$1 a day (UNDP 2006). Billions of people in developing countries have no access to modern energy services. Among the energy poor are 2.4 billion people who rely on traditional biomass fuels for cooking and heating, including 89% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa.

Thus, finding ways to protect global ecosystems, reduce the risks of global climate change, improve energy security and simultaneously improve the livelihoods of the poor are important challenges in the transition to a green economy, especially for developing countries.

The challenge for policy-makers is to meet increasing demands for food and resources while minimizing environmental and social pressure. A major shift in agricultural policies and practices is needed if a growing world population is to be fed without over-exploiting scarce natural resources or further damaging the environment.

### **MASHAV's Approach to Sustainable Agricultural Development**

Closely connected to the international agenda, MASHAV's agricultural programming deals with the introduction of modern technologies and agro-technical methods designed to increase the levels, sustainability and quality of agricultural production to ensure food security. It also concentrates on introducing effective support systems to enhance the economic viability of agriculture in areas such as marketing, storage and transport, the supply of agricultural inputs, granting of credit and finance to the agricultural sector and upgrading the work of extension services.

MASHAV's approach to agricultural development is based on harnessing science, technology and extension. Applied research, the introduction of innovative technologies and the promotion of agricultural crop intensification and diversification are key elements in attaining sustainable food security. The challenge is to adapt many of the known improvements in the use of agricultural practices and technologies to make them accessible to the reality and needs of the smallholder

farmers in rural areas, while taking into account the different stakeholders in the agricultural system (farmers, state and private sector).

### **Towards Rio+20**

As part of the preparations for participating in the Rio+20 Conference, the Government of Israel and the Secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) decided to jointly organize a High Level Expert Group Meeting on “Using Green Agriculture to Stimulate Economic Growth and Eradicate Poverty,” held in Israel in October 2011 (**See Box**).

Over 70 delegates from 28 countries including representatives from WFP and the FAO participated in the event. The purpose of this high-level meeting was to discuss the central role that green and sustainable agriculture can play in stimulating economic growth and combating poverty through the sharing of know-how, best practices and lessons learned. Policy options should provide the individual (including small) farmer with incentives to apply sustainable practices to improve productivity, income and well-being, while maintaining healthy ecosystems. The focus of the meeting was on agricultural development under conditions of limited natural resources (including water and land), and to climatic instability. Consideration was also given to the development of policies, financial mechanisms and bio-physical management systems aimed at increasing production efficiency, and to the level and stability of yields under such adverse conditions.

The opening statement was delivered by Mr. Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, who stated that: “Israel has proven to be a leader in agricultural technology for development, practicing innovation and implementing sustainable solutions for agricultural development, food security, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. They have informed and advised the Commission on Sustainable Development on matters related to integrated water management, drylands, and sustainable crop production. We have much to learn from the Israeli agricultural experience. I wish to commend the in-country experts here today for the dedication they have shown in organizing and contributing to this ambitious and interesting program. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the Israeli Government for your continued leadership, commitment, and generosity. I look forward to our continued collaboration in the coming months as we prepare for Rio+20.”

### **BOX**

#### **International High Level Expert Group Meeting on Using Green Agriculture to Stimulate Economic Growth and Eradicate Poverty**

The Government of Israel and the Secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) co-organized this high-level international meeting to be held in Israel in October 2011, and will constitute a contribution to the preparations for Rio+20, exploring how sustainable agriculture can contribute to a green economy, addressing the importance of green agriculture in ensuring food security, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and stimulating economic growth in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Topics for plenary and roundtables include, among others:

- Mobilizing the farmer (large- and small-scale) to adopt economically viable food production methods while making efficient use of natural resources;
- Macro-economic policies for green agriculture;
- Agricultural food production and the environment;
- Identifying stakeholders in agriculture.

The program includes a field trip to showcase Israeli best practices in different types of management of intensive agriculture to comply with sustainability on one hand and economically viable food production on the other. The conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting will be summarized in an outcome document written collectively by the participants and presented as a contribution of the group to the Rio+20 preparatory process and will be incorporated in the compilation document to be submitted to the second Intersessional Meeting in December 2011. Outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting will also be introduced during the Rio+20 Conference through a side event.