

**FAO Statement at the Second Intersessional Meeting of the
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
United Nations, New York
15-16 December 2011**

Mr Co-Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues of the UN system,
Major Groups,

“There will be no green economy without sustainable agriculture”. This is FAO’s overarching message for Rio+20. The agricultural sector - including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and food processing - will play a vital role in the transition to a green economy. Croplands, pastures and forests occupy 60 percent of terrestrial land, agriculture uses 70 percent of globally withdrawn freshwater, and the sector as a whole provides livelihoods for 40 percent of the world’s population¹. The agricultural sector depends heavily on natural resources for its production processes and can both cause environmental harm and provide environmental benefits. While current practices contribute to over one third of global greenhouse gas emissions, good management practices can result in an almost carbon-neutral sector, as well as the creation of environmental services and the generation of renewable energy, while also achieving food security. The agricultural sector can also be an engine for economic development and the creation of millions of green jobs, especially in the poorest countries. Consequently, there can be no green economy without the agricultural sector.

At the same time, food and nutrition security will have to be achieved as an integral part of the green economy. Only an economic system that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities, will be able to deliver food security for over 9 billion people, by 2050, in a resource-constrained world. The problem of under-nourishment, with roughly 1 billion people going hungry, is super-imposed by the problem of micronutrient malnutrition, with roughly 1.7 billion people overweight and obese. At both ends of the spectrum, individuals are not deriving sufficient nutrition from their diets. Improving nutrition through better diets can also reduce the ecological impact of dietary choices. A shift to more sustainable diets would trigger upstream effects on the food production (e.g. diversification) and processing chain. Improved diets, in terms of micro-nutrients density and quality will be more sustainable, resulting in substantial gains for both the environmental and public health.

More diverse food systems and off-farm diversification will also offer livelihood opportunities for green jobs in employment-scarce settings, while improving land stewardship.

Various food and agriculture models can deliver the multiple objectives of food security, environmental conservation and social and economic development as synergies, rather than trade-offs. They will involve an ecosystem approach to production systems, fairer trade, and more equitable access to natural resources and livelihood opportunities, as advocated by the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. This transition process involves both large and small holdings, whereby sustainable systems are supported equitably. They also need to be facilitated by more sustainable food demand and consumption patterns and well-functioning markets. Although the long-term benefits are clear, making the transition

will require new policies, investment and research. Financing and supporting this transition will require cooperation across multiple sectors, not just limited to food, agriculture, fisheries or forestry, but also including energy, water, the environment, health, education and economic development.

As already announced during the second PrepCom meeting in March 2011, FAO has launched this year a “Greening the Economy with Agriculture” (GEA) initiative in the framework of its preparation for Rio+20. The objective of this initiative is to assist countries implementing the transition towards the green economy in the context of sustainable development, food security and poverty alleviation.

GEA aims to promote a dialogue on sustainable development strategies between the agriculture, forestry and fisheries constituencies and other partners, as well as the overall participation of food and agriculture stakeholders into the Rio+20 process and beyond, with a view to facilitating their access to the resources and institutional arrangements that might be put in place in order to effectively move towards sustainable development. By taking a proactive role in international, regional and national debates for Rio+20 and beyond, the GEA Initiative would create bridges among different types of stakeholders and between constituencies, notably between agriculture and the environment, while strengthening the overall resilience of countries to exogenous shocks, either macroeconomic or ecological.

As part of this initiative, FAO organized a broad stakeholder consultation through a joint FAO/OECD Expert Meeting on Greening the Economy with Agriculture in Paris, France, 5 to 7 September 2011. Preparatory documents for this meeting explored the linkages between green economy and the four pillars of food security:

- ✓ Food, bioenergy and natural resources **availability** for low footprint agriculture, forestry and fisheries;
- ✓ **Access** to food and productive resources to the poor and indigenous people, including decent rural livelihoods, in a green economy context;
- ✓ **Stability** of food systems to macroeconomic and ecological variability;
- ✓ **Utilization** of low carbon food systems, including sustainable diets, biosecurity and waste management;

In addition, FAO is developing Guidelines for the Sustainability Assessment of Agriculture and Food Systems.

Greening the Economy with Agriculture can be achieved by applying an ecosystem approach to agriculture, forestry and fisheries management in a manner that addresses the multiplicity of societal needs and desires, without jeopardizing the options for future generations to benefit from the full range of goods and services provided by terrestrial, aquatic and marine ecosystems. Therefore, GEA strives to:

- ✓ achieve food and nutrition security through an appropriate balance between domestic production and trade;
- ✓ contribute to achieving the right to adequate food for all;
- ✓ ensure decent rural livelihoods;
- ✓ use traditional and scientific knowledge to maintain healthy ecosystems that integrate food production and respect natural resource constraints.

Using this analytical work, FAO and the other Rome-based agencies (IFAD, WFP and Bioversity International) prepared a joint submission for the Rio+20 outcome document. In the coming months, FAO and its partners will continue to develop their analysis of the interlinkages between green economy, sustainable agriculture and food security and to present concrete initiatives for a more sustainable food and agriculture such as the Global Soil

Partnership, the Water Platform, the Climate-Smart Agriculture, Food for Cities, activities related to Food Waste, among others. Coming opportunities to discuss these messages with other stakeholders include notably the meeting of Ministries of Agriculture organized by Germany in Berlin in late January, the Farmers' Forum organized by Farmers Organizations just before the IFAD Council of Governors in mid-February or targeted side events during the UNCSD 3rd Inter-sessional or PrepCom meetings.

Thanks you very much for your attention.

ⁱ FAO, 2011. The State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture (SOLAW)