

AGRICULTURE AND THE GREEN ECONOMY



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Agriculture is the most important sector for many countries in terms of its potential to influence a wide range of issues that are critically related to sustainable development, including: the economy, employment, food security, trade flows, poverty, human health, climate change, the use of natural resources (especially land and water), and biodiversity. However, notwithstanding increases in productivity and yields over the past few decades, today the agricultural sector is characterised by: declining rates of growth in productivity (despite receiving subsidies of over US\$ 1 billion per day); a decreasing share of global agricultural exports from developing countries; an increase in the use of agrochemicals, resulting in negative impacts on human health, ecosystems, and biodiversity; increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions; and, the inequitable distribution of benefits among countries and among different segments of societies within countries.



Around the world, evidence is mounting to suggest that sustainable forms of agricultural production present viable alternatives to existing (and unsustainable) farming practices. More sustainable agricultural systems offer numerous opportunities and benefits, including: competitive economic returns, the supply of essential and life-supporting ecosystem services, the creation of decent jobs and livelihoods, a smaller ecological footprint, increased resilience to climate change, and enhanced food security.

Countries in the EECCA region have a particular comparative advantage in terms of seizing the opportunities offered by sustainable and organic agriculture, given the low level of pesticide and fertiliser use, a significant amount of small farms, and the ready availability of agricultural labour. There are also considerable export opportunities given the close proximity of European Union (EU), one of the biggest and fastest growing markets for organics.



THE AIM OF THE GREEN ECONOMY SCOPING STUDY IN THE EECCA SUB-REGION

UNEP, in collaboration with governments, and national and international organisations working on agriculture, food and economic development issues, is launching a sub-regional initiative commencing with the development of a Green Economy Scoping Study for the EECCA sub-region. Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine are the three leading pilot countries in which national level projects will be launched. These national studies will collect and analyse data to provide an overview of the sector and present the potential economic returns, income generation, job creation, and poverty reduction benefits that can be achieved by investing in sustainable forms of agriculture. Each study will develop a package of policy reforms, investments, and capacity building measures for fostering a transition to a green economy. The national studies will, in turn, feed into the sub-regional synthesis report. The synthesis will draw off the strong and convincing evidence offered by the national studies to support a plan for transitioning to a green economy – an economy dominated by investment in and production of the environmentally enhancing goods and services provided by sustainable agriculture.

METHODOLOGY

To ensure national ownership and capacity building, the Scoping Studies will be prepared by national institutions and experts. UNEP, IFOAM and other international organisation will provide technical assistance to these institutions as and when needed.

In addition to the multidisciplinary research that will be conducted by national experts and institutions, two national workshops will be organised in each country to consult a broad range of stakeholders about the scope and findings of the studies as well as to validate the practicability of their recommendations.



Project Partners

National Project Partners:

Ecoglobe LTD, Armenia

Ecoglobe LTD was established in 2002 and is the first Armenian organic certification company managing inspection and certification of ecological agricultural production. Its sphere of activities covers agricultural production, processing and realization. Further details are available at: www.ecoglobe.am

Proruralinvest, Moldova

Proruralinvest is a NGO created in May 2003 as a partner organization of Landell-Mills Management Consultants, a UK based consulting company. Proruralinvest is responsible for implementation of the Support to Rural Investment and Services Project in Moldova. Further information about Proruralinvest is available at: www.rural.md

Organic Federation of Ukraine

The Organic Federation of Ukraine was founded in 2005 as a Ukrainian organic umbrella organization. It has established a broad communication network, organizing seminars, lectures, round-tables, and a regularly distributed monthly newsletter. It unites more than 100 members: farmers, processors, traders, consumers, schools and service providers specializing in organic. Further details can be found at: www.organic.com.ua

Green Dossier, Ukraine

Green Dossier is an information center with the objective of educating people, especially youth, by providing knowledge of humanities, environmental issues and sustainable development. Further information about Green Dossier is available at: www.dossier.org.ua

The Green Economy Initiative

As the governments around the world are devising responses to the challenges posed by financial, economic, food, fuel and climate crises, the UNEP-led Green Economy Initiative (GEI) of United Nations offers convincing macroeconomic evidence and technical advice for focusing policy and investment packages on key economic sectors (such as industry, sustainable agriculture and forests, renewable energies, water services, transport, waste management, and green buildings) as a means of stimulating economic development, creating jobs, and addressing poverty, while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions, extracting and using less natural resources and creating less waste.

International Project Partners:

International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)

IFOAM is providing technical assistance for this project through GroLink. Further details about IFOAM and GroLink can be found at www.ifoam.org and www.growlink.se

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the United Nations' designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global and regional levels. It leads the Green Economy Initiative, which has received input and support from over 20 United Nations Organizations and countless other institutions from the public, private and NGO sectors. More about UNEP and the Green Economy Initiative is available at: www.unep.org/greeneconomy

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Agriculture: A Catalyst for Transitioning to a Green Economy



A Scoping Study of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) Sub-region