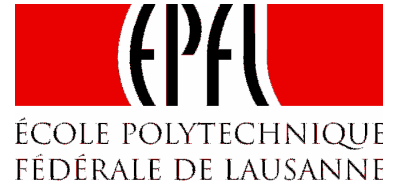


Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels

An initiative of the EPFL Energy Center



4th Virtual Meeting of the Working Group on Environment (full minutes)

19th of October 2007

1. Objectives of the meeting:

In the frame of defining criteria on conservation and biodiversity, this 4th meeting aimed to present the first outputs from the Expert Panel on Conservation and gather the Working Group feedbacks on the following points:

- Duty of identification and special management for the producer
- Protection of HCV areas, ecological corridor and biological conservation areas
- Ecosystem functions and services
- Buffer zones, ecological corridors
- Best/good practices

2. General News:

- The **outputs from the Steering Board**'s last virtual meetings will be released shortly, along with the official second version of draft principles [*NB: These documents were sent to the RSB members on the 23rd of October*]. The Steering Board will meet in Lausanne on the 6th and 7th of November.

- The **Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels/UNEP Regional Outreach in Belo Horizonte** has attracted around 45 participants from the LAC region and provided very interesting feedbacks. An important feedback was that sometimes, farmers seemed confused with some technical terms used in the principles, such as those related to conservation.

- A similar Regional Outreach will be held in Shanghai (13-14th Nov). The preparation is going on, as we expect about 40 participants from East and South-east Asia region.

3. Identification and management of production areas:

The secretariat has formulated the following proposition:

6.a "It is the responsibility of the producer to identify the nature of the ecosystems on the production site and around it. If native ecosystems, ecological corridors or HCV areas are identified by the producer on the production site and around, the exploitation must comply with criteria 6.b and 6.e. "

The questions raised by such a principle were the following:

- What kind of producers will be able to do this?
- How to improve it to make it more broadly applicable?

- What will be the concrete needs to actually identify such areas and to assess possible impacts?

COMMENTS AND REACTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS
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- It s unavoidable that **new concepts and approaches will be introduced**. Some producers will be aware of them, some not, in extent to which the standards can take advantage of other kinds of tools that have been developed. It makes it more likely that the producers will get on board. **The issue of scale is critical**. There needs to be language at both the overall level for the whole standards as well as potentially within specific areas or criterion that clarify how small producers deal with a given issue. There have been various methods for doing that on some standards. FYI, the mechanism that FSC used in Canada for providing guidance on a particular issue was the development of "Intent Boxes", that would clarify the intent or expectations for a particular criterion or indicator - has proved very useful.
- We need a more detailed explanation, which includes general language at the criteria level that would at least give people the sense, given the differences in capacity to implement, depending on the scale... (Can we add language **"appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operation"**?).
- If we are to make a difference between small and large scale producers, we consequently need to define where s the limit. Are we able to do this in every context?

The issue is how we define the scale. Sliding issue, as land property may range from less than 1 to 1000 of ha. Where do we draw the line?

- From the experience, some initiatives have developed separate standards for small producers with consequent criteria. Engaging small producers in the discussion is crucial!
- Regional meeting should look at this and help us defining smallholders.
- There is a concern about the producers' responsibilities. Including surrounding areas will make complicated how to define the borders of these areas. We need a unified view on how to define the areas.
- **If you want different treatment for smallholders, you have to deal with cumulative impacts, because some smallholders can be either linked to small conversion unit but also to large scale units**, as cooperative for instance. Large scale production can hence be initiated by small producers! How to deal with this aspect? One idea would be, to define geographical scale, to have a formula linking the proportion of the production size to the cultivation size or something.
- It must be clear that identification must happen. This cannot just apply to existing protected areas.
- If optional, it may discourage people to conduct an assessment. If you have not assessed it, you cannot identify it as an HCV area. Let's state that assessment must be carried out rather than identification. Some procedures of identification must be followed.

The farmer can be looking at his own production site but what happens with the surrounding areas? If a biomass producer is surrounded by other biomass plantations, it is an important thing to note. If beyond that, there are HCV areas, then the farmers will obviously know about that. **Most of the time, farmers are very well aware of what's happening beyond their farm in the surrounding lands, e.g. where the water comes from, what the neighbors are doing. These are things farmers typically pay attention to.**

- Every producer should have a management plan. This plan should include the identification and proper management of these areas. **Smallholders may lack resources (technological, financial, etc...) to make assessment, analysis and investigation on his own land and around.** When we talk about the scale and intensity of operations and the burden that we are expecting to put on the producers, we need to consider it through the **actual capacities, compared to large producers who obviously have more means at disposal to carry out these requirements.**

For the secretariat, it is important to think about the **practicality of small producers.** Maybe they will need to work together in a cooperative way.

- A possible solution to define small scale would be looking at the producer. Trigger: How much produced in a given area as a way to get at the scale issue? Very large plants are then easier to identify and work through back to the farms.
- This is a point for the **Implementation Working Group.** Scale issues are related to biodiversity, but social aspects as well...

Secretariat needs to add a sentence on scale and intensity and bring the attention of the IMP WG.

4. Protection of conservation areas:

The secretariat has proposed the following wording:

6.b "HCV areas, intact or fragmented native ecosystems and biological conservation areas (list of areas will be provided in annex or as indicators. Ex: KBA) cannot be converted for biofuel production. Exploitation of such areas can be envisaged as long as high conservation values are preserved." (Cut-off date and compensation included in the indicators?)

The question for the conference was if the group agreed on the content and this wording.

COMMENTS AND REACTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

- There is a contradiction between the 2 sentences: "HCV areas (...) cannot be converted" and "exploitation can be envisaged as long as...". Do we need to add "limited" before exploitation?
- Could we add "The Exploitation of the HCV areas can be, etc...". **Agreed.**

- Can we say “limited management” instead of exploitation?
- But management of HCV areas should happen all the time. It may be a confusing term. Strict conservation is also a management and here we want to include limited extraction of resources.
- **This is a very sensitive issue and the most important criterion.** We must be careful about opening loophole. What are we talking about with “limited exploitation”? In the second generation, harvesting grass can be done. Does it mean we also allow a limited part of the HCV area to be converted, forest for instance? Then it is digging in the very core of the sustainability criterion.
- The first sentence of the wording relates to a lot of territories. Fragmented native ecosystems may be exploited without disrupting their HCV, for instance areas where shifting cultivation is possible.
- There is **a lack of geographical specificity**. Ex: IKEA committed not to exploit HCVF but it had not been defined and after being attacked in a campaign, they modified it to “geographically defined HCVF”, to make it more precise. Adopt a list wont be geographically sufficient as the list of indicators will be difficult to interpret. And who will actually pay for making the maps? Certainly not the producers, but purchasers and big companies, but they are at the end of the value chain. There is a concern that this could be left unspecified without defining a mechanism about how to reduce this geographical lack of specificity.

Biological Conservation Areas could be considered “protected areas”, on a legal perspective, which means that they are geographically bound. But intact or fragmented native ecosystems really lack geographical specificity. Someone made this point a few conferences ago: the big producers or converters are going to be looking for specificities on this.

Geographical specification must be looked at.

- Nature of ecosystems on the production site and around: this is very broad. Unequivocally, when the HCVF concept was invented, it was for the areas of production under the domain of the producers. Now, the analysis may go to a higher level, depending on the species, communities and broader landscape level issues. But in terms of the responsibility, it is tied to the production area.
- One of the key aspects in the discussion is that the **values are identified and then the areas**. How those values are identified and managed on the production areas? What is needed? The Identification of high conservation values, going back to scale question, are currently dealt with by an international network, with which large producers may be more easily connected than small producers. This brings back to the scale question. Big issue.

Some of these points shall be grouped under the scale issues. But there is still a **problem with intact or fragmented ecosystem. These terms miss geographical boundaries.**

- A lot of these areas haven’t been identified: intact areas, fragmented native ecosystems, HCV areas, have yet to be identified and mapped and somebody will have to pay for it. This must be discussed by the implementation working group.

But this is not limited only to fragmented or intact ecosystems. Suggestion of rewording: **“Areas identified as containing HCVs, intact or fragmented native ecosystems and biological conservation areas cannot be converted for biofuel production.”**

- Could we also talk of a “limited use under a demonstrated management plan” instead of exploitation? As long as someone has ensured a plan for preserving HCV areas, limited use can be acceptable.
- There is a concern about the suggestion of use “nationally identified areas”, as some producers can exploit areas that have not been yet nationally identified. Back to the scale issue. Producers can identify small areas on their production site but if we are to avoid the bigger effects (displacement of plantations for instance), it seems there is no way to avoid large scale identification. But a **high level process of mapping, though needed, cannot be done by the producers only. We must make a reference to an overall system of mapping of these areas.**

As it is quite urgent, maybe some interim steps can be made. Under 6.b, the fact we included “intact or fragmented” means more than only protected but we need a methodology for identification.

- Everything is open unless values are identified. **It makes two options; one is to consider it opened, that if values have not been identified, one can freely move ahead. The other option is that unless values have been mapped, we potentially consider all of them containing HCVs, what make them closed.** Better to encourage the mapping but the drawback is that it makes a barrier. It would be interesting to study the possibility of a rapid assessment but meanwhile, it s necessary to avoid making that call, take some principle stand to leave it open or closed until the mapping has been made.

We need to define a way to avoid that unidentified areas are freely exploited.

- A land use management plan is key, as a way to ensure that some assessment is done. What we are looking forward is for people to pay attention and evidences of care about the use of their lands. Producers have plans, note necessarily at a higher level. Requiring a document that someone else can access seems important.

Issue of land use planning is one we need to be explicit about.

Is it something we need to include here or pass it to the Implementation Group?

This also gets back to the issue of scale: land use plan for a farm or a region?

Different institutions would then be involved.

5. *Ecosystem functions and services:*

The secretariat has proposed the following wording:

6.c “Adverse effects of biofuel production on ecosystem functions and services must be avoided or minimised. Ecosystem functions include (1) ecosystem physico-chemical integrity, regeneration and succession; (2) genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity; (3) natural cycles that affect the productivity of the ecosystem.” (cf: FSC criterion 6.3)”

The questions to the participants of the meeting were:

- Do we agree on the content: ecosystem functions or services? Is it realistic for identification? Who can make such an evaluation? Can the indicators solve this problem?
- Do we agree on the proposed wording?

COMMENTS AND REACTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

- There is a definition of ecosystem functions, but there shall be some comparable comparison of ecosystem services as well, like “ES are benefits provided to people by ecosystems”. Cf: Millenium Ecosystem Assessment. **The Secretariat will add this definition.**
- **There are some overlaps between this part and protection of HCV areas,** since the HCV definition includes ecosystem services. Is it necessary to break this out separately? If you disrupt an HCV areas or native ecosystem, you will definitely impact and disrupt ecosystem functions (regeneration and succession for instance or ecosystem diversity).
- **It is true that conversion will result in the loss of ES and EF, but not necessarily the opposite:** ex, an increased extraction of water or intensification, without forcefully converting an area or clearing habitat, may have a negative impact on ecosystem function. **Hence, this second lay of safety is needed.**
- The cut off date is a difficult topic but at some point, it needs to be addressed, whether it s in our group or not.
- Related to ES and EF, in all the criteria, nothing is mentioned on chemicals. Is this aspect sufficiently covered?

The use of chemicals is to be addressed through soil, water and air, with Expert Panel for each topic. Let s call on the secretariat to make sure it s being addressed. True that chemicals impact biodiversity as well, but indirectly through the ecological compartments.

6. *Buffer zones and ecological corridors:*

The secretariat has proposed the following wording:

6.d “Buffer zones must be set between the production sites and surrounding natural areas to ensure that they remain unaffected by the production. Riparian zones should be maintained or restored to a natural/ near-natural state”

6.e *“Biofuel production must not destruct or disrupt natural ecological corridors. In case the production site disrupts an ecological corridor, a significant area (10%???) of the production site must be maintained in a natural state to allow undisrupted migrations of wildlife.”*

The questions to the participants of the meeting were:

- Is it too constraining to require ecological and buffer zone (cf: to which extent is the producer responsible for its production site and riparian areas? What are the criteria for limitation of production site and riparian areas? Shall the buffer zone be taken on the production site itself? Which size or proportion of the whole site to be kept as ecological corridor? How to establish it? Who? Who checks?

- Do we agree on the proposed wording?

COMMENTS AND REACTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

This is a broader land use issue. Maybe **we are not clear enough about how buffer zones can be used.**

- **The statement “ensure that they remain unaffected” is not realistic**, because effects will happen, for instance airborne...

Suggestion: we could replace it by “minimize effects”. **Agreed.**

- Concern about the term **“significant area (10%???)”**. There are countries where the requirement is defined, sometimes above 10% (Brasil 20%). So it might not be a good starting point. However, the real challenge is on the scale issue-> Recommendation to be passed to the IMP working group, because we don't find the difficulty is with the large scale producers in meeting the threshold but with small forest or agricultural owners to meet a % threshold.
- There is also an **issue of location**. It makes a huge difference where this x% is located.
- Could we say “undisrupted migration of wildlife **AND PROTECTION OF HABITATS**”? **Agreed**

The point is to enhance the effective size of the area.

- Importance to develop **landscape level maps** that would allow comprehensive understanding for the decision makers. ->IMP group.
- Once again, **maps are critical** to have a broad overview.
- We cannot really avoid the issue of **large scale land use planning** because all the other issues make sense at a farm level but before you get the farm level or plantation level, **you have to identify the “no go” areas at a national or subnational level, as well as strategic migration corridors** and this is not something you can address at the producer level, unless it s a huge scale production. So, these national considerations are needed first, and then the criteria we have here make a lot of sense at a plantation level. The mention of riparian zones makes sense at the farm level.
- Concern about the **additional aspect of things**. Biofuel production will happen in areas where these corridors have already been disrupted long ago **and it s not fair to hold the biofuel production responsible for that**. Suggestion: biofuel production should not “increase the destruction or disruption”?

- "Must not destruct" already means new destruction. If something is gone, it won't be biofuels destroying it.
- "Must not disrupt" seems to include old disruption.
- Maybe we can think **a little more positively and keep the idea that, as we are developing biofuel production areas, maybe there are place where we can restore habitats.** Maybe there are trade offs of location, where it would be a good idea to restore a corridor and replace that land with an area somewhere else, which is not so critically located. **Reconstruction or reestablishment of corridors is something we might be able to think about in a larger land use plan.**
- **Is global land use management really in our mandate?** We have been delegated the responsibility to identify negative effects on environment with associated remediation. Are high level management plans not too political and beyond our mandate? Can we have an influence at this level?
- **Calling for a management plan to be prepared is not necessarily a political statement.** We are certainly not going to prepare the management plans. What we do is suggesting the importance of having the management plan.
- **In Alberta (Canada), there is a management plan. Basically, all the producers and stakeholders from government are involved,** so everybody is on the same line. When there are cumulative impacts, producers work together to find solutions.
- **Management planning is done today and is a much more inclusive process that it once was.** It really does involve the producers and the other interest groups when it s done well.
- **Every farmer has a plans: Rotation plan. Allocation plan for different crops at different times if large enough.** We are not only talking about regional land use planning. We should incorporate land recovery and ecological improvement, although it s already there to the extent we are talking on using marginal lands and it s a wonderful thought that biofuel production might also incorporate land recovery or improvement.

It is a good idea to be positive and constructive. We should emphasize that kind of contribution, which conservation can make to the overall activity of the land.

7. Best/good practices:

This topic was not fully discussed due to lack of time.

COMMENTS AND REACTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

- Shouldn't we say "Good practices"? Best sounds like the best you can do whereas we must always be trying to improve them.
- All these questions about using marginal land or possibly restore habitats are at a different level than what we have called the redline area (converting HCV area for instance). These are all about the best/good practices to be promoted...

8. Conclusions and next steps:

This meeting has been highly fruitful and constructive. The issue of scale, high level management plan and maps are suggestions to pass on the IMP group. **All the suggestions agreed on during the conference will be included to reword some of our criteria.** The 2nd virtual meeting of the Expert Panel on Conservation will aim to validate the criteria in order to make a suggestion to the Working Group. As per the schedule of the Steering Board Meeting (6-7th Nov) and regional outreach in Shanghai (13-14th Nov), **the next Virtual Meeting of the Working Group will be held in the second half of November 2007.**

Thanks to all the participants!

Please keep on sending your views, comments and opinion to sebastien.haye@epfl.ch or upload them on the **Bioenergy Wiki** ([http://www.bioenergywiki.net/index.php/RSB Working Group on Environment](http://www.bioenergywiki.net/index.php/RSB_Working_Group_on_Environment)) for an interactive debate!