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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

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Sustainable Bioenergy and the role of the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP)

Executive Summary

Sustainable bioenergy can contribute to sustainable development by stimulating agricultural productivity, supporting food security, and contributing to Net Zero growth. Focusing on sustainability is key and the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), of which FAO is a founding member and hosts its Secretariat, has been a unique multilateral forum to ensure that sustainable bioenergy is an engine of low-carbon and sustainable development.

GBEP, established in 2006 to support the implementation of the 2005 Gleneagles Plan of Action: *Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development*, has been supported by the subsequent G7 and G20 Summits to continue its work to facilitate the sustainable development of bioenergy. Sixteen years after its establishment, GBEP has built a growing international trust by actively working to advance bioenergy for sustainable development, climate change mitigation, and food and energy security.

The GBEP initiative is committed to continue working for sustainable development while contributing to all FAO aspirations.

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I. Background

1. Sustainable energy solutions play a crucial role in ending poverty and hunger. Moreover, they can spur innovation, generate millions of green jobs, and improve vital services such as healthcare and education, while also helping to create a just, equitable, Net Zero Growth[1], contributing to net zero emissions while enabling economic growth that leaves no one behind.

2. Bioenergy is one specific form of renewable energy; it can be used for heating and cooking, electricity generation, and as a transport fuel. Bioenergy is recognized as an integral component of a low-carbon global energy system; to meet Net Zero targets, it is projected that bioenergy will need to almost double by 2050 compared with 2020[2].

3. The links between bioenergy, agriculture and food security are complex. Bioenergy can pose both opportunities and challenges. It is therefore key to focus on sustainability to ensure that bioenergy makes a positive contribution to sustainable development by stimulating agriculture productivity, supporting food security and contributing to healthy ecosystems, while also contributing to achieve the Paris Agreement goals. Bioenergy options are very context-specific and involve diverse stakeholders across many sectors; their sustainable implementation therefore requires policies and governance structures based on robust and impartial assessments.

4. The Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), of which FAO is a founding member and hosts its Secretariat, is a unique forum to ensure that sustainable bioenergy is an engine of low-carbon and sustainable development.

II. Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP)

GBEP Mission

5. GBEP is a multilateral initiative where voluntary cooperation works towards consensus amongst its members (including more than 80 between Governments and International Organizations). It was established to implement the commitments in the 2005 Gleneagles Plan of Action and was invited by subsequent G7 and G20 Summits to continue its work to facilitate the sustainable development of bioenergy.

6. Sixteen years after its establishment, and at a time when there is general agreement on the important role of sustainable bioenergy as a contribution to a decarbonized economy, GBEP has built growing international trust by actively working to advance bioenergy for sustainable development, climate change mitigation, and food and energy security.

GBPE's priority areas and achievements

7. The main priority areas for GBEP have been sustainability and capacity development, with a policy support approach.

8. GBEP has developed a set of 24 sustainability indicators for bioenergy to measure the environmental, social and economic impacts of bioenergy production and use at national level. This set of indicators is the most comprehensive and broadly agreed tool for assessing and monitoring bioenergy sustainability. These indicators and their respective methodology sheets, which address the life cycle of all forms of bioenergy, guide any analysis of bioenergy at national level, to inform decision-making and to facilitate the sustainable development of bioenergy. Measured over time, these indicators can be used to monitor sector responses to policy and give additional information to policymakers for policy adjustments, with a view to further improve the sustainability of the national bioenergy production and use.

9. GBEP indicators have been measured in 14 countries, and additional countries are implementing them. FAO, as a GBEP partner, has performed full sustainability assessments of bioenergy in four countries, giving policy-makers recommendations on measures to improve the

[1] www.fao.org/energy/bioenergy/en
[2] IEA 2021, Net Zero by 2050.

sustainable development of bioenergy at national level. FAO has also used these indicators for sustainability assessments of bioenergy produced on marginal, underutilized and contaminated lands in the context of European Union-funded projects.

10. GBEP has also been focusing on capacity development activities to raise awareness of the potential benefits of sustainable modern bioenergy and support related policy-making. Amongst the main achievements:

a) Transitioning to Sustainable Modern Bioenergy in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). GBEP supported the development of a regional strategy on Bioenergy that was adopted by ECOWAS Members in 2015.

b) GBEP Study Tours for Sustainable Bioenergy. Eight Bioenergy Weeks have been organized so far, every year in a different region, as opportunities for scientists and officials to learn from good examples in the sustainable production and use of bioenergy to guide bioenergy policies. The 2022 edition is planned to take place in Latin America.

c) Thematic discussions, capacity development activities including trainings. These events have been held, *inter alia*, on how the links between wood energy and forest and landscape restoration can best contribute to: climate targets; bioenergy mapping; bioenergy and water; biogas; advanced liquid biofuels; and bioenergy and nutrition. Bioeconomy and the role of bioenergy in this broader context also represent a key focus area.

III. Next steps

11. GBEP is committed to continue working for sustainable development, facilitating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and contributing to all FAO aspirations; this includes focusing on how sustainable bioenergy could work for *better production, better nutrition,* a *better environment,* and a *better life*, to leave no one behind.

12. Since its establishment, GBEP has been funded by extrabudgetary contributions. It is hoped that these contributions will continue to be provided to its Secretariat in FAO to allow continuation of its work supporting countries towards a sustainable development of bioenergy.