



## **Report and Possible Steps Forward of the Experts' Workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism**

*Prepared by the Office for Sustainable Development and Environment*

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Overview of Preparatory Process: Recently, OAS' Member States identified three substantive areas of work to be addressed in the preparatory work for the 2006 Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Development: (a) sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, and sustainable tourism; (b) risk mitigation and risk reduction related to natural hazards and natural disasters; and (c) promoting international cooperation in managing transboundary freshwater resources. Moreover, an important focus of the Ministerial meeting will entail supporting public participation, gender equality, and the active engagement of indigenous peoples in these three specific areas, as well as in sustainable development, more generally.

Objective and Mandate: The objective of this informal, one-day workshop of experts was to identify useful steps forward in supporting sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry and sustainable tourism at the policy and project levels. The November workshop marked the initiation of a preparatory process towards the First Inter-American Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Development that will be hosted by the Government of Bolivia, and will be held in the second half of 2006. Experts were asked to identify potential areas of cooperation at the workshop, which could form the basis of more detailed preparatory work by the OAS Secretariat. The options provided below are based on the informal discussions and they represent a first step towards identifying work ahead.

Workshop Objectives: The objective of the Workshop on Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism included the following:

- Begin the process of identifying successful policies and practices underway within the countries of the region that support sustainable management in the agricultural, forestry and tourism sectors.
- Identify mechanisms by which successful practices can be shared, through information networks, online databases and other means. This should build upon successful regional and other networks, including the Sustainable Tourism Network of the Americas, supported by the Rainforest Alliance and the International Model Forest Network supported by IDRC and others.
- Identify policies and project(s) that could be established in support of the Ministerial meeting.

Background Materials: In preparation for the workshop, a series of brief background notes were prepared by the OAS Secretariat, addressing the following issues:

- An overview of sustainability in the agriculture, forestry, and tourism sector in the region.

- Payments for environmental services.
- Environmental valuation techniques as one means of supporting ecosystem payments.
- An overview of some economic effects of trade agreements in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Some recent developments in trade facilitation, environmental, and sustainability-related labeling and certification systems in the agricultural and forestry sector.

Summary of Some Key Points: Below are some possible steps forward, identified during the discussions, in preparing for the Ministerial meeting in each particular area.

#### **CLUSTER ONE: BUILDING LINKS ACROSS SECTORS**

Following the speech of Honorable Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Minister of Energy and Environment ([www.oas.org/osde](http://www.oas.org/osde)), it was agreed that a major obstacle to achieve sustainable development remains the fragmentation of the issue and lack of integration among key economic sectors and different ministries at the national level. The role of coherence among different sectors remains a critical challenge, despite the efforts of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and others to bring different sectors together. It was agreed that the OAS Ministerial meeting created an opportunity to bring different stakeholders together in a political context. The experience of the OECD in organizing a sustainable development ministerial meeting in 2002 ([www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)) which brought together ministers of finance and environment, was identified as a potential model for the OAS process and under this cluster, the following items were identified as potential issues to be addressed by the Secretariat in the preparatory process for the Ministerial meeting:

*National Reports on Sustainable Development:* There is a risk of falling into policy cracks by focusing on the “cross-cutting” issues within sustainable development, because of the need of inter-agency coordination. One concrete suggestion in order to promote coordination among different ministries is to revive the national sustainable development reports, which were identified at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) but a proper follow-up has not been achieved. The OAS preparatory meetings could include a consultation process to help prepare, with cooperation of national governments, these national reports.

*Regulatory Issues:* In identifying common elements, it was noted that the value-added of work by the OAS in this broad area entailed identifying possible areas of cooperation at the international level. Determine the advantages of compiling and placing online national regulations, standards and norms – where applicable – related to sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, and sustainable tourism. One possible model could be the recent online law database supported by the OAS in the areas of environmental law and water.<sup>1</sup>

*Supporting Regulatory-Related Initiatives:* Given the multiple sectors involved in sustainable management of resources, the discussions recognized that a broad range of related regulatory matters fall under the rubric of “governance” and they need to be supported, and their role in supporting sustainable management of natural resources needs to be examined. Several areas which entailed governmental action were highlighted, including:

- (a) *Support Effective Public Participation:* In 2003, governments to the OAS formally endorsed the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in

<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.oas.org/osde/fida/laws/database.htm> and <http://www.oas.org/osde/EnvironmentLaw/WaterLaw/home.htm>

- Decision-Making for Sustainable Development (<http://www.ispnet.org/lpgmissi.htm>). The strategy provides principles and recommendations that serve as a useful platform to enhance at the operational level meaningful and effective public participation. In the preparation of the Ministerial meeting, the OAS will provide an online “virtual forum” to enable a wide range of stakeholders to comment on draft documents and participate in the process. The virtual forum will replicate one used to support OAS-related activities for the Health and Environment Ministerial meeting, held in Mar del Plata in June 2005. (<http://www.oas.org/consulta/osde/>)
- (b) *Support Access to Information*: Related to public participation, the preparatory process can identify opportunities to advance access-to-information laws that have an impact on resource management at the national level among the 34 countries of the hemisphere, as well as examine codifying through the political process some basic indicators in support of effective access-to-information provisions. This could include analyzing how effective the 34 Member countries of the OAS are applying Principle 10 of Agenda 21, adopted at the 1992 UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.
  - (c) More broadly, identify ways in which governments can collapse and aggregate information related to sustainable management of natural resources at the sectoral level.
  - (d) *Define the Role of Land-Tenure and Secured Property Rights*: Examine the role of property rights in supporting sustainable management in the agricultural, forestry, and tourism sectors, using LandNet Americas as online data-source. (<http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/>)
  - (e) *Effective Enforcement*: Illegal logging is a problem that many countries are facing. The Ministerial meeting provides an opportunity to address this issue, both at the source and consumer side, through various initiatives, including monitoring and enforcement.
  - (f) *Procurement*: Some delegates highlighted the role of governments, noting in particular the work of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation in its Green Purchasing Initiative (<http://www.cec.org/eco-sat/english/index.html>). However, it was noted that this issue while necessary, was complicated for a number of reasons, including possible implications from the perspective of trade policy.

## **CLUSTER TWO: VOLUNTARY INITIATIVES**

A basic issue which requires clarification in the lead-up to the Ministerial meeting is the parameter of activities that fall under the rubric “sustainable” agriculture, forestry and tourism. There are two approaches to address this issue. First, identify ways in which environmental and social standards (including core labor standards) are affecting mainstream agricultural production, forest harvesting, and the provision of tourism services. Second, identify trends and challenges in supporting the significantly smaller sustainable farming, forestry, and tourism niche markets.

Most of the discussions that took place around this issue focused on the second approach, and examined two areas: (a) market-based instruments and voluntary initiatives that support sustainable produce and services. These ranged from green or social (fair trade) labeling and certification systems to understanding the market characteristics of different niche markets and the role of the private sector in supporting such schemes, and (b) identifying and supporting actions by governments, either alone or through public-private sector partnerships, in supporting voluntary initiatives.

The workshop discussed some specific areas in which governments, acting alone or jointly through regional or hemispheric initiatives, could play a role in supporting voluntary market-based instruments. The following possible areas of work could be prepared and examined in the lead-up to the Ministerial meeting:

- (a) *Summary of Current Schemes*: Provide a summary of the multiple definitions and approaches of “sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry and sustainable tourism” that exist in the countries of the region.
- (b) *Definitional Issues*: Identify common elements among and between different categories, as well as examine if the multiplicity of definitions and schemes are creating problems for regulators, providers, consumers and intermediaries.
- (c) It was noted that harmonization of different schemes is not always an answer. However, opportunities do exist in the area of conformity assessment, equivalency and mutual recognition.
- (d) *Information Sharing through Networks*: Given the proliferation of schemes, an important initiative involves compiling information, through databases and portals, as well as sharing information proactively through networks. Given the creativity and dynamism of the private sector, it was noted that often, governments are in need of information and not the other way around. Although “best practices” is a notion that has entered the vernacular, it remains extremely difficult to identify and share best practices in a meaningful way. The Canadian Model Forest Network Initiative (<http://www.modelforest.net/cmfn/en/initiatives/>) represents an extremely useful model in this regard, that could be replicated and supported through the OAS Ministerial preparatory process.<sup>2</sup>

### CLUSTER THREE: INNOVATIVE FINANCING

The final cluster of issues discussed involved financing, as well as price setting for sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, and sustainable tourism. Different obstacles to financing were identified, particularly in the area of rural credit, microfinance and the challenges facing small and mid-sized producers.

The need of approaching environmental management from an economic perspective was highlighted. One particular area which links the economy and the environment and in which new mechanisms for financing are evolving is payments for environmental services (PES). A number of different kinds of schemes are underway within the region, including Costa Rica, Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Panama and others. Most of these schemes are local in nature, focusing on local benefits. Work in the area of PES continues to accelerate given the environmental and socio-economic impacts and benefits for communities, including women and indigenous populations. For example, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) recently held a conference to explore some of the lessons in integrated management of environmental services in human dominated ecosystems and most of the sessions were dedicated to the topic of PES.<sup>3</sup> Further information in this area is available in the background papers prepared for the Workshop in San Jose.

Given the pivotal role that watersheds are playing in most PES systems as a mean to support sustainable forestry-related goals, a specific area of opportunity identified during the meeting is to explore PES schemes related to international water basins. It was noted that the OAS-GEF portfolio of transboundary river basin projects (<http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/usde>) – including the wider Amazon River Basin initiative – created a possible foundation upon which to explore international PES systems. However, it remains difficult to determine whether lessons from one

<sup>2</sup> The OAS supports a number of hemispheric networks which support information sharing. These include the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network ([www.iabin.org](http://www.iabin.org)); the Inter-American Water Resources Network ([www.iwrn.org](http://www.iwrn.org)) and the Renewable Energy in the Americas Initiative ([www.oas.org/osde](http://www.oas.org/osde)).

<sup>3</sup> Available at [http://web.catie.ac.cr/catie/Conferencia%20Wallace\\_eng/home\\_eng/wallace\\_home\\_eng.htm?CodSeccion=56](http://web.catie.ac.cr/catie/Conferencia%20Wallace_eng/home_eng/wallace_home_eng.htm?CodSeccion=56)

PES project can be replicated to another region. Nevertheless, the importance of flexibility in designing PES systems was emphasized.

As a concrete step forward, the OAS will jointly organize with other partners a one-day technical workshop in early 2006, to identify common elements necessary for PES systems that could include:

- The role of valuation studies in helping to establish monetary levels.
- The role of baseline data and the supporting role that governments and organizations can play in compiling indicators and other information.
- Methods to monitor transactions.