

12th Meeting of the GBEP Working Group on Capacity Building for Sustainable Bioenergy (WGCB)

Online - 12.00 – 14.15 CET time (UTC +1)

Tuesday, 27 October 2020

Co-Chairs Summary

The GBEP Working Group on Capacity Building for Sustainable Bioenergy (WGCB) held its 12th meeting on 27 October 2020 online due to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Philippines, Spain, Sweden, United States of America, ECOWAS/ECREEE, EUBIA, European Commission, FAO, ICRAF, IEA, IEA Bioenergy and IRENA participated in the meeting as Partners and Observers. External experts from the private sector – UPM and Versalis – also joined as speakers of the Mini-webinar.

Miguel Almada (Argentina) welcomed Partners and Observers during his opening of the meeting and the agenda of the meeting was formally adopted.

Overview of the work of the WGCB in 2020

Constance Miller (GBEP Secretariat) gave an overview of the work that was conducted under the WGCB in 2020 as part of the various activity groups:

Activity Group 2 - Implementation of the GBEP Sustainability Indicators was completed in Ethiopia and Kenya under the project “Building Capacity for enhancing bioenergy sustainability through the use of GBEP indicators”. [More information](#), as well as the [final project reports](#) are available online, along with an interesting [video](#) from Kenya.

Activity Group 3 - Due to the current global pandemic, this year’s Bioenergy Week to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, has been postponed to 16-19 March 2021. The event is organized by GBEP in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), African Energy Commission (AFREC) and African Union Commission (AUC). GBEP is monitoring the health situation to determine whether an in-person meeting will be possible or if the event will have to be held online. The [draft agenda](#) has already been developed and includes many promising sessions, including: bioenergy reporting and statistics; sustainable bioenergy as a contribution to land conservation and restoration; presentation of the GBEP Youth Award; and roundtables on bankability and bioeconomy opportunities in Africa, among others.

Activity Group 4 – Under the new workstream, “Woody biomass for forest landscape restoration and sustainable livelihoods”, the AG4 published a [report](#) in June 2020 entitled “Collection of examples: Positive Relationships between Sustainable Wood Energy and Forest Landscape Restoration”, which brings together case studies of how improving the sustainability of wood energy value chains can reduce pressures on natural forests through better management

practices and improved technologies. A [webinar](#) was also held to discuss this theme and to showcase some of the case studies from the report.

Two videos have been developed under this theme to provide information to the general public and youth on the area of [sustainable wood energy and FLR](#) and the [contribution to the SDGs](#).

In the context of the collaboration between FAO/GBEP, GIZ and IEA Bioenergy on FLR and wood energy, GBEP (along with both collaborators and with generous funding from GIZ) has organized and guided a number of international and national dialogues and activities on this topic. Both the [technical report](#) and the [final report](#), that summarizes all outputs and outcomes of the project, are available online.

Activity Group 7 – The AG7 “[Stocktaking Paper – Regional analysis of biogas value chains](#)” was published in April 2020. It is the result of interviews, surveys and discussion sessions during the last three Bioenergy Weeks (Ghana, Africa 2017; Argentina, Latin America 2018; and The Philippines, Asia 2019).

To continue the e-learning series of webinars, the AG7 held [two webinars on biochar](#): “Biochar systems for sustainable agriculture”, presented by Prof. David Chiaramonti; and “Climate-smart biochar systems: opportunities and challenges”, presented by Prof. Johannes Lehmann.

Activity Group 8 – Under AG8, work has continued to collect examples of experiences in advanced liquid biofuels; so far nine contributions have been received. This has been hindered by the effects of COVID-19 on the biofuel sector. A session that covered these impacts was held during the 12th WGCB Meeting to provide inputs for the upcoming report (more information below).

Youth – At the GBEP meetings in 2019, the Steering Committee agreed that GBEP should increase its efforts to involve youth in its activities. The GBEP Secretariat has worked hard to push forward with this commitment. To this end, GBEP launched the [GBEP Youth Award](#), which will be awarded each year in association with the Bioenergy Week. The deadline for the call for papers from outstanding African students/researchers for the GBEP Youth Award 2021 is 31 December 2020.

The GBEP Secretariat has also begun work on a Bioenergy Supplement for the [YUNGA Energy Challenge Badge](#). The first draft, approved by the GBEP Partners and Observers via email, is currently under review by YUNGA and should be ready for finalization and piloting next year.

Capacity Development Materials for the general public and youth – The Secretariat has been developing some infographics to explain key bioenergy topics to the general public, including youth, with a view to sensitize their knowledge about the key potential role of bioenergy in the context of climate change and development. The topics are [gasification](#), [biogas](#) and the [Water-Energy-Food-Climate Nexus in the context of COVID-19](#).

The Secretariat produced a promotional video to publicize GBEP’s work. This video is available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Capacity Development events – GBEP held a [side event at the 28th e-EUBCE](#), 9 July 2020. This side event aimed to give the opportunity to shed light on the role of bioenergy in the climate

goals (including considering the recent IPCC report on Climate Change and Land) and share the experience of GBEP and other relevant international institutions regarding the joint effort towards sustainable development of bioenergy.

In partnership with IRENA, GBEP organized a [session at the IRENA Innovation Week 2020](#) on ‘Growing the bio-economy: solutions for the sustainable supply of biomass & biofuels’.

The GBEP Secretariat has also participated in many other events to share the GBEP experiences.

Activity Group 4 – Woody biomass for forest landscape restoration and sustainable livelihoods

At the beginning of the session, the video developed by the GBEP Secretariat on [Sustainable wood energy and FLR](#) was shown.

[Tiziana Pirelli](#) (GBEP Secretariat/FAO) then gave an overview of the outcomes of the project in the context of the collaboration between FAO/GBEP, GIZ and IEA Bioenergy on FLR and wood energy. She focused specifically on the outcomes of the international and national dialogues in Togo and Ghana and the recommendations from these meetings, which were to:

1. Establish *permanent Multi-Stakeholders Working Groups* to foster dialogue among FLR and energy stakeholders;
2. *Inform policy makers* towards the development of integrated and harmonized FLR, sustainable wood energy and climate policies and measures;
3. Build harmonized *datasets and map domestic bioenergy supply potential and existing bioenergy enterprises*. This will serve as: a) a baseline on which to develop and measure further progress; and b) identify best practices and facilitate networking among players in the value chains; and
4. *Provide technical support and trainings* to identify and implement sustainable, context specific, technical solutions.

These follow-up activities are suggested to be implemented across all AFR100 countries in order to accelerate the achievement of the commitments to forest restoration taken by these nations.

Mini webinar on Activity Group 8: Impact of COVID-19 on the advanced liquid biofuels sector

The advanced liquid biofuels sector has been particularly affected by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the reduction in demand for transport fuels and the consequent drop in prices. The AG8 therefore decided to hold a mini-webinar for GBEP Partners and Observers, moderated by Maria Michela Morese (GBEP Secretariat), in order to raise awareness on these issues within GBEP and discuss the long-term perspectives.

[Toshimasa Masuyama](#) (IRENA) opened the webinar with a presentation on scaling-up advanced biofuels as an essential part of transport decarbonization pathways. He showed the decreasing biofuels investments globally since 2011 and stated that stability of regulation, cost

and availability of financing, and the level of conversion efficiency and CAPEX are important for reinvigorating this investment.

[Adam Brown](#) (IEA Bioenergy) then focused in on another key component of the success of advanced liquid biofuels, which is the costs of production. For many types of advanced biofuels, these costs are much higher than the current fossil fuel price range. Technical advances and improved financing may have the scope to reduce these costs by 20-50 percent in the medium term but this would still leave a gap for many pathways unless anticipated fossil carbon prices are implemented. He concluded that the large-scale deployment of advanced liquid biofuels will therefore depend on support, either via strong carbon price signals or incentivization of low carbon fuels.

[Marko Janhunen](#) (UPM Biofuels) and [Dario Giordano](#) (Versalis) then provided private sector perspectives of the impact of COVID-19 on the sector. Mr. Janhunen focused on the opportunities at the European level that have arisen from the pandemic in terms of the substantial amount of financing available for innovative investments through the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and also the opportunities presented by the Green Deal. However, he stressed that revision of relevant legislation creates regulatory uncertainty. Mr. Giordano also focused on the long-term trends in terms of CO₂ reduction targets and the consequent transition from fossil fuels to renewables.

The participants then heard a public sector perspective from [Emily Marthaler](#) (USA), who discussed the US policy response to COVID-19 and the long-term vision. She stated that the long-term vision has not changed, despite short- and medium-term disruptions and challenges. These challenges include demand contraction that has caused weak margins. However, she also noted that impacts are not all negative, as industrial demand and demand for freight has remained steady, and there are new marketing opportunities, for example in hand sanitizer. The US support focuses on market demand, infrastructure support, and enabling legislation and regulations.

Finally, the participants heard from [Andrea Rossi](#) (IEA, Biofuture Platform Facilitator) who presented the Biofuture Platform Five Principles for Post-COVID Bioeconomy Recovery and Acceleration: 1) Do not backtrack; 2) Consider short-term COVID support for producers; 3) Reassess fossil fuel subsidies; 4) Build back better with bio; and 5) Reward sustainability. These principles have the support of the 20 Biofuture Platform member countries, and although the principles are non-binding and non-prescriptive, member countries are encouraged to implement them in accordance with broader sustainability initiatives and economic recovery programmes. Some countries have already started to implement the principles, for example Canada's Clean Fuels Standard, which incorporates positive externalities of biofuels into market-based mechanisms.

There was a discussion session to end the webinar. Panelists discussed the competing demands on biomass, and how we need to ensure efficient distribution of biomass for different used. It was also noted that actually the flexibility of production of advanced biorefineries has been useful during this time of market shock. The sustainability of the biomass itself was also

stressed, by using residues and waste that have limited other uses, in order to reduce societal debate.

Conclusions on next steps of the WGCB

Miguel Almada led the discussions on the next steps for the WGCB in 2021 and the following conclusions were reached:

Activity Group 2 will continue, as it has always done, to collect and disseminate information on the implementation of the GSI. However, the AG2 will also forge a stronger collaboration with the TFS under the new workstream on facilitation of the implementation of the GSI through the data entry sheets and a dedicated tool.

Under **Activity Group 3**, the 8th Bioenergy Week, to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia has been postponed to March 2021 due to the global pandemic. The health situation will continue to be monitored by GBEP and the partner organisations (UNECA, FAO, AFREC and African Union Commission) and it will be decided in due advance whether the meeting will be held in person or online. The 9th Bioenergy Week is still planned to be held in Paraguay (most probably in 2022), with preparations to begin in due course.

Activity Group 4 will hold additional webinars on wood energy for FLR and sustainable livelihoods to complement the one already held in 2020. Given the poignance of this topic in light of the UN Decade on ecosystem restoration, the scope of webinars will also be expanded to include biomass for landscape restoration other than forestry, including agroforestry, and the links with natural events exacerbated by climate change.

Activity Group 7 will hold web conferences on important aspects identified by the Stocktaking Paper, such as financial support and policy incentives. The GBEP Secretariat has been asked to facilitate connection between IEA Bioenergy and AG7 co-leaders, with a view to facilitate a collaboration in the context of the IEA Bioenergy compilation on the “Status of renewable gas policies”.

Activity Group 8 will draw on the mini-webinar held during the WGCB meeting in order to finalise the collection of experiences in advanced liquid biofuels. The call for examples has therefore been renewed and Partners and Observers are invited to distribute the call widely in their networks and to send related inputs by 31 December 2020. Associated webinars will also be held to discuss these examples and potential policy implications.

In terms of the work on **youth**, the bioenergy supplement will be finalised and piloting will occur in collaboration with Partners and Observers and YUNGA. The Youth Award 2021 will be presented during the 8th Bioenergy Week to outstanding research conducted by young researchers from Africa. The deadline for the call for papers for the Youth Award is 31 December 2020, and Partners and Observers are invited to distribute the call widely in their networks.

For **capacity development materials**, it was decided that Partners and Observers will disseminate the materials produced in 2020. Furthermore, as an in-kind contribution from FAO, there will be an update made to the 2010 report on financing of bioenergy projects and related online search tool.

The WGCB also stressed the importance to translate into additional languages the Bioenergy Supplement as well as the capacity development materials developed by the GBEP Secretariat, with a view to increase spread of related important messages. Partners and Observers are encouraged to take an active role on this by facilitating the translation of these materials into their national languages.

Events in 2021 – the GBEP Secretariat already plans to attend a number of conferences in 2021, including the EUBCE (Marseille, 26-29 April 2021) and BBEST 2020-21/BIOFUTURE SUMMIT II. Partners and Observers are invited to suggest further events where the participation of the GBEP Secretariat is advantageous by 31 December 2020.