

20th Meeting of the GBEP Task Force on Sustainability

Online 12.00 – 13.30 CET time (UTC +1)

Tuesday, 22 November 2022

Co-Chairs Conclusions

The GBEP Task Force on Sustainability (TFS) held its 20th meeting on 22 November 2022 online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Paraguay, Spain, United Kingdom, Sweden, Viet Nam, ECOWAS/ECREEE, FAO, IEA Bioenergy, IICA, IRENA, and WBA participated in the meeting as Partners and Observers. External experts also joined the meeting, in particular to participate in the mini-webinar on “Strategies and Public Policies around Bioeconomy and Bioenergy”

Mr. Takashi Hayashi (Japan) and Mr. Ahmed Abdelati Ahmed (Egypt), co-chairs of the TFS, opened the 20th TFS meeting.

Work of the TFS in 2022

[Maria Michela Morese](#), GBEP Executive Secretary, presented the Task Force’s work during 2022 (see [presentation](#) and related [background document](#) circulated) distributed over the two workstreams on the GBEP Indicators (GSIs), as well as on bioenergy in the context of the broader bioeconomy.

Workstream on the GSIs

GBEP’s work on facilitating the implementation of the sustainability Indicators was based on three main tools that have been developed so far:

- i. GBEP Sustainability Indicators and the Implementation Guide;
- ii. Data entry sheets; and
- iii. Rapid Implementation Framework (RIF) Handbook.

[Ms. Morese](#) presented 2022 and future activities (see also [2023-2024 background document](#) circulated) related to each of the tools. It was proposed and agreed to:

- i. develop project proposals to integrate the implementation of the GSIs and/or RIF;
- ii. pilot the RIF at country level; and
- iii. develop data entry sheets for all bioenergy pathways (in addition to the one from agricultural crops already developed in 2020).

Workstream on Bioenergy as Part of the Broader Bioeconomy

[Ms. Morese](#) briefly presented 2022 activities and gave the floor to [Uwe Fritsche](#), IEA/IEA Bioenergy, as leader of the workstream on bioeconomy, to present the work done. He presented the two Technical Papers that were recently circulated to the GBEP members: one developed by

IFEU on “Linking bioenergy and the bioeconomy”; and the other developed by IINAS and IEA Bioenergy on “Sustainability indicators for bioenergy and the broader bioeconomy”. He stressed the need to consider sustainability indicators for both bioenergy, and the broader bioeconomy, and proposed to address this in GBEP through three different options:

- *Downsizing* to radically reduce the number of indicators to the absolute minimum;
- *Improving* to reflect application experiences for improving the applicability and data availability (especially “proxy” indicators); and
- *Dashboard* which opens the indicator scope widely and relies on applicant/participant choices of relevant indicators.

Presenting the way forward, he proposed the discussion of the technical papers in an online workshop (February/March 2023) and in the next GBEP Annual meetings in mid-May 2023, with a view to finalize and publish the papers. He also highlighted the importance to organize the joint workshop on “Sustainability Governance of the Bioeconomy” in 2023 (involving GBEP, Biofuture Platform, IEA, IEA Bioenergy and OECD), postponed several times due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In terms of next steps, Ms. Morese not only echoed the proposal of Mr. Fritsche to finalize the technical papers as mentioned, but also proposed that the GBEP Secretariat finalizes the infographic on “bioenergy in the broader bioeconomy” as a simple communication tool for the general public and not only for experts. She was also pleased to announce that IEA/IEA Bioenergy, will be supported by Argentina as co-leaders of the workstream.

Partners and Observers were invited to send further suggestions and input on the 2023 TFS work to the GBEP Secretariat by 20 January 2023.

Strategies and Public Policies around Bioeconomy and Bioenergy

Moderated by Hugo Chavarría (IICA), the 20th TFS meeting hosted a webinar on “Strategies and public policies around bioeconomy and bioenergy” giving an overview of the current experiences in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Argentina, and Africa. Mr. Chavarría highlighted the beneficial role that bioenergy may play within the broader bioeconomy and the importance to share experiences and lessons learned within the development of bioeconomies across continents. The webinar was recorded in [English/original language](#) and in [Spanish](#). Interpretation service was generously provided by IICA.

[Justus Wesseler](#) (Wageningen University and Research, Netherlands) presented the “Biomonitor” project, which introduces a framework to monitor and measure the bioeconomy in the EU and its member states. He introduced EU’s definition of the bioeconomy, and a timeline of the developments around bioeconomy and related policies in the EU. The European BioEconomy Strategy has five main objectives: ensuring food and nutrition security; managing natural resources sustainably; reducing dependence on non-renewable, unsustainable resources; mitigating and adapting to climate change; and strengthening European competitiveness and creating jobs. Intervention on the bioeconomy has direct and indirect implications on the whole economy, and resulting effects and contributions are difficult to assess. Policies on the bioeconomy must be carefully designed, based on a taxonomy for sustainable investment and a

set of indicators to measure progress, to align the objectives of the European BioEconomy Strategy with the agenda of the European Green Deal.

[Eduardo Trigo](#) (IICA), gave a presentation on the bioeconomy in Latin America and the Caribbean. He introduced the definition of the bioeconomy in the region, as well as its resource base and knowledge capacity. Main developments, which span biotechnologies, bioenergy, bioinputs and carbon efficient production strategies, have mostly preceded policy developments and were mainly led by market and innovation. Characterized by regulatory evolution, the region is a world leader in biotechnologies and bioenergies, driven by local research and development. Several “carbon neutral” certification processes are in place, and the sector of bio-entrepreneurship is growing. More than twenty countries have regulatory frameworks in place for specific bioeconomy sectors and based on the Argentinian example, macro indicators for bioeconomy developments have been developed.

[Maria Murmis](#) (Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Argentina) presented the bioeconomy and bioenergy strategies of Argentina. She gave an overview of the development of the bioeconomy in Argentina from 1991 until today. The country has a huge bioeconomy potential, being a large agricultural producer of raw materials and biomass. Two main instrumental laws are in place in Argentina, regulating blends, prices and quality standards of biofuels, and promoting power generation through the connection of renewable energy to the national power grid. The main sources of bioenergy in Argentina include biodiesel, bioethanol, biogas and dry biomass. In Argentina, bioenergy is considered a precursor and first mover of the wider bioeconomy. Policies and programmes, such as the “*PROBIOMASA*” Programme, have been tremendous enablers and drivers of the bioeconomy, and introduced ways to measure and assess the bioeconomy.

[Julius Ecuru](#) (BioInnovate Africa, Kenya) gave a presentation on the bioeconomy evolution in Africa. In early 2000s, starting from an existing focus on biodiversity, the African bioeconomy developed based on a European perspective. Main developments took place in South Africa. Across regions in Africa, the bioeconomy spans different sectors and assumes various definitions, ranging from bio-innovation to sustainable production and exploitation of biological resources. The bioeconomy concept is still evolving and can be best understood in the context of its application. African development of sustainable bioeconomy started from sound academic work as well as research on applications in other regions. The bioeconomy sector is a descendant and continuation of discourses around biodiversity, biotechnology and bioscience innovation. Main drivers are the available resource base, fossil fuel transition and consumer attitudes. Future opportunities and developments lie within the work of local scientists and collaborations across continents and hemispheres.

Mr. Chavarría closed the session by summing up its main messages and conclusions. He stressed the benefits that bioeconomy may achieve, but underlined the challenges behind its establishment, which requires to switch from fossil fuels to biological energy sources. He appreciated how the bioeconomy discussion spread from Europe towards other regions and continents, such as Africa and Latin America, with huge comparative advantages. In light of the needs and necessities emerging from current crises and uncertainties, increasing attention is being placed on the bioeconomy, which represents an opportunity that must be seized. He

acknowledged the role of bioenergy as precursor for the bioeconomy, proving the benefits in terms of decarbonization as well as social and economic development. Mr. Chavarría highlighted that the road ahead depends upon five important aspects: promotion of science, technology and innovation; capacity building for a new biological paradigm; fueling bioeconomic markets; establishing services and frameworks to support biomarkets and bio-entrepreneurship; and expansion of value chains in rural contexts.

Conclusions and Next steps

The next steps for the TFS in 2023 were decided as follows (see also [background document](#) circulated in advance to the meeting):

Workstream on the GSIs

- i. Develop project proposals to integrate the implementation of the GSIs and/or RIF;
- ii. pilot RIF at country level; and
- iii. develop data entry sheets for all bioenergy pathways (in addition to the one from agricultural crops already developed in 2020).

Workstream on Bioenergy as Part of the Broader Bioeconomy

- GBEP discussion of the IINAS and IFEU technical papers in an online workshop (February/March 2023) and in the next GBEP Annual meetings in mid-May 2023, with a view to finalize and publish them;
- organize the joint workshop on “Sustainability Governance of the Bioeconomy” (as a joint effort GBEP, Biofuture Platform, IEA, IEA Bioenergy and OECD), postponed several times due to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- GBEP Secretariat to finalize the infographic on “bioenergy in the broader bioeconomy”; and
- Argentina was nominated as new co- leader of the workstream, together with IEA/IEA Bioenergy.

Partners and Observers were invited to send further suggestions and input on the 2023 TFS work to the GBEP Secretariat by 20 January 2023.