



Bridges Trade BioRes

News, events and resources at the intersection of trade and biodiversity

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Conservation	1
ENDANGERED SPECIES, TOURISM, FISHERIES, HIGHLIGHTED AT IUCN CONGRESS.....	
Shipping	3
GLOBAL MARINE BODY PUSHES AHEAD WITH EMISSIONS CURBS ON SHIPPING	
Standards.....	5
SPS COMMITTEE MOVES FORWARD ON PRIVATE SECTOR STANDARDS; HEARS FROM CHINA ON MELAMINE	
In Brief	7
GLOBAL MERCURY REGULATION: ONE STEP FORWARD.....	
EUROPE STICKS TO CLIMATE TARGETS, SEEKS WAY TO ALLAY COMPETITIVENESS CONCERNS.....	
NEW TOOLS AIM TO BOOST TRADE IN ORGANIC GOODS	
REPORT: ECONOMICS JUSTIFY UNIVERSAL ELIMINATION OF FISHERIES SUBSIDIES	
Events & Resources	11
EVENTS	
RESOURCES.....	

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Conservation

ENDANGERED SPECIES, TOURISM, FISHERIES, HIGHLIGHTED AT IUCN CONGRESS

Last week in Barcelona, more than 8,000 leaders from government, civil society, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector met for the International Union for the Conservation of

Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress - the world's largest conservation event.

One of the most anticipated events of the congress - the release of the IUCN's updated Red List of Threatened Species, which undergoes major analysis every four years - stated that over a quarter of all mammals now under threat of extinction.

The congress strives to be a forum for all those concerned with conservation. Representatives from groups ranging from Shell Oil to indigenous Amazonians were in attendance in Barcelona. Through dialogues, negotiations and, ultimately, resolutions, this year's Congress produced several trade-related developments.

New labelling system for trade in medicinal plants

Signatory institutions to an international standard that promotes the sustainable management of wild plants used in medicines and cosmetics have agreed to create an industry labelling system that will allow sustainably harvested products to be easily identified.

The new international labelling system, which was endorsed by the parties to the International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP), will primarily be used in the herbal products industry. More than 320,000 tonnes of medicinal and aromatic plants are harvested in the wild and traded annually and many are harvested unsustainably and in danger of extinction.

"Industry adoption of the standard will ensure sustainable use and equitable sharing of the world's wild plant resources," said IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre. "This new agreement marks a significant step forward in the sustainable use of wild plants important to human health and well being."

Illegal wildlife trade

The aforementioned Red List survey specifically targeted Vietnam and Cambodia which, according to the report, face an "empty forest syndrome". Endangered species are "getting vacuumed out of some areas where they were common," the report says.

Conservation experts say that illegal trafficking remain a serious concern. David Emmet, regional director of the Indo-Burma program at Conservation International, says that demand for endangered species from countries such as China are fuelling the black market. Two Cambodian species that are highly sought after for their use in medicine and traditional clothing have been newly classified as 'endangered' by the Red List this year.

Another one of the report's striking statistics revealed that 79 percent of primates in South and Southeast Asian now face extinction.

New global standards for tourism services

Sustainable tourism also received international attention at the forum. Sustainability issues regarding tourism, an important source of revenue in many developing countries particularly in ecologically sensitive areas, were addressed in both economic and environmental terms.

A coalition of 27 organisations used the World Conservation Congress to launch its Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), a set of guidelines for sustainable practices in the tourism industry. The GSTC was developed over the past 15 months after review of more than 60 sets of criteria already being implemented around the globe.

The guidelines focus on four areas: maximizing tourism's social and economic benefits to local communities, reducing negative impacts on cultural heritage, reducing harm to local environments, and planning for sustainability. The coalition also introduced its accreditation organisation for sustainable tourism certification programs, the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC).

Carbon trading and indigenous populations

While many environmentalists have been applauding the likelihood of a comprehensive carbon trading scheme being incorporated into the future successor to the Kyoto Protocol, several indigenous groups now say that the commoditisation of carbon could deprive them of access to food, clothing and building materials if forests are bought up by investors. Locals also say that mapping out territories in a way that is fair to those whose livelihoods depend on them needs to be addressed.

Indigenous groups joined with 250 other representatives of business, trade unions, forestry companies, and governments at the Congress to issue a joint statement entitled, 'Beyond REDD: The Role of Forests in Climate Change'.

"The huge step is having a unified statement from businesses to indigenous groups," said Daniel Birchmeier, senior program officer for Switzerland's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). "That can't be ignored." Throughout the IUCN Congress, indigenous groups pushed for equitable representation in future climate negotiations as well as assurances that conservation efforts do not leave them marginalised.

"For forests to fully achieve their potential to address climate change their governance must be improved and processes established to empower disenfranchised people, including Indigenous Peoples," the document reads. "The importance of mapping and securing the tenure, property, and carbon rights of Indigenous Peoples, family forest owners, and local communities, and devising effective mechanisms for the distribution of benefits, cannot be overstated."

Fishing for sustainability

In other trade news from the IUCN Congress, key countries voted to close the Mediterranean bluefin tuna industry until stocks can be brought under control. Observers say the 13 October vote came as a surprise, due to the acquiescence of major exporter Spain and major importer Japan. The vote also calls for a permanent fishing ban in the

months of May and June, when bluefin tuna are spawning.

While the motion is non-binding, it places pressure on the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the body that will decide on the future of the fishery in November, to follow suit.

"The message that we need to close the fishery now or have few fish and no fishery into the future is now coming from scientists, from consumers, from communities, and from countries," said Sergi Tudela of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Fisheries subsidies were also tackled at the Congress. One event, entitled 'Fishing for Sustainability: Maintaining Momentum for Fisheries Subsidies Reform', saw participants debate the merits of subsidy reforms.

"Fisheries play a critically important role in developing countries, in terms of employment, food security, and government revenues," says ICTSD's Moustapha Kamal Gueye, who spoke at the event. "A sustainable utilization and conservation of fisheries is essential not only from an environmental point of view, but also for future socio-economic development. Reforming harmful subsidies, especially in large subsidizing countries is essential in that regard."

Debate at the event also called attention to the problems associated with Fishery Partnership Agreements (FPA's) and the need for proper governance regimes in the fisheries sector.

IUCN's World Conservation Congress was launched in 1948 and takes place once every four years.

ICTSD Reporting; "Organizations announce criteria for sustainable tourism," THE CANADIAN PRESS, 8 October, 2008; "Survey targets animal trafficking," PHNOM PENH POST, 8 October, 2008; "Forest CO2 storage plans should aid poor: alliance," REUTERS, 8 October, 2008; "Forest, Wildlife Protection Pledged at World Conservation Congress," ENS, 14 October, 2008.

Shipping

GLOBAL MARINE BODY PUSHES AHEAD WITH EMISSIONS CURBS ON SHIPPING

The International Maritime Organisation is debating plans to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from ships - a major and growing source to be tackled in the fight against climate change.

Meeting from 6-10 October in London, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) 58th session on the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) also adopted tough new sulphur oxide, nitrogen oxide and particulate matter targets and updated regulations for managing ballast water - seawater used by vessels to provide stability. The Committee further agreed on a new ship breaking treaty, which will be officially adopted at a special high-level conference in May next year, and then goes to ratification.

IMO taking the lead on carbon emissions from ships?

The MEPC is continuing to move ahead with discussions on how to tackle greenhouse gas emissions from ships. While some countries feel the IMO is the right forum to take on this work, others feel it should be handled within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC; see Bridges Biores, 18 April 2008, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/biores/11194/>).

Among the most complex issues within the negotiations, which was discussed at the MEPC, is the question of how to account for common but differentiated responsibilities among countries. This principle is deeply rooted within the UNFCCC context, where it is clear that those countries that bear the historical burden of climate change and have the means to pay for mitigation should take the lead, supporting developing countries in their mitigation and adaptation efforts. The IMO has traditionally taken a pragmatic approach, working closely with the regulated industries to get things done. In terms of regulating greenhouse gases, three quarters of ships carry 'non-Annex I', or developing country

flags - often even if operated by developed country companies. In addition, the process of changing flags is relatively easy and frequent.

In addition to discussions on who should take on commitments, participants considered whether these should be voluntary or mandatory. They agreed on an Energy Efficiency Design Index for new ships and an energy efficiency operational index for existing ones; on an efficiency management plan suitable for ships; and on a voluntary code on best practice in energy efficient ship operations. These new measures will help operators cut energy use, and companies evaluate the greenhouse gas impacts of the shipping element of their operations.

Regarding the new Energy Efficiency Design Index, Lee Adamson, spokesperson for the IMO, said "It is an extremely complicated equation. But essentially it establishes an energy efficiency baseline for different types of ships and help designers work out how to improve the energy efficiency of their designs."

The IMO will continue its work on curbing greenhouse gas emissions during an intersessional meeting in early 2009 and at the MEPC scheduled for July 2009. The results will feed into the UNFCCC Copenhagen conference in December of that year. According to some observers, the IMO is racing to come up with its own plan in order to avoid being regulated by the UNFCCC.

Following the MEPC meeting, some environmental groups felt too little progress had been made on curbing greenhouse gas emissions among the bickering around who should do what.

Tougher sulphur, nitrogen oxide controls

The MEPC adopted an amendment to the MARPOL Convention, which serves to prevent pollution at sea. MARPOL Annex VI Regulations for the Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships are being updated to require parties to gradually reduce sulphur dioxides in shipping fuels. In 2012, the allowed concentration will be at a 3.5 percent maximum, dropping to 0.5 percent in 2020. Fuels used in certain sensitive areas - usually around heavily populated ports - will be subject to even stricter limits.

These changes will enter into force on 1 July 2010. Noting the global scope of the new regulations, Janea Scott of the Environmental Defense Fund said "This newly adopted international regulation will ensure that all ships, both domestic and foreign, are held to the same rigorous emissions standards."

Recycling convention set for adoption

A draft convention on the safe recycling of ships has been in the works within the MEPC - in close cooperation with the International Labour Organisation and the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste - since 2000. The issue has been controversial, since some developing countries with established scrapping facilities that provide sorely needed jobs and incomes have been hesitant to see too much regulation or the banning of these activities.

Ships often contain numerous hazardous materials, such as asbestos, heavy metals and hydrocarbons. Under the new convention, the recycling and scrapping practices will be clearly regulated. Ships set for recycling will have to carry inventories of hazardous materials, the new Convention provides guidance as to how to construct, operate and maintain ships to facilitate recycling at the end of its life. Certain hazardous substances will be banned in ship construction and servicing. In addition, ship recycling yards will have to have recycling plans in place, which can be verified by the authorities.

IMO Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos commented that the new Convention represents "a major milestone in IMO's quest to ensure that ships reaching the end of their operational lives do not pose any unnecessary risk to human health and safety and the environment."

Background

The worldwide fleet of 90,000 ships transports 90 percent of the world's goods. According to new IMO estimates, shipping contributes 2.7 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, up from a previous estimate of 1.8 percent. Shipping has grown by three percent annually on average over the last three decades, and shipping emissions are projected to grow as global trade expands.

According to Intertanko, the global association of tanker owners, they are set to rise by a further 30 percent by 2020, and shipping will become one of the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions, following land transport, housing, agriculture and industry.

In the last couple of decades, the international community has taken steps to reduce emissions from other sectors, but the shipping industry has been left behind. The ships are mostly powered by large diesel engines using dirty 'bunker' or 'residual' fuel. Efficiency and environmental standards on shipping fuel have been largely ignored due to the distance between the ships and the externalities they create.

"Shipping starts to clean up its act," ENERGY EFFICIENCY NEWS, 13 October 2008; "IMO Environmental Meeting Finalizes Draft of Ship Scrapping Program," RECYCLING TODAY MAGAZINE, 13 October 2008; "New ships to get green performance gauge" BUSINESS GREEN, 14 October 2008; "Tough Global Limits Imposed on Air Pollution from Large Ships," ENS, 13 October 2008; "Major progress on air pollution, ship recycling and ballast water management at IMO environment meeting," IMO RELEASE, 13 October 2008.

Standards

SPS COMMITTEE MOVES FORWARD ON PRIVATE SECTOR STANDARDS; HEARS FROM CHINA ON MELAMINE

The WTO Committee that deals with trade measures related to food safety and animal and plant health has heard from China on the recent melamine contamination of Chinese milk products. Aside from more specific concerns on measures that affect trade, the committee also outlined a roadmap for addressing private sector standards, heard concerns over new international standards, and endorsed technical assistance for developing countries.

With around 300 delegates in attendance, the 43rd meeting of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS committee), held on 8 and 9 October at WTO headquarters in

Geneva, was one of the largest ever convened. The committee was preceded by a workshop on technical assistance to developing countries to implement SPS standards, held on 6 October, and two informal consultations, on special and differential treatment and a review of the operation and implementation of the SPS agreement, both held on 7 October.

The SPS agreement is intended to allow governments to protect human, animal, and plant life or health by restricting trade. Trade restrictions implemented by Members must be based on scientific assessment and not used as a front for unfairly discriminatory or protectionist policies. Such standards are garnering more weight as tariffs and other traditional barriers to trade are lowered.

Discussion on private sector standards gains momentum

Despite ongoing debate surrounding the committee's decision to address private standards, delegates at the meeting decided to move forward by starting to analyse specific standards applied to individual products. A report, with input from relevant international organisations, compiling and analysing information from Member's on specific products whose trade has been identified as being affected by private standards will be produced.

The strategy for how to proceed was developed based on Members' discussions, as well as on responses to a Secretariat questionnaire on these issues (G/SPS/W/230, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>).

The issue of whether to address private standards was first raised in 2005 and represents new territory for the SPS committee, which traditionally deals with guidelines set by governments or international standards-setting bodies (see Bridges Weekly, 6 July 2005, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/6158/>).

A number of developing countries have been highly critical of the use of private sector standards, arguing that they reduce the efficacy of the SPS regime by creating higher standards outside of government control. These countries stress that the standards are arbitrary and end up

penalising developing countries and small farmers exporting to the North since they lack capacity and funding to comply. Many developing countries argue that governments should take responsibility for standards set by private-sector actors within their boundaries. Others, especially developed countries, say that private sector standards fall outside the remit of the WTO and its SPS Agreement (see Bridges Weekly, 2 July 2008, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/12250/>).

China defends melamine-free exports

China used the meeting to acknowledge the global concern sparked over the illness of 54,000 children and death of four babies in China, which has been attributed to milk containing melamine, a chemical substance that artificially raises a product's protein content in nutritional analyses. The Chinese delegation reported that its government was making enormous efforts to deal with the problem. Greater regulations were introduced on 10 September, which were further tightened ten days later, and since then no contamination has been discovered, the officials said.

However, China asked that any import bans that Members impose be in compliance with international guidelines on scientific risk assessment and official notification, among other things. More than 30 countries have limited imports of Chinese dairy products, and in some cases more than dairy products, since the contamination was detected, the Associated Press reported.

Members also raised concerns about other health-related trade restrictions at the meeting, including 'mad cow disease' and 'novel' food regulations by the EU.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE or 'mad cow disease') was again on the SPS agenda. Canada noted concern that beef import restrictions under Korea's revised Livestock Epidemic Prevention Act may violate the SPS agreement. Together Canada, the EU, Uruguay, Switzerland and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIA) stressed that many countries enforce import restrictions that are too strict and

out of step with OIE recommendations. Furthermore, some participants argued that many countries are not applying the idea of 'regionalisation' set out in the SPS agreement. This provision recognises that, while waiting for an entire country to be declared free, regions can be free from a disease and so have restrictions lifted from trade.

Peru, with the support of the Philippines and several Latin American countries, raised another health-related matter criticising new European food regulations. The EU argues it requires assurance that traditional foods exported to Europe do not present health risks and, as such, suppliers must prove that traditional or ethnic products are safe based on historical evidence of consumption over a large region.

The complainants contended, however, that the proposed regulations are too burdensome on suppliers and that the EU had not notified the SPS committee of the new regulations. In response, the EU said that revision of the regulation is under discussion in the European Parliament and that its main concern was with extracts or food supplements, rather than with entire fruits or vegetables.

Controversy over shipping standard

Controversy heated up over a proposed shipping standard intended to prevent the spread of invasive species. China, Japan, Korea and Indonesia objected to a new plant standard proposed by the North American Plant Protection Agency (NAPPO) that would require that all ships be inspected for the Asian gypsy moth before entering territorial waters of NAAPO's member states - Canada, Mexico and the US.

The complainants argued that the standard is not based on science or current international standards and that it is too broad in scope as it covers all of temperate Asia and would subject entire shiploads, instead of just products, to inspection. Therefore they contended that the standard would unjustifiably disrupt trade.

Canada, Mexico and the US defended the proposal, saying that it is based on proper risk assessment of the Asian gypsy moth that may

threaten 600 North American plant species if introduced. Furthermore, the NAPPO members said that they had taken their trading partners' concerns into account by allowing regions to be declared pest free, and that ships entering and moving throughout any of the three countries waters would only need to be inspected once.

Embody SPS measures in development assistance, committee says

The workshop on technical assistance held prior to the SPS meeting raised a theme that was to endure throughout the week: how SPS issues in developing countries can improve trade performance. In particular, delegates suggested that SPS implementation should be brought within the realm of mainstream development assistance. According to a staff member of the WTO Secretariat, this means that development experts should recognise just how important it is to deal with SPS standards in trying to bolster a developing country's capacity to export and ultimately strengthen its economy.

The next meeting of the SPS Committee is scheduled to take place from the 25-26 February 2009, during which the third review of the SPS agreement is scheduled to begin.

Further details of the SPS meeting can be obtained at http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news08_e/sps_10oct08_e.htm.

ICTSD reporting. "Officials: WTO faults China in piracy dispute," THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 10 October 2008.

In Brief

GLOBAL MERCURY REGULATION: ONE STEP FORWARD

The international community has taken strides towards the global regulation of the production, trade and consumption of mercury, a highly toxic bio-accumulating metal. Although there is no consensus yet, at a recent meeting in Nairobi on whether to opt for a new legally-binding instrument or a voluntary approach, countries

managed to narrow down the options, and tease out the main elements of a regulatory system.

Around 250 participants from 90 countries attended the Second Meeting of the Ad hoc Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6-10 October. The group has been mandated by the UNEP Governing Council to move the mercury regulation issue forward, and will be reporting back to the next Governing Council meeting in February 2009.

Participants discussed the basics of mercury regulation, including reducing supply and demand, reducing international trade as well as atmospheric emissions and ways to achieve environmentally sound management (ESM) of mercury-containing waste. They also considered safe storage solutions for mercury, remediation of mercury-contaminated sites and improvements to the information flow.

On trade specifically, a number of countries, including the EU, Norway and several African countries felt that mercury trade should be reduced. Japan agreed, and proposed that trade between nations be operated on the basis of "prior informed consent," as is the case for many other regulated toxic substances. Japan made it clear it opposed any ban on trade in mercury, and Switzerland said trade in products containing mercury that had no substitutes should be allowed.

Disagreement emerged over whether the new global regulatory system should be limited to cover trade in elemental mercury only, or also products - including products destined for recycling or waste products - containing mercury. Following informal consultations during the course of the meeting, participants were able to agree on the need to regulate mercury-containing products in addition to mercury in its elemental form.

Participants also touched on the role of the WTO. China felt any restrictions on trade in mercury should be handled in that forum. Others disagreed, however, saying mercury trade should be addressed under the new global mercury

regime, and noting that trade restrictions are allowed under Article 20 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade on health and environmental grounds.

Civil society groups welcomed the progress made at OEWG-2. "We now call upon the GC to finish the work that it started and establish a negotiating committee to develop a global treaty on mercury," said Michael Bender of the Zero Mercury Working Group. "Only through a treaty will we see sufficient reductions in global mercury emissions, supply and demand," he added. Most of the governments meeting in Nairobi supported a legally binding treaty, although some key players, such as the US, China and India, preferred going down the path of voluntary commitments.

"Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc OEWG to Review and Assess Measures to Address the Global Issue of Mercury," EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN, 13 October 2008; "Elements for a UN Global Framework on Mercury Agreed to," EEB RELEASE, 10 October 2008.

EUROPE STICKS TO CLIMATE TARGETS, SEEKS WAY TO ALLAY COMPETITIVENESS CONCERNS

European heads of state met from 16-17 October to discuss their climate goals at a meeting that was dominated by talks on the global financial crises.

Given the grave financial woes, a number of European leaders - especially from Eastern Europe, but also Germany and Italy - were asking for leeway for their industries, either because of heavy reliance on coal power or due to competitiveness concerns in energy-intensive sectors such as steel.

The EU is debating a legislative package on energy and climate change, which the EU is set to adopt by the end of the year (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 25 January 2008, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/biores/9354/>). The EU is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20 percent by 2020, and the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) serves as a key tool for achieving the target. Industry, power

production and airlines will all be covered by the ETS. Discussions regarding the proportion of emissions permits different sectors will have to buy, or get for free, are ongoing.

Going into the high-level talks, Jose Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission said, "Saving the planet does not disappear because of the financial crisis. Of course we understand that in the difficult financial moments, governments become more defensive, but I think our duty is to call the attention of governments and the public in general to the responsibility here."

The European steel industry, on the other hand, was lobbying for exemptions. The European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF) and European Confederation of Iron and Steel Industries (EUROFER) appealed to decision makers to "ensure a fair balance between climate change measures on the one side and the competitiveness of the European industry, sustainable investment and high quality jobs on the other," stressing that they have already taken significant action and cannot be hit by additional costs amounting to billions of Euros per year. Specifically, they wanted to see an improvement in the ETS proposal on leakage, benchmarks, waste gases, electricity costs and international agreements. As long as Europe is moving ahead alone, argue EMF and EUROFER, sectors susceptible to "leakage" - the relocation of carbon-intensive industries to countries with laxer regulations - these sectors should be allocated all their emissions allowances for free. According to a report by the European Commission, industries such as primary aluminium, hot rolled steel and slabs produced in basic oxygen furnaces and clinker would be facing competitiveness concerns unless all trading partners join global efforts to address climate change.

Luxembourg Euro-parliamentarian Claude Turmes, said, however, that "This is alarm level red - Lobbyists from every dirty industry are trying to profit from this [financial] crisis."

During the tense discussions, the French presidency found a way to move the legislative package ahead. Europe still plans to conclude its work in this regard in December, and according to

a draft final statement released just before the close of the meeting, "The European Council confirms its determination to honour the ambitious commitments it has made on climate and energy policy." The next few months will show just what form the policy will take, and what concessions may be made to specific countries and industries.

Additional information

To view the EMF-EUROFER statement, see http://www.emf-fem.org/press/press_releases/emf_and_eurofer_joint_appeal_to_the_political_decision_makers_on_the_revision_of_the_eu_emissions_trading_system

ICTSD Reporting; "Steelmakers Urge EU to Improve Emissions Proposal," REUTERS, 3 October 2008; "EU Vows "Cost-Effective" Climate Plan Amid Crisis," REUTERS, 17 October 2008.

NEW TOOLS AIM TO BOOST TRADE IN ORGANIC GOODS

An international task force charged with removing barriers to trade in organic products has released two tools aimed at creating a worldwide standard for organic certification. The tools were launched on 7 October at the 8th meeting of the International Task Force on Harmonisation and Equivalency in Organic Agriculture (ITF) in Geneva.

The two tools establish guidelines that, if implemented, could help improve developing countries' participation in the quickly expanding organic products trade. The 'EquiTool', the first of the two instruments, is a guide intended to help decision-makers assess the equivalency of one organic standard to another. With an array of organic certification bodies around the world - more than 400 public and private certification bodies are now in operation - establishing a means of equivalency could help improve market access. The second guide, the International Requirements of Organic Certification Bodies (IROCB), establishes a minimum set of performance requirements for organic certification bodies.

The ITF is a joint initiative of the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM - the umbrella organisation of the organic sector worldwide). The task force was formed in 2003 to help remove the multitude of technical barriers restricting the flow of organic trade and to improve developing countries' access to international markets.

At the meeting, ITF members drew attention to potential opportunities in the organic industry for farmers in developing countries. "The sector is growing rapidly and presents opportunity for producers. Organic agriculture is particularly well suited for smallholder farmers," said UNCTAD Director General Supachai Panitchpakdi. "It preserves traditional knowledge and reduces dependence on external inputs."

FAO Assistant Director-General Alexander Müller agreed with Supachai, underscoring the need for developing countries to get in on the ground floor of a market poised for growth. "The growth of organic agriculture presents a very good opportunity for farmers to participate in trade," he said "Market demand is strong and consumers know that the quality of organic products is high and the production system is environmentally friendly."

Currently, the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Food and the IFOAM Basic Standards are the only two international standards for organic agriculture. Rather than creating a new global standard, the two new ITF initiatives aim to internationalise the world's fragmented certification systems. For example, IROCB - based on ISO 65 (General Requirements for Bodies Operating Product Certification Systems) - will enable the recognition of organic certification bodies worldwide.

Additional resources

For further information on the ITF meeting and the 'EquiTool' and IROCB, visit www.unctad.org/trade_env/ITF-organic/material1.asp

"Easing organic agricultural trade," MATANGI TONGO ONLINE, 13 October 2008; "New tools help developing nations mkt organic products abroad," THE ECONOMIC TIMES, 12 October 2008; "IFOAM, UNCTAD and FAO Launch Tools for Uniting the Organic World," GREEN PLANET, 11 October 2008; "Task Force Launches Two Tools to Facilitate Trade in Organic Products," UNCTAD PRESS RELEASE, 7 October 2008.

REPORT: ECONOMICS JUSTIFY UNIVERSAL ELIMINATION OF FISHERIES SUBSIDIES

The marine fishing industry loses up to US\$ 50 billion annually from poor management, inefficiencies and overfishing, according to a new report by the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The report, entitled 'The Sunken Billions: The Economic Justification for Fisheries Reform', was launched at the World Bank headquarters in New York on 8 October and debated at the recent IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona (see related story, this issue).

"The real cumulative global loss of wealth over the last three decades period is estimated at \$2.2 trillion," the report said. "The annual loss is equivalent to approximately 64 percent of the landed value of the global catch, or 71 percent of the value of global fish trade in the base year (2004)."

The report also emphasised that the estimate of economic loss is a conservative one, as it does not account for several important factors such as the costs of subsidies and illegal fishing activities, and the benefits of healthy marine ecosystems.

According to the report, most of the economic losses - which represent the difference between the potential and actual net economic benefits from global marine fisheries - can be attributed to two causes. First, fish stocks are now so depleted that the cost of finding and catching them has risen substantially. Over 75 percent of the world's fish stocks are either fully exploited or over exploited, FAO says.

The second main factor is that, thanks to the fact that there is now an overabundance of ships on the high seas, the redundant investment and operating costs have dissipated the economic benefits of fishing. Indeed, despite technology advancements, the global marine catch has remained stagnant at around 80 million tonnes for over a decade. The current marine catch could be achieved with half of today's global fleet, the report argued. Academics have blamed subsidies for driving the irrational expansion of fishing fleets.

The increasing prices of fuel and food are cited as pressuring governments to provide subsidies to fishing industries. But when considering whether the economic benefits exceed the costs of subsidies, the report said, "in the case of fisheries, the answer is almost invariably 'no'."

Therefore, the report declared that even aside from the well-documented argument for action to prevent massive biological losses, the economic losses alone "justify increased efforts by national economic policy makers to reverse this annual haemorrhage of national and global economic benefits."

Improved governance of marine fisheries could recapture a substantial part of the annual economic loss, the report said. A reduction in fishing effort would increase productivity, profitability and net economic benefits, while rebuilding fish stocks would lead to increased sustainable yields and lower fishing costs.

The report also noted that fisheries reform could also help improve livelihoods and food security among the world's poor. "Fish is the main animal protein for over 1 billion people. It provides livelihoods for over 200 million people and 90 percent of these people are in developing countries."

The report comes at a time when the Doha Development Round's Rules negotiations, which cover negotiations on the reduction of fisheries subsidies as well as dumping and subsidies and countervailing measures, have been at a standstill while negotiations on agriculture and non-agricultural market access negotiations have taken

centre stage in attempts to reach modalities, or compromise between the two.

Additional resources

The report 'The Sunken Billions: The Economic Justification for Fisheries Reform' is available for download at http://www.globefish.org/files/Sunken%20Billions%20Report%20Advance%20Edition_659.pdf

ICTSD reporting; "Fisheries waste 'cost billions'," BBC, 8 October 2008.

Events & Resources

EVENTS

For a more comprehensive list of events in trade and sustainable development, please refer to ICTSD's web calendar, <http://www.trade-environment.org/page/calendar.htm>.

Coming up in the next two weeks

20-21 October, Geneva, Switzerland. CARING FOR CLIMATE: FIRST MEETING OF SIGNATORIES. The meeting brings together more than 200 business executives with government and UN officials and climate experts involved in designing the post-Kyoto climate framework. Participants will take stock of the progress made and share experiences in implementing climate strategies, lowering risk exposure, and increasing business opportunities. For more information contact Lila Karbassi, tel: +1 917 367 5767; email: karbassi@un.org; internet: http://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/Environment/meeting_of_signatories.html

20-24 October, Rome, Brussels, and throughout Europe. EUROPEAN FOREST WEEK 2008. This series of meetings in Rome will provide an opportunity for diverse stakeholders and forest managers to share perspectives and seek solutions to some of the most challenging issues facing forests and forestry today: climate change, energy and water. In conjunction with the Rome meetings, a high-profile European Union Presidency event will be held in Brussels (20

October) and a number of national and local events will take place in participating countries throughout Europe. For more information contact European Forest Week, email: efw@unece.org; internet: www.europeanforestweek.org

22 October, Paris, France. 2ND INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON SECTORAL GHG EMISSION REDUCTION POTENTIAL. This conference, organised by the Government of Japan, will discuss the issues relevant to emission reduction. The aims of the conference are to enhance understanding of strategies and models of emissions reduction and to create synergy among policy makers, researchers, and industry sector representatives. For more information contact Hiroaki Teshima, tel: +81 3 5521 8330; fax: +81 3 5521 8276; email: hiroaki_teshima@env.go.jp

27-31 October, Rome, Italy. FOURTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE ROTTERDAM CONVENTION (PIC COP-4), Rome, Italy. The fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties is scheduled to take place in Rome, Italy, from 27-31 October 2008. For further information, please contact: Rotterdam Convention Secretariat; tel: +41-22-917-8296; fax: +41-22-917-8082; e-mail: pic@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.pic.int>

28 October, Copenhagen, Denmark. THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL AND CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS: LESSONS FOR TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND FINANCING TOWARD COP15. This one-day seminar focuses on lessons learned from the Montreal Protocol for climate negotiations on technology and finance toward COP15. The seminar targets negotiators and experts who are directly involved in seeking solutions for the future agreement in the fields of technology transfer and financing. For more information contact Asger Garnak, Senior climate change economist, tel: +45 4597 2853; email: agk@cowi.dk; internet: <http://www.cowi.com>

28-29 October, Geneva, Switzerland. WTO TRIPS COUNCIL & SPECIAL SESSION. For further information, contact the WTO Information and Media Relations Division,

Geneva; tel: +41 22 739 5007; fax: +41 22 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

28-29 October, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. CARBON CAPTURE & STORAGE: SHOWCASING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND NECESSITY FOR CO2 STORAGE. This two-day congress will bring together key experts from the CCS global developments and showcase the opportunities and necessity for successful CO2 storage. For more information contact Green Power Conferences, tel: +44 (0)207 099 0600; fax: +44 (0)207 900 1853; email: info@greenpowerconferences.com; internet: http://www.greenpowerconferences.com/carbonmarkets/carbon_capture.html

28-31 October, Hong Kong. ECO EXPO ASIA. This conference will bring together leading environmental protection industry suppliers, academics, and experts for networking and informative seminars. For more information contact the organisers, tel: (852) 2238 9929; fax: (852) 2598 8771; email: ecoexpo@hongkong.messefrankfurt.com; internet: <http://www.ecoexpoasia.com>

Other upcoming events

7-8 November, Beijing, China. BEIJING HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE: TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER. This conference will focus on the following three areas: (i) status of technology, technology transfer, obstacles to technology transfer and best practices, (ii) mechanisms for overcoming barriers and obstacles to technology transfer, especially under UNFCCC, and (iii) the roles of public and private sectors and their potential collaboration for technology transfer. For more information contact the National Development and Reform Commission Department of Climate Change, tel: +86 10 6850 1573; fax: +86-10-6850-5881; email: BJCTC@ccchina.gov.cn; internet: http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/energy/op/beijing_climatechange_workshop08.htm

13-14 November, Washington DC, United States. ENERGY BAR ASSOCIATION: SHAPING OUR ENERGY FUTURE IN THE ERA OF RISING GLOBAL ENERGY

CONSUMPTION, CARBON EMISSIONS AND PRICES. The Energy Bar Association's Mid-Year Meeting will address Global Warming and United States energy policy. The day-and-a-half conference includes content from leading authorities who will provide advice to the new administration and explore complex issues impacting all aspects of the energy industry and regulation. For more information contact the Energy Bar Association, tel: +1 202 223 5625; fax: +1 202 833 5596; e-mail: admin@eba-net.org; internet: www.eba-net.org

RESOURCES

If you have a relevant resource (books, papers, bulletins, etc.) you would like to see announced in this section, please forward a copy for review by the Bridges staff to Malena Sell at msell@ictsd.ch.

RECONCILING ENVIRONMENT AND TRADE: SECOND EDITION. By Edith Brown Weiss, John H. Jackson and Nathalie Bernasconi-Osterwalder. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008. The volume focuses on five cases, all of which remain cornerstone trade-environment cases of the WTO. In their penetrating analyses of these cases and their vast implications, the authors take into account the entire disciplines of both trade law and environmental law, noting especially the points of friction between the multilateral instruments in each field and the developing jurisprudence of the WTO Dispute Settlement with regard to the exceptions specified in Article XX of the GATT. The articulated standpoints of all parties-governments and NGOs on both sides of the controversy-are probed for "agendas," whether stated or unstated. For further information see http://www.brill.nl/product_id28363.htm

PLANE TRUTHS: DO THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS FOR AVIATION GROWTH REALLY FLY? By Victoria Johnson and Martin Cottingham. Nef with WDM, September 2008. This report from nef (the new economics foundation) explores the impact of aviation growth on human development. The study demonstrates that the economic benefits of international tourism to developing nations have been overstated, and in fact, poses more of a risk

than a benefit. To minimise carbon emissions, the report suggests that high-speed rail travel could replace between 45 and 75 percent of all outbound flights from the UK. To achieve this, the report recommends a higher differential on tax on short-haul flights to both limit demand and generate revenue for investment in alternatives to air travel, and for a fund to help developing nations adapt to climate change. To access the publication visit http://neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_Publication_Detail.aspx?pid=261

MALAYSIAN PALM OIL: GREEN GOLD OR GREEN WASH? By Friends of the Earth International, October 2008. This report looks at the environmental impacts of the Malaysian palm oil industry. While Malaysian palm oil is advertised as a "green" product, the report raises concerns about the "carbon debt" of palm oil, the destruction of tropical forests, and the effects on indigenous communities, especially focusing on those in the state of Sarawak. To access the publication visit <http://www.foei.org/en/publications/agrofuels/agrofuels>

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FORESTS: EMERGING POLICY AND MARKET OPPORTUNITIES. By Charlotte Streck, Robert O'Sullivan, Toby Janson-Smith and Richard G Tarasofsky. Chatham House, October 2008. After framing forestry activities within the larger context of climate-change policy, the contributors analyse the operation and efficacy of market-based mechanisms for forest conservation and climate change. Drawing on project examples from around the world, the authors present concrete recommendations for policymakers, project developers, and market participants. They discuss sequestration rights in Chile, carbon offset programs in Australia and New Zealand, and emerging policy incentives at all levels of the U.S. government. The book also explores the different voluntary schemes for carbon crediting, provides an overview of carbon accounting best practices, and presents tools for use in future sequestration and offset programs. It concludes by considering a range of incentive options for slowing deforestation and protecting the world's remaining forests. To access the publication visit

<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/books/view/-/id/966/>

MAKING CERTIFICATION WORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF BIOFUELS. UNCTAD, 2008. This UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) publication reviews biofuel certification schemes that are already in place or are being developed, including: benefits and drawbacks of such schemes; implications for developing countries; and possible ramifications of certification in the context of the World Trade Organisation. The study concludes with some suggestions on how to ensure that biofuels certification is indeed conducive to sustainable production. To access the publication visit http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ditcted20081_en.pdf

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