

**Speaking Points for Mrs. Puri**  
**CBTF-ITF: Partnerships for Sustainable Development**  
**24 September 2008-09-24**

- For many years, UNCTAD has a strong mandate to analyze issues at the interface of trade, environment and sustainable development
- On the one side, UNCTAD works to ensure that well-intentioned environmental requirements do not pose overly large burdens on developing country exports
- On the other side, UNCTAD helps developing countries seize opportunities offered by growing markets for environmentally preferable products
- Win-win-win

UNCTAD's work on trade and sustainable development is characterized by

- **Partnerships** at national, regional and global levels
- **Multi-stakeholder:** bringing together Governments, private sector, NGOs and researchers
- **Integration of 3 pillars:** research and policy analysis, consensus building and action-oriented technical cooperation
- Focus on **Africa and LDCs**

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Organic agricultural products is a case in point.

Organic agriculture is one of the most promising options in meeting the challenge of alleviating poverty, increasing incomes, enhancing trade while at the same time protecting the environment.

Organic agriculture is sustainable and environmentally friendly production system that offers developing countries a wide range of economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.

Global markets for certified organic products have been growing at rates of over 15% a year over the past two decades. In 2006, global certified organic sales were estimated to have reached over 30 billion euros, a 20 per cent increase over 2005, and are expected to increase to 52 billion euros by 2012.

While sales are concentrated in North America and Europe, production is global with developing countries producing and exporting ever-increasing shares.

Due to expanding markets and price premiums, recent studies in Africa, Asia and Latin America indicate that organic farmers generally earn higher incomes than their conventional counterparts.

Organic agriculture contributes to poverty alleviation, environmental protection and food security with a combination of main features, most notably by:

- Increasing income and/or reducing costs of externally purchased inputs;
- Increasing yields in low-input areas over time

- Conserving biodiversity and nature resources on the farm and in the surrounding areas;
- Improving soil fertility and structure, thus improving water retention and resilience to climatic stress, contributing to climate change adaptation;
- Mitigating climate change by utilizing less energy than conventional agriculture and also sequestering carbon;
- Reducing illness and death in farm families due to agro-chemical exposure;
- Producing safe and varied food;
- Being sustainable in the long term.

Organic production is particularly well-suited for smallholder farmers, who comprise the majority of the world's poor. Resource poor organic farmers are less dependent on external resources and experience higher and more stable yields and incomes, enhancing food security.

Organic agriculture in developing countries builds on and keeps alive farmers' rich heritage of traditional knowledge and traditional agricultural varieties.

Organic farming has also been observed to strengthen communities and give youth an incentive to keep farming, thus reducing rural-urban migration.

It also offers opportunities for female farmers to improve their incomes.

This evidence clearly shows that organic agriculture is a promising trade and sustainable development opportunity and a powerful tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to poverty reduction and the environment.

There are also **challenges** for developing countries in seizing these opportunities, particularly in terms of building productive capacities and market access and entry difficulties.

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We are pleased today to share with our member States highlights of UNCTAD's analytical action-orientated work on organic agriculture.

The work has focused around two international partnerships for sustainable development:

- UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF), and
- UNCTAD-FAO-IFOAM International Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture (ITF).

These partnerships extend to the operational level and are having a real impact on the world.

I now turn the floor to my colleagues to tell you more.

*Organic Agriculture and Food Security in Africa*  
(UNCTAD/DITC/TED/2007/15)

Food security is an issue of great concern in many countries, particularly in Africa. This new UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF study shows that organic agriculture can be good for food security in Africa—equal or better than most conventional systems and more likely to be sustainable in the longer-term.

A shift towards organic production systems has enduring impact, as it builds up levels of natural, human, social, financial, and physical capital in farming communities.

Organic agriculture is a sound response to rising food and fuel prices, agricultural systems that favour use of low carbon footprint production methods and local resources.

The 15 case studies examined in-depth have shown

- increases in per hectare productivity for food crops,
- increased farmer incomes,
- environmental benefits,
- strengthened communities and
- enhanced human capital.

Organic agriculture can improve food security by addressing many different causal factors simultaneously. Organic agricultural systems are making a significant contribution to reducing food insecurity and poverty in East Africa and improving rural livelihoods.

These conclusions are confirmed by the findings of the recently released report of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), an intergovernmental process, supported by over 400 experts under the co-sponsorship of the FAO, GEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, the World Bank and WHO. It stated strongly that "the way the world grows its food will have to change radically to better serve the poor and hungry if the world is to cope with growing population and climate change while avoiding social breakdown and environmental collapse."

It is my pleasure to, together with Mr. Hussein Abaza of UNEP, launch this publication.