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# CBTF

## UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development

### Update on Activities. April 2006 edition

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## Introduction

Launched in 2000 at UNCTAD X in Bangkok, the UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF) is a collaborative initiative between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) that provides support to countries on issues related to trade and environment in pursuit of national sustainable development and poverty reduction goals. It was created in response to requests by governments to help developing countries and countries with economies in transition understand and address complex trade-environment-development linkages at the national level and effectively participate in trade negotiations at the international level. Due to the increased demand for expertise in the field of trade and environment, especially in the area of capacity building, the CBTF is currently focusing its activities on the following thematic areas:

- \* Promoting production and trade of organic agricultural products from developing countries;
- \* Assisting developing countries on conceptual and empirical issues related to the current WTO negotiations on liberalization of international trade in environmental goods and services (EGS) as well as enhancing awareness on related trade and development opportunities at the national level; and
- \* Promoting mutual supportiveness between multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and international trade.

Thanks to the financial contributions provided by the European Union, Governments of Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (USA), the CBTF has been able to complete projects initiated during Phase I (2000 - 2003) and launch a number of new activities under Phase II (2004-2007).

The CBTF is currently seeking funding to respond to national requests for capacity building assistance.

## Organic Agriculture

### Regional Workshop on “Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agriculture in East Africa” in Arusha, Tanzania, 7-9 March 2006

This regional workshop brought together relevant stakeholders and national and international institutions to discuss four capacity building background studies and progress on integrated assessment projects being undertaken in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda as part of the CBTF East

African Regional Initiative on Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agriculture. Fifty-six people, representing twelve different government agencies from four countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda), ten NGOs, four universities and four UN agencies, as well as a number of private businesses and donor groups, attended the workshop.

The four discussed capacity building background studies included:

- \* Overview of the Current State of Organic Agriculture in Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and Opportunities for Regional Harmonization;
- \* Best Practices for Organic Agriculture Policy: What Developing Country Governments Can Do to Promote the Sector;
- \* Organic Agriculture and Food Security in Africa; and
- \* Demand for Organic Products from East Africa.

National teams, consisting of a lead government agency and a local research institute, which are charged with implementing the national-level integrated assessment projects presented background documents. The teams also informed participants on the progress thus far and future project implementation plans.

The workshop provided an opportunity for national organic movements, IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements), EPOPA (Export Promotion of Organic Production from Africa), ITF (International Task Force on Harmonization and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture) and other relevant ongoing projects to share their activities with the workshop participants. Issues including regional cooperation around the East African Organic Standards, development of a regional agenda for research on organic agriculture, development of shared databases on production and trade of OA, and establishment of a Regional Organic Agriculture Platform were discussed in detail. [More ...](#)

### **Second Meeting of the Regional Standards Technical Working Group (RSTWG) for Harmonising East African Organic Agriculture Standards in Arusha, Tanzania, 6 March 2006**

The agenda of the Regional Standards Technical Working Group (RSTWG) meeting focused on the harmonisation of existing East African organic agriculture standards. One important step forward was the new partnership between CBTF and IFOAM to make the harmonisation of organic agriculture standards a joint activity. In addition, a framework for the harmonisation of regional standards was presented and discussed. The areas for the East African standard were presented, based on an analysis of the existing private and public standards in the region.

Participants at the RSTWG meeting included representatives of National Bureaus of Standards from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda, certification bodies from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, the national organic agriculture movements from these three countries, the East African Business Council, representatives from IFOAM, and a resource person from GroLink (an NGO). The next meeting of the RSTWG will be convened in May 2006.

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### **National Launching Workshop for “Integrated Assessment for Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agriculture in Kenya” in Nairobi, Kenya, 25-27 January 2006**

The launching of the integrated assessment project in Kenya marked the next step in the CBTF East African regional initiative on organic agriculture. The Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Wilson Songa welcomed the participants and read a message from the Federal Minister for Agriculture who was unable to attend. The Secretary noted the government’s appreciation for the project, its timely nature, and assured the Ministry’s full support.

The UNEP presentation focused on the background of the East African Initiative, its regional aspects

as well as the methodology and process of undertaking integrated assessment. Bridge Africa, the lead agency undertaking integrated assessment of the OA sector, presented the background paper, which covers the state of organic agriculture in the country. Representatives of the private sector (farmers and traders of OA products) made presentations about their experiences with production and trade in OA. These presentations focused on coffee, tea, macadamia nuts and herbs.

More than 40 participants representing the Kenyan ministries of trade, environment and agriculture, the Kenya Revenue Authority, NGOs, universities and the private sector including farmers and journalists, attended the workshop.

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### **Fifth Meeting of the International Task Force on Harmonisation and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture (ITF) in Hammamet, Tunisia, 5-8 December 2005**

The International Task Force (ITF) is an open-ended platform for dialogue between the public and private institutions involved in trade and regulatory activities in the organic agriculture sector. The CBTF contributed to the 5th meeting of the ITF Steering Committee by sharing its experiences with supporting the East African regional initiative on organic agriculture, including the integrated assessment projects in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The meeting also reviewed papers on the following topics: models and mechanisms for harmonisation; equivalence and mutual recognition; the impact of the Organic Guarantee System on the production and trade of organic products; conformity assessment bodies in organic harmonisation; and feasibility of an international comparative database of organic norms. [More ...](#)

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### **Seminar on “Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agriculture in India” in Pune, India, 4-6 January 2006**

The CBTF, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture of the Government of Maharashtra, the Centre of Competence for the Innovation in the Agro-Environmental Sector (AGROINNOVA), the University of Turin-Italy, and the Movement for Alternative Development by Harnessing Youths' Ability through Media (MADHYAM), convened a seminar on Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agriculture (OA) in India. One of the main objectives of the seminar was to assess the status of the sector and discuss best practices in addressing systemic and technical challenges in promoting OA. The seminar identified important barriers to the sustainable growth of the sector and action-oriented projects that could minimize these barriers. Proposed projects included research on environmental, social and economic impacts of OA production and trade, developing a package of practices for farmers, forming an association for the production and marketing of organically produced and processed food and developing standardized packaging and post-harvest management systems for organic produce.

UNEP, on behalf of CBTF, made a presentation on the role of integrated assessment in ensuring mutual supportiveness of environment and trade policies and shared its East African experiences of supporting organic agriculture projects.

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## **EGS and MEA-WTO Relationship**

### **ESCWA/UNEP Regional Workshop on Trade and Environment Capacity Building, Muscat, Oman 25-27 March 2006**

UNCTAD and UNEP participated in a joint “Regional Workshop on Trade and Environment Capacity Building” organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the UNEP Regional Office for Western Asia and the League of Arab States. Approximately 60 participants from the Arab region attended the workshop, which focused on critical trade and environment issues, including environmental requirements and market access, eco-labelling, and assessment. The workshop also included training in negotiations and negotiation simulation

exercises.

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### **WTO Regional Workshop on Trade and Environment for Arab and Middle East Countries, Muscat, Oman 28-29 March 2006**

UNEP and UNCTAD, under the auspices of the CBTF, participated in the “WTO Regional Workshop on Trade and Environment for Arab and Middle East Countries,” convened back-to-back with an ESCWA/UNEP trade and environment workshop. The WTO workshop focused on the ongoing WTO trade and environment negotiations, including discussions on the relationship between trade measures in MEAs and WTO rules and the possible liberalization of tariffs and non-tariff barriers for environmental goods and services.

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### **WTO Subregional Workshop on Trade and Environment for Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus in Vienna, Austria, 13-14 December 2005**

Both UNEP and UNCTAD participated in the workshop to lead sessions on trade and environment issues. The session lead by UNEP focused on the role of Integrated Assessment in ensuring the mutual supportiveness of trade and environment policies. The UNEP presentation highlighted that in many countries, socio-economic growth and environmental development does not automatically follow trade liberalisation. Instead, countries need to have appropriate social and environmental policies in place in order to harness the benefits created by trade liberalisation. Integrated Assessment helps countries integrate environment, social and economic issues into policies, plans and programmes. The UNCTAD presentation covered issues related to environmental goods liberalisation and the effects of environmental requirements on market access. The presentation highlighted the challenges faced in defining terms like environmental goods and environmental (and related health) requirements as well as the difficulties that developing countries face adjusting to international requirements. Some recommendations were also made on how developing countries can meet such challenges.

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