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Dialogue on a Sustainable Agriculture at the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting
Act Now to Ensure Food Security for Tomorrow

Agriculture is the central topic to be discussed at the 2012 Rio+20 Conference. This is what Biovision and more than a hundred other international NGOs demand. Within the scope of the UNECE RPM, the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting in Geneva, the representatives of governments, NGOs, the UN, the private sector, and science met to establish a dialogue.

The result of the world agriculture report IAASTD is: only an agriculture that is economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable will boost development in rural areas, combat poverty, and ensure food security. This premise was discussed in Geneva by the various parties on the occasion of the “Effective Action on Sustainable Agriculture at Rio+20” event organized by Biovision along with the Millennium Institute, the More and Better Network, and IFOAM, the international umbrella organization of ecological agriculture.

“The balance between sustainable agriculture and food security is not new by any means but has been the usual practice for thousands of years, and only later was overshadowed by industrialization and technology”, Salman Bal from the permanent Swiss mission at the UN Office and the international organizations in Geneva explained. He added that the climate change, events such as floods and droughts, the population explosion, and higher food prices have now put the topic of sustainable agriculture and food security back on the table.

The Problem of Distribution

“Why do a billion people go to bed hungry today?”, asked Asad Naqvi, Member of the Green Economy Team of UNEP, the UN environmental programme. Not because there are not enough calories produced but because of the losses along the chain of production, from harvest to consumption, and because of the unequal distribution. Naqvi also pointed out that 40 per cent of the world population generate about 5 per cent of the worldwide income, with the existence of most of them depending on agriculture, including forestry and fishery. Investments turning agriculture, in particular that of smallholders, more productive and sustainable, meant an increase welfare for these three billion people, which contributes quite decisively to economic growth and the fight against poverty, he explained.

Already today, we are producing sufficient food for nine billion people. The central issue is above all accessibility to water, land, and food for individuals, David Nabarro, UN Secretary for Food and Food Security, stated. And this is exactly what an agriculture based on smallholders that is adapted to local givens and based on sustainability is able to achieve. Besides, it is more resistant against the effects of climate change and promotes the independence of farmers, women and men alike, for instance as to the production of seeds and fertilizers.

Known Solutions

“Since 2008, solutions have been put on the table with the IAASTD World Agriculture Report”, Hans R Herren, President of Biovision and the Millennium Institute declared. “Firstly, this is the reason why agriculture now requires a prominent place on the Rio+20 agenda. Secondly, this conference is to

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commission an organization to realize the results of the IAASTD. These may thereupon deduce courses of actions for governments on a national level from the recommendations made in the report.” It’s high time, says Herren, now that three years have gone by since the report was published: “If we do not do anything right now, we shall still discuss the very same things at the Rio+30 conference”, he warned.

The results of the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting (RPM) will be presented on December 15th and 16th on the occasion of the second Intersessional Meeting of the Rio Conference 2012 in New York. In a next step, Biovision advocates that the topic of a sustainable agriculture be made part of the preliminary draft of the negotiation papers for Rio+20 that will, presumably, be published in January.

Additional information available from:

www.biovision.ch

www.timetoactrio20.org

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