

Agriculture and Development

Brussels, 15 April 2008.

The unequal distribution of food and conflict over control of the world's dwindling natural resources present a major political and social challenge to governments and policy makers. The new report launched today by the International Assessment on Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) – endorsed in Johannesburg by delegates from over 60 countries – draws global attention to the issue which is likely to reach crisis status as climate change advances and world population expands.

Along with the launch, **GreenFacts** is releasing an official reader-friendly overview of the assessment. This summary, freely available at www.greenfacts.org/en/agriculture-iaastd/ offers a convenient tool for digging into the findings and recommendations of the IAASTD. The assessment was initiated by the World Bank and the FAO (UN Food and Agricultural Organization) to evaluate how to make better use of agricultural knowledge, science and technology to reduce hunger and poverty, improve rural livelihoods, and foster equitable and sustainable development. To help communicate its findings, the IAASTD, through Com+ Alliance, called upon **GreenFacts**, an independent non-profit organization based in Brussels, to provide the general public with plain-language version of the findings of the assessment.

“Business as usual is not an option”, says Professor Robert Watson, Director of the IAASTD, “the public needs to know and we are pleased that the summary by GreenFacts brings the findings and recommendations of our experts to the reach of a much wider audience.” Professor Watson elaborates, “Agriculture can do more than just focus on production. It can help supply clean water, it can help to protect biodiversity, it should be managed in a way that manages our soils sustainably. Without this realisation we risk undermining the capital of the agricultural sector.”

Highlights of the IAASTD

The assessment raises key issues for the sustainable development of agriculture, and suggests paths for action:

- * In the fight against poverty, small-scale farmers would benefit from greater access to knowledge, technology, and credit, and, critically, from more political power and better infrastructure.
- * Ensuring food security is not merely a matter of producing enough to eat: food must also be available to those who need it. Stronger local markets and preparedness for sudden price changes and extreme weather events are needed.
- * Agricultural sustainability means maintaining productivity while protecting the natural resource base, for instance by improving low impact practices such as organic agriculture.
- * Human health can be improved through efforts to diversify diets and enhance their nutritional value, but also through enhanced food safety infrastructures and through coordinated prevention of the spread of infectious disease.
- * Achieving greater equity in agriculture requires investment to bring technology and education to rural areas. Fair access to land and water and fair

prices for agricultural products are crucial, as is the involvement of stakeholders in decision making and resource management.

About GreenFacts

GreenFacts was created in 2001 by individuals from scientific institutions, environment and health organizations, and businesses, who called for wider access to unbiased information on environment and health topics.

GreenFacts has received wide praise from the scientific community for its peer-reviewed summaries of scientific reports on issues of growing interest. Agriculture and Development is just one of many topics covered on the GreenFacts website. Other recent publications include overviews of consensus reports on climate change, biodiversity, water resources, nanotechnology and AIDS.

GreenFacts is a unique and powerful resource at a time when science is critical to our understanding of issues of health and the environment.

www.greenfacts.org

About Com+ Alliance

The Com+ alliance is a partnership of international organizations and communications professionals from diverse sectors committed to using communications to advance a vision of sustainable development that integrates its three pillars: economic, social and environmental.

By offering a platform to share expertise, develop best practice and create synergies, Com+ hopes to actively support creative and inspiring communications across the world.

www.complusalliance.org

About the IAASTD

This international assessment addresses how to make better use of agricultural science, knowledge and technology to reduce hunger and poverty, improve rural livelihoods, and foster equitable and sustainable development.

Published in 2008, it represents a three-year effort by about 400 experts around the world, working under the auspices of 30 governments and 30 representatives of civil society. The latter include nongovernmental organizations, producer and consumer groups and international organizations.

The assessment was sponsored by the United Nations, the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility, an independent financial organization that provides grants to developing countries. Five U.N. agencies were involved: the Food and Agricultural Organization, the U.N. Development Program, the U.N. Environment Programme, the U.N. Education, Science and Cultural Organization and the World Health Organization. Additional individuals, organizations and governments participated in a peer review process.

www.agassessment.org

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