

Farmers Major Group

The GE & IEG must reverse business-as-usual not accelerate it

IFOAM¹ uses its principles (Health – Ecology – Fairness - Care) to guide its advocacy work and screen policies. The Green Economy (GE) and International Environmental Governance (IEG) must usher in a new paradigm based on similar principles rather than rebadge business as usual under a collective new UN banner. If not the GE will not be credible and will miss a timely opportunity to address multiple economic and environmental challenges which are also connected to growing inequity and global social unrest.

Without a paradigm shift the GE risks accelerating business as usual industrial agriculture which already accounts for approx. 32% of all anthropogenic GHG emissions when deforestation and the conversion of other carbon and biodiversity rich ecosystems such as grasslands are taken into account. It is also a major driver of many other environmental issues such as water usage, soil erosion and fertility loss, desertification and biodiversity loss. And despite massive environmental side effects, industrial agriculture has failed to feed at least three quarters of a billion people each year since records began in 1969. Today the figure is closer to 1 billion all of whom live in developing countries and most of them are in rural areas.

Industrial agriculture disenfranchises the poor who cannot afford to buy food on international commodity markets. Instead it produces agriculture products for markets that are able to pay. For example enough grain is produced for industrial meat production to feed 3 billion people yet only 15% of this is converted into human food. Supply models for meeting projected growth in the demand for agro-fuels and meat are based on a business as usual industrial agricultural systems and current consumption patterns. The GE and IEG must find ways to address current production and consumption trends in order to balance the needs of people and the planet – especially the worlds most vulnerable. This includes the additional pressure on agriculture, ecosystems and rural people that will be caused by the demand for biomass involved in a shift from the black carbon to a green carbon economy.

To address all pillars of sustainable development the GE must be turned into an opportunity for the worlds farmers especially the rural poor who account for 75% of the worlds hungry. The GE must strengthen the worlds web of small food producers (including 400 million small farms of less than 2ha) who nourish 70% of the worlds people by providing fresh, local and diverse foods while simultaneously nurturing the majority of the worlds ecosystems and biodiversity. The GE must facilitate a shift to putting the needs of local people and their ecosystems back at the centre of farming systems and international policy. The GE must together with other international efforts to address food security and sovereignty be a driver for alleviating hunger and poverty while sustaining the worlds natural ecosystems and their services as well as the local people that directly depend upon them.

IFOAM calls for the UNEP General Council to ensure that the GE is based on agro-ecological and participative based practices and systems as recommended by the most comprehensive study ever carried out on the future of agriculture - the 'IAASTD Report' - which was endorsed by UNEP, FAO, UNDP, WB and over 50 countries.

1 IFOAM – International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. The global umbrella organization for organic farmers. An organization that has 800 members organizations in 110 countries. It covers millions of certified and non-certified farmers that use organic practices and apply organic principles. IFOAM is currently on the UNEP major Groups facilitating Committee. Contact: r.jordan@ifoam.org

