



Brussels Policy Development Briefing n° 22

The water we eat: challenges for ACP countries in times of scarcity

Wednesday 13th April 2011, 8h30 – 13h00 (EC, Building Berlaymont)

<http://brusselsbriefings.net>

INFORMATION

Objectives of the Briefing: Improve information sharing and promote networking, CTA, the DG DEVCO from the European Commission, the ACP Secretariat, Concord and various media organise bimonthly briefings on key issues and challenges for rural development in the context of EU/ACP cooperation. The Briefing on 13th April 2011 will discuss the relationship between water resources and agriculture in ACP countries. It will: i) raise awareness about existing and emerging key challenges; ii) promote the exchange of information and expertise; iii) feed into the debate various perspectives on policy options.

Target: More than 150 ACP-EU policy-makers and representatives of EU Member States, civil society groups, research networks and development practitioners, and international organisations based in Brussels.

Context: Over one-third of the world's population has to contend with water scarcity. If current patterns of farming persist, the amount of water used will increase by 70% to 100%. The rising urban population in developing countries is generating demand well beyond the capacity of already inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure and services. Unsustainable agricultural practices and industrial expansion are likely to lead to an increase in water pollution and water use. Indeed, the exploitation and contamination of water resources resulting from urbanization, agricultural intensification and land degradation have already led to significant declines in water quality and quantity. Will there be enough water to produce enough food in future, and where will it come from?

Policy Challenges: By 2025, nearly two-thirds of the world's population will live in water-stressed regions. Water scarcity is likely to become a more frequent cause of conflict between countries and user groups. The recent acceleration in the production of biofuels is also increasing pressure on both land and water resources. ACP countries face enormous challenges, and they will have to improve their water productivity if they are to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving poverty and hunger by 2015. These challenges will be exacerbated by climate change. However, they are not insurmountable. They can – and must – be addressed through research, increased investment and appropriate policies.

Key topics of discussion: Agriculture's use of water and impact on water resources are complex and dynamic, especially in the context of climate change and variability on agricultural systems, and involve trade-offs between economic, social and environmental demands. Limited and unreliable access to water limit agricultural productivity in many regions. What are the lessons learned during the past 50 years that will help us find suitable and innovative solutions? The world has enough water, but we need to manage it better and improve water governance. Water governance is the key to resolving or preventing water conflicts, and improving the productivity of existing water uses. Which are the policy responses which need to be in place or strengthened? We will also look at some emerging issues, such as virtual trade and water footprints and their implications for ACP countries.

Speakers: Representatives from leading international organizations, research networks and civil society organizations: International Water Management Institute, NASFAM, NEPAD/CADEP, Institute for Agricultural and Trade Policy, Water Footprint Network, King's College London Water Issues Group.

Available material: Input and comments before, during and after the meetings will be included in the Briefings blog: <http://brusselsbriefings.net>.