

Concept note

BioTrade IMPACT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

« Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted » Albert Einstein

I. Background

As foreseen in the 2006 work-plan, the BTFP will support the development of a BioTrade impact assessment system. The development of the system will take place in parallel with the development of the BioTrade verification framework, because the indicators developed for verification of the BioTrade Principles and Criteria will be used to the maximum possible extent in the impact assessment system.

II. Objectives

The objectives of the BioTrade Impact Assessment System are the following:

Accountability of BioTrade:

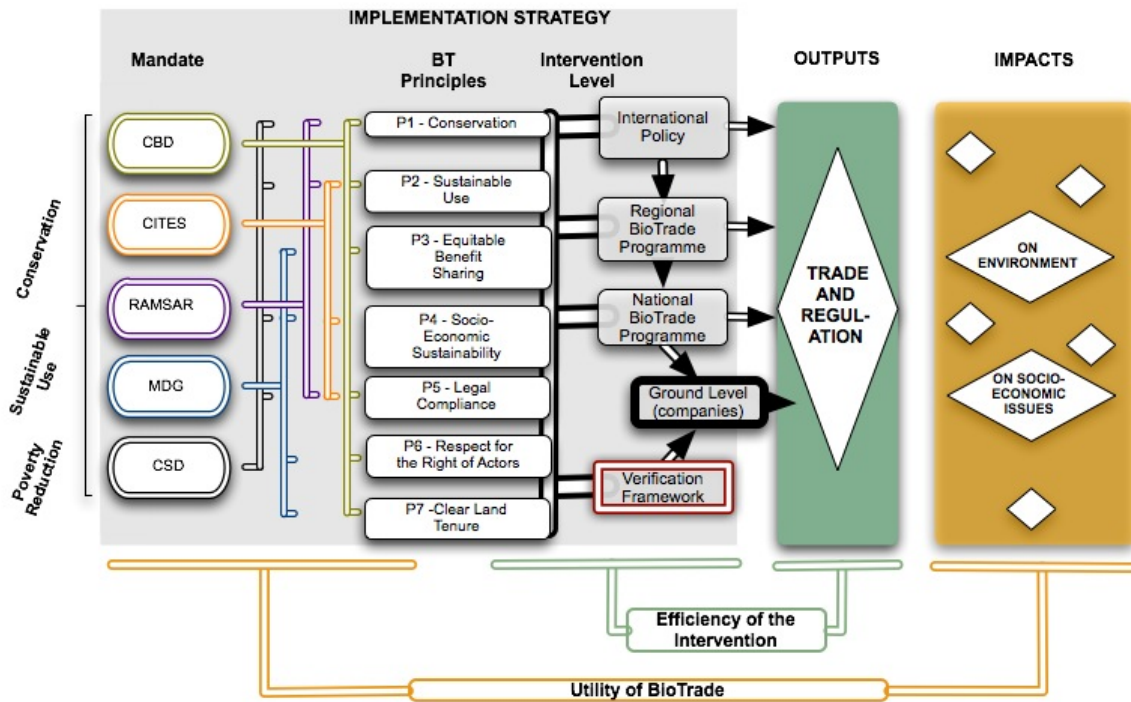
- √ To measure the utility of BioTrade, particularly in term of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Millennium Development Goals.
- √ To demonstrate that the logic of the program functions, i.e. to confirm the hypothesis according to which promotion of investment and trade in biological resources (under certain conditions) can be a means of sustainable use of and conservation of biodiversity and poverty reduction.
- √ To be able to facilitate communication of the outputs and the impacts of BioTrade to the general public, donors, companies, NGOs, etc.

Support management and program design

- √ To contribute to a learning environment.
- √ To better visualize impacts and promote continuous improvement.
- √ To provide guidance to the overall project strategy

III. Components of the BioTrade system

The diagram, below, schematically represents some of the components of the BioTrade System and the two different levels of assessment that are being contemplated.



Components of the BioTrade system and evaluation's questions

a. Mandate

Conservation of biological diversity, its sustainable use and contribution to poverty reduction are key driving imperatives towards achieving sustainable development. They have resulted in international and multilateral negotiations on sustainable development and biodiversity policies, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) and the Ramsar Convention on the Protection of Wetlands. In addition, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the WSSD have set and/or reaffirmed important targets on poverty reduction and reduction of current rate of biodiversity loss to be achieved by 2015 and 2010 target respectively.

b. BioTrade Principles

The BioTrade Initiative grounds its mission, vision and program on the mandate received from these key multilateral environmental agreements. This has resulted in the development of a set of Principles and Criteria for BioTrade. The diagram only represents the Principles, but shows the link between them and the different multilateral frameworks. These Principles frame the whole BioTrade initiative and fundamentally indicate the fields in which the initiative has to have positive results and impact.

c. Outputs

The Outputs are roughly intended to represent the direct results of the implementation of BioTrade activities ("services offered") on trade flows in goods and services and relevant regulation (policies and laws). These outputs are tangible and should be relatively easy to measure through cooperation among stakeholders; the efficiency and effectiveness of the intervention can be assessed through periodic evaluation/monitoring based on the measure of the outputs. See "harmonized system of information management" below.

d. Impacts

The impacts are intended to represent the less direct effects of the BT activities. These effects are a lot more challenging to assess, but they will determinate the success of BioTrade in achieving its mandate. See also "tools and procedure for assessing the impacts" below.

Note: The verification framework, among other activities, is addressing more directly environmental and socio-economical issues. The verification process will be particularly useful for gathering information on outputs and impacts.

IV. Expected outputs

The development of such a BioTrade impact assessment system is an important process itself that will permit mutual learning throughout the process among all stakeholders involved. The following outputs are expected throughout the process:

a. General logical framework¹

This should offer an overview of the large scope of activities being undertaken in the field of BioTrade and define the scope of assessment. It will be useful as an instrument of communication (public, donor) to present the logic of all activities being undertaken under the BioTrade Initiative and to raise the ability of continuous improvement of these activities. It should also allow, on the basis of the knowledge and experience of the different stakeholders, to predict possible and negative impacts and identifying coexisting factors (to help assessing in what extent are the impacts attributable to the BT activities). This work will be initiated with the BT stakeholders from the Andean region and Brazil in the Lima workshop in July 2006.

b. Harmonized system of data and information management

As part of the impact assessment system a harmonized procedure should be developed to report at the international level on a regular basis. This procedure should include address enterprises, assessment bodies (NGO, verifiers, public institutions) and national authorities and should be adapted to the heterogeneity of BioTrade programs.

This system will permit to have a clear idea on the extent to which BioTrade takes place and will allow reporting on quantitative and qualitative issues such as number of enterprises, type of product/services, amount of production, surface involved, etc.

This system will provide a good indication on the outputs of BioTrade activities (see diagram above). It should be able to gather useful data for periodic reports and evaluations. It will also help to assess whether the impacts measured at the environmental and socio-economical level can be attributed to BioTrade.

c. Tools and procedures for impact assessment

This system should be implemented at the national level and/or in relation with the institutions supervising the implementation ("critical path") of the BioTrade verification framework². It will demonstrate the impacts of BioTrade in terms of poverty reduction and sustainable use / conservation of biodiversity. These systems will be adapted to the national context, but should be similar enough to allow comparison between different countries and to allow for the collection of information to report nationally and internationally on the general impacts of BioTrade.

¹ While trying to conduct all planned activities and achieve expected results, it is easy to lose sight of the goal, or to focus too strongly on functioning and performance (efficiency) and not enough on its context (effectiveness). It is important not only to ask, "Are we doing things right?" but also, "Are we doing the right things?" Herweg K, Steiner K. 2002. Impact Monitoring & Assessment. Instruments for use in rural development projects with a focus on sustainable land management. Volume 1: Procedure. Berne, Switzerland: Geographica Bernensia for CDE and GTZ.

² In some cases, it may be no national program involved, so the institution supervising the critical path will be involved directly.

Impact indicators

Impact indicators will be developed to assess whether the actual impacts are consistent with the BioTrade objectives and “Principles and Criteria”. Even though there were not intended to measure impact, a lot of work has been carried out by the BioTrade Initiative and partners to develop indicators that provide specific information on environmental or socio-economical issues. This existing cluster of indicators will be considered and when useful will be taken into account for the development of impact indicators.

V. The process

The work on the development of the system started early June 2006 and should end in April or May 2007. As the impact assessment should be closely linked with the critical path it will be coordinated by the BTFP, however this system will not disregard other activities of BioTrade Initiative and national BioTrade programmes/partners.

Nancy Vallejo (external consultant – specialist of verification scheme and certification process) and Alexandre Dufresne (civil service of the Swiss Confederation) will carry out the development of the system in cooperation with national programmes and other BioTrade partners. Rik Kutsch Lojenga, BTFP manager, will supervise this process.

Cooperation and participation

The Lima workshop will be one of the first steps in the process and will allow national countries to integrate the process from its early stages onwards. The Lima workshop and the current work of the countries will offer a basis to develop a conceptual framework and to design and develop an impact assessment system. Alexandre Dufresne will be based in Latin America to facilitate cooperation with national programmes during the formulation process of the system. Cooperation possibilities should be further discussed with the national programmes.

Legitimacy and credibility of the IAS

To reach a greater approval and validation of the system, there will be a consultation and validation at different stages of the programme with key stakeholders (identified by the BT national program and the BTFP). The national programs are from now invited to communicate the institutions they want to associate to the consultations phases.

The consultation process will also follow WTO requirements to ensure that the IAS is acceptable within the trade regime and can serve as an international guideline for other similar processes.