

**Global biodiversity mechanisms:
a thematic review of recent developments and future evidence needs**

Strand Palace Hotel, London 20th May 2009

Thematic Briefing

**Application of the ecosystem approach and use of
ecosystem services**

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Briefing note: Application of the ecosystem approach and use of ecosystem services

Despite the ecosystem approach (EA) being developed as the primary framework of action under the CBD, the results of the in-depth review conducted before CBD CoP9 showed that the EA is still rarely used in its full scope. Insufficient understanding of the concept seems to be one of the largest barriers to overcome.

The decision at CBD CoP 9 stressed that the EA should not be regarded as a single solution but rather its application provides the basis for bringing together social, economic, cultural and environmental values. It was also noted that whilst there were good examples of it being applied locally it needs to be applied at all levels and embedded across policy. For instance, the EA has an important role to play in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The concepts of ecosystem services and ecosystem functioning are also firmly embedded in the concept of the EA. Consequently its application could assist in the articulation of the role of ecosystem goods and services to human well-being.

The Decision at CoP 9 strengthened calls for the promotion of the EA across sectors and to promote national initiatives. The UK National Ecosystem Assessment will assist with meeting this requirement. There were also calls for its incorporation into poverty reduction strategies with particular emphasis on its application at the local level. The DFID, ESRC, NERC project Ecosystem Services and Poverty Reduction (ESPA) could make a useful contribution to this aim.

Sustainable use of ecosystem services

There is wide recognition that securing sustainable food (and biofuels, fibre, fuelwood etc) production globally will require ecosystems to maintain their capacity to deliver ecosystem goods and services. The FAO has estimated that 40% of the world's economy is based directly and indirectly on the use of biological resources. It is therefore not surprising that sustainable use of biological diversity is one of the three objectives set out in the CBD's first article. As underlined in the plan of implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, sustainable use is also an effective tool to combat poverty, and, consequently, to achieve sustainable development. In light of this CBD Decision VII/14 adopted the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment findings have also strengthened the call for a better understanding of the links between ecosystem goods and services and public welfare. This has also been echoed in several CoP decisions, notably under CBD's agricultural biodiversity, forestry biodiversity and EA decisions; and a CMS resolution on sustainable use.

Under the decision on agricultural biodiversity at CBD CoP9 there were several calls for work which strengthen the links between sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services and biodiversity, as follows.

- Compiling and disseminating information to improve understanding of soil biodiversity, its interaction with above-ground biodiversity, other soil functions, and the practices that affect it.
- Completing information (much has already been collated by the FAO) on pollinator species, populations and their taxonomy, ecology and other interactions.
- To gather and disseminate information on the links between climate change, agriculture and biodiversity, including the impacts of climate change on crops, crop wild relatives, livestock, food and nutrition, soil biodiversity and pollinators, as well as the availability of water.

An in-depth review of the CBD's thematic programme on sustainable use is currently underway. This will report to SBSTTA 14 and then to CoP10 in 2010.