



SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION PANEL ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES FOR MEASURING AND REPORTING SUSTAINABILITY OF BIO-BASED ENERGY AND PRODUCTS

Held in Washington DC, United States on 29 June 2010

Goal of the discussion panel

The OECD organised a discussion panel on the Development of Strategies for Measuring and Reporting Sustainability of Bio-based Products in conjunction with the 7th World Congress on Industrial Biotechnology and Bio-processing on June 29, 2010 in Washington DC. About 50 participants from industry, academia and governmental agencies attended the panel.

The main objectives of the panel were:

- To launch the report from OECD Montreal Workshop, held in 2009, entitled “Towards the Development of OECD Best Practices for Assessing the Sustainability of Bio-based Products” and to communicate its main conclusions,
- To review national and regional policy priorities for measuring and reporting sustainability of bio-based products,
- To review industry view and priorities for measuring and reporting sustainability of bio-base products,
- To gather practitioners’ views on the emerging principles for assessing the sustainability of bio-based products.

The panel was structured around four speakers’ presentations and dealt with regional policy perspectives regarding the sustainability of bio-based products; industrial views on sustainability issues; the need for an international instrument in assessing the sustainability of bio-based products and its potential scope and impact.

Main messages

There was a strong support amongst participants for the need and thus for the development of an international instrument (*e.g.* OECD Council Recommendation) to help governments develop approaches for measuring sustainability of bio-based products beyond bio-fuels. Participants urged the development of such an instrument.

A priority has been given to the definition of sustainability goals for bio-based products at different levels such as company, society, policy makers while considering geographical boundaries and the three sustainability pillars.



All in all, the development of the OECD Council Recommendation has been perceived as a benefit for the biotechnology industry and policy makers. It would allow for a better communication with consumers, and thus for a better acceptance of bio-based products while assuring further political support to this sector.

On the other hand, the development of the sustainability assessment instrument is not without challenges: the sustainability assessment generates high complexity information, which should be communicated simply and comprehensively to various stakeholders. Additionally, the sustainability criteria should be meaningfully chosen for a given context and should be weighted to allow their prioritisation during the decision making process.

The coordination of regional and international initiatives dealing with sustainability of bio-based products has been given a high priority by participants. The development of an OECD Council Recommendation should benefit from the experience gained under various regional and international initiatives, including bio-fuels-related metrics and the sustainability evaluation tools.