

Major Global Environmental Assessments 2007-2008

A number of global environmental assessments will be released by different organizations over the course of 2007 through early 2008. These include the Summary for Policy Makers of the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a Comprehensive Assessment of Water Use in Agriculture by CGIAR, the fourth Assessment Report of Climate Change by IPCC, the fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) Assessment by UNEP, a first ever International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development by World Bank and others, and the second OECD Environmental Outlook.

Each assessment has a specific focus or entry point, and a different methodological approach. Together they provide a complementary package assessing expected environmental developments over the next few decades and the policies and actions that can be taken to avert significant environmental damage and related impacts on societies and the economy. It is expected that a number of common messages will emerge from these authoritative assessments on the most pressing environmental challenges ahead and how they might be tackled.

Each assessment report is being produced through a rigorous review process, often, including the involvement of a large number of government representatives, scientists, civil society and industry stakeholders. The assessments draw on state-of-the-art knowledge in their field of specialty, and all use scenarios or other quantitative analysis to project environment-related changes into the future.

The lead agencies carrying out these assessments are holding regular consultations in order to exchange information on the respective findings, and to identify common messages and possible differences. The consultations also provide an opportunity to share results and technical capacity, in order to avoid duplication of efforts between the assessments.

This note provides an overview of these different assessments, their main focal themes, their analytical approaches, contact persons and release dates.



Global Environment Outlook 4 (GEO-4)

Lead agency: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Focal theme: “Environment for development” with a special focus on the role and impact of the environment for human well-being and the use of environmental valuation as a decision-making tool.

Key questions: How are various forms of natural and human-induced global and relevant sub-global environmental changes affecting human well-being and development opportunities? What are the key policy-relevant issues and findings relating to the interactions between environment and society and where is there need for further action? How far do environmental policies act as a driver for environmental change, what are the most efficient and effective ways to implement them? What are the barriers and what are the corrective measures that could be taken?

Analytical approach: The GEO-4 retrospective horizon is the 1987 Brundtland Commission report – *Our Common Future*. It also provides a future outlook - for the short-term up to 2015 (with special consideration of the MDG targets), as well as for the medium term up to 2050, based on four contrasting scenarios and the use of different models. It assesses state-and-trends of major environmental issues, and their interlinkages with the development process, analyses policy responses and impacts, and discusses future response options and opportunities for mitigating/adapting to environmental change. The extensive global and regional analysis of issues is presented in the context of international environmental governance. The models used in the assessment include: Integrated Model to Assess the Global Environment (IMAGE), WaterGap, International Futures (IFs), Global Methodology for Mapping Human Impacts on the Biosphere (GLOBIO), the Asian Integrated Model (AIM), IMPACT/LEITAP (worldwide models of food supply, demand and trade) and UBC Fisheries.

Governance and oversight: UNEP’s Governing Council (Environment Ministers)

Publication date: first week of October 2007

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OECD Environmental Outlook to 2030

Lead agency: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Focal themes: environment-economic linkages to 2030; policy analysis

Key questions: How will economic and social developments drive environmental change to 2030? What policies are needed to address the main environmental challenges? How can OECD and non-OECD countries best work together to tackle these challenges?

Analytical approach: Projections to 2030 are developed using a global general equilibrium model (ENV-LINKAGES) coupled with an integrated environmental impacts model (IMAGE). A single reference baseline is developed, against which the economic and environmental impacts of specific policy simulations are compared.

The projections are complemented by qualitative discussions based on extensive OECD analytical work.

Governance and oversight: Developed under the authority of the OECD Environment Policy Committee (EPOC), as an input to the March 2008 OECD Environment Ministerial Meeting.

Publication date: mid-February 2008

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Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Fourth assessment report (AR-4)

Lead agency: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Focal theme: Global Climate Change

Key questions: Comprehensive assessment with increased focus on new findings and cross cutting themes including key vulnerabilities, integration of adaptation and mitigation, sustainable development, water, technology, uncertainties and risk, and regional matters.

Analytical approach: The assessment reports provide review and synthesis of peer-reviewed literature along three main lines: (i) the physical science basis; (ii) impacts, adaptation and vulnerability; (iii) mitigation of climate change. The fourth assessment reviews a wide range of available scenarios but does not develop new scenarios.

Governance and oversight: IPCC plenary

Publication date: Working Group reports spread over the first half of 2007; Policy Makers Summary in November 2007

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International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (the AgAssessment)

Lead agency: World Bank. Co-sponsored by FAO, UNEP, UNDP, WHO, UNESCO and GEF

Focal theme: Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology Systems for the future

Key questions: How can agricultural knowledge science and technology be used to address the challenges of hunger and poverty alleviation in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable manner?

Analytical approach: One worldwide and five regional assessments are conducted. The assessment reports provide review and synthesis of peer-reviewed literature

looking back 50 years and forward 50 years, providing options for action to decision-makers. The global assessment involves a single quantified reference baseline to 2050 as well as a review of other relevant scenarios. The role of key assumptions for the developments to 2050 is analyzed with model-based simulations. Models include IMPACT and IMAGE.

Governance and oversight: Intergovernmental with a multi-stakeholder Bureau (includes governments, private sector, NGOs, producers, consumers and international organizations)

Publication date: second week of January, 2008

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Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture (the Ag Water Assessment)

Lead agency: International Water Management Institute (IWMI), one of the CGIAR centres

Focal theme: a critical evaluation of benefits, costs, and impacts of the past 50 years of water development and current challenges to water management

Key questions: how can water for food be developed and managed to help end poverty and hunger, ensure environmentally sustainable water-agriculture practices, and find the balance between food and environmental security

Analytical approach: While the assessment's scope is global, it focuses on developing countries where water-for-food is critical for livelihoods. It takes the approach that water management in agriculture includes a continuum of practices between rain-fed and irrigated agriculture, wise use of wetlands, freshwater fisheries and aquaculture, and livestock. Over the past five years, the Ag Water Assessment has engaged a participatory process of dialogue, partnerships, research, synthesis, review and outreach. Diversity of participation is a key principle of the process in terms of background, region and gender.

Governance and oversight: Steering Committee selected from key CGIAR centres and key partners

Publication date: March 2007 (Book title: Water for Food, Water for Life: the Comprehensive Assessment)

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