

2-7 Low carbon society (LCS) and sustainable development (SD): Perspectives of Brazil

Haroldo Machado Filho, Brazil

In December 2007, under the multilateral climate change regime, Parties reached an agreement on the framework to address climate change during the post-2012 period. One of the most important pillars of this framework is the Bali Plan of Action, which sets a negotiation process to be finalized by 2009 on long-term cooperative actions to address climate change by enhancing implementation of the UNFCCC.

According to the Bali Plan of Action, all countries must take part in the global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but these efforts must be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. In this regard, the negotiation process addresses options on how to enhance national and international mitigation actions, including “nationally appropriate actions by developing country Parties in the context of sustainable development, supported and enabled by technology, financing and capacity-building, in a measurable, reportable, and verifiable manner.”

Each developing country must pursue its path of development, in a sustainable manner, based on its national circumstances, and should make all the efforts to reduce GHG. These efforts must be strengthened through the provision of positive incentives, including technology transfer and financing, from the international community. Developing countries will need improved access to adequate, predictable and sustainable financial resources and technical support.

Based on its national circumstances, Brazilian efforts towards a LCS include tackling deforestation and using ethanol as a substitute for gasoline. Deforestation is the main source of GHG emissions in Brazil. However, the rate of forest loss in the last three years has decreased by almost 60%, which represents an unprecedented success in reducing deforestation. Moreover, the use of ethanol as a substitute for gasoline has avoided emitting 644 Mt of CO₂ over the last 30 years. In Brazil, ethanol production from sugarcane not only reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and is socially sustainable, but it is also energy and cost-effective.

In fact, biofuels from developing countries (DCs) have a great untapped potential to reduce global GHG emissions. However, major energy consumers in the developed world have placed all kinds of barriers to biofuels from DCs. Barriers to biofuels distort markets, raise energy prices, spread poverty, endanger food security and are totally inconsistent with climate concerns. Therefore, barriers to biofuels should be removed promptly and unconditionally.

A successful conclusion to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round of negotiations, with the inclusion of ethanol and biodiesel in the list of environmental goods and services, is fundamental for the reduction of tariff barriers related to biofuel exports. Efforts should be deployed to ensure that ethanol and biodiesel will be produced in a sustainable way, but these efforts shall not create unnecessary non-tariff barriers to international trade, especially to exports from developing countries, or validate the current unsustainable consumption of fossil fuels.