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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде

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联合国环境规划署



Green Economy and Trade Opportunities (2013-2014)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Trade has the potential to facilitate the transition to a green economy by fostering the exchange of environmentally friendly goods and services, increasing resource efficiency, generating economic opportunities and employment, and contributing towards poverty eradication. The transition to a green economy, on the other hand, has the potential to boost international trade. The Rio+20 Conference outcome document, “The Future We Want”, affirms international trade as an engine for development and sustained economic growth. In this context, the outcome document brings into focus the need to achieve progress in addressing important issues, such as trade in environmental goods and services.

At the same time, there are significant challenges facing many developing countries to structurally transform their economies in a sustainable manner. This is particularly the case for those countries that lack the required economic and technological know-how. The Rio+20 Conference underlined that, in order for developing countries to realise their full trade opportunities, financial and technical assistance is needed from all relevant stakeholders.

It is also critical to acknowledge concerns that have been expressed, particularly by developing countries, that trade-related policy measures, such as tariffs, subsidies, standards, intellectual property rights and national regulation in general, particularly when applied at the border, might be used to unnecessarily restrict international trade for green economy-related purposes. It is therefore important to respond to these concerns by supporting governments in their drive towards a green economy while reducing the risks of such structural changes. In particular, identifying concrete trade opportunities, together with appropriate policy reforms and greater access to technologies and know-how, can create and strengthen developing countries' capacity to benefit from a transition to a green economy.

Through an intense stakeholder process, UNEP, in collaboration ITC and ITCSD, is currently developing a study that identifies a range of international trade opportunities for the transition to a green economy in six major economic sectors: agriculture, fisheries, forests, renewable energy and manufacturing. It identifies policies that are acting as facilitators or hindrances to the transition to a green economy and points to enabling conditions needed to respond to international demand for environmentally-friendly goods and services at national, regional and international levels.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES:

This new project proposes refinement of the findings and application of the analysis to the national sector-specific level. Analysis, effective tools, stakeholder dialogue and policy advice for harnessing trade opportunities arising from a green economy transition will be provided to selected countries. The studies will focus on pilot countries where opportunities to increase trade flows exist in the context of green economy. Through inclusive stakeholder processes, they will examine policy reforms and enabling conditions required to maximise such opportunities and minimise any negative impacts on/of trade. The project will build the capacity of stakeholders to take advantage of trade opportunities in a green economy and promote outreach to global and regional fora on trade and green economy in general, and the WTO in particular.

Five steps will be followed:

(1) Country and sector selection

It is intended that country studies will initially be developed in countries where UNEP has active green economy advisory services projects and in which scoping studies have identified trade as an important aspect of countries' green economy transition. Review of this and other country-level initiatives will also point to national institutions wishing to engage in work on related trade opportunities.



For each country, one sector or commodity that demonstrates particular export opportunities for green products or services will be chosen. Important criteria for the sector to be selected include:

- economic importance of the sector for the country in terms of actual or potential trade flows, revenue, employment, food security, etc.;
- the extent to which the sector produces goods or services that, with a limited amount of assistance, could be made more resource efficient, including through certification and labelling;
- whether the natural resources used to produce the goods or services, e.g. water, fisheries, timber, energy, are being utilised sustainably or being depleted at a high rate; and
- the potential to create and further develop existing governmental and non-governmental partnerships, initiatives and/or policy reform processes.

(2) Definition of approaches, methodologies and partnerships

UNEP will review initiatives and assessment methodologies related to the sectors identified with a view to developing guidance that will be used at the country-level implementation and draw linkages with existing work. UNEP will build upon the work and experience of other initiatives such as the Sustainable Trade Initiative to develop methodologies to improve the sustainability of supply chains through cooperation with key stakeholders (e.g. private sector, financial institutions, civil society organisations and governments) and identify experts within and outside UNEP to assist with the national level analysis.

(3) Country-level analysis

The country-level analysis will identify key trade opportunities in the chosen sector. It will build on economy-wide green economy assessments being undertaken by UNEP and its partners and use methodologies and partnerships identified in step 2. This phase will commence by identifying national stakeholders and experts that can contribute to and review the analysis in order to ensure that it is country- and demand-driven.

The analysis will contain the following elements:

- assessment of trade trends related to the chosen sector and their overall economic, social and environmental impacts;
- review of domestic and international drivers and requirements that are creating and shaping trade opportunities in the sector (e.g. environmental and economic considerations, certification schemes, government regulations, harmful subsidies, etc.);
- analysis of barriers towards the achievement of more resource efficient trade policies and practices;
- identification of specific trade opportunities, such as the expansion of trade in certain environmental goods and services, certification of particular products or the development of more resource-efficient process and production methods related to the traded commodity; and
- review of enabling conditions for harnessing opportunities and overcoming barriers, such as capital investments into sustainable production processes, fiscal policies and incentive measures, regulations, sustainable procurement, new enterprise development, labelling and certification options.

Assessments tailored to the specific country circumstances and based on quantitative and qualitative methods will result in sectoral analysis related to trade opportunities as well as options and recommendations for the design of sector-specific implementation measures.

(4) National stakeholder workshops to stimulate uptake and identify follow-up activities

National workshops will be designed to stimulate uptake of the outcomes once the studies have been produced. Work will already be undertaken during the course of the project to engage with donors in order to plan for and initiate capacity-building activities based upon the trade opportunities that have been identified.

A stakeholder workshop will be held in each country to discuss the findings of the project, define follow-up activities and seek donor engagement related to the implementation of recommended policy packages and new initiatives, e.g. through training programmes. This workshop will involve government agencies, the private sector and other concerned stakeholders. It will include specialist input from partners working with the private sector, such as ITC, and offer legal advice as to how trade-supporting green economy measures can be implemented in consistency with trade rules and requirements.



The workshops will also build the capacity of national institutions to harness trade opportunities identified by the projects and provide linkages to recipient country-driven aid-for-trade programmes to engage more on supply constraints for environmental goods and services in developing countries.

(5) Outreach and international dialogues on concrete new trade opportunities

International outreach will be organised to provide opportunities for governments (trade, environment, sectoral ministries, etc.), civil society, the private sector and industry, trade unions and other stakeholders to learn and exchange information and experiences related to concrete trade opportunities arising from the transition to a green economy. This will include expert meetings to facilitate exchange of experiences among the pilot countries to allow for reflection and exchange of experiences from the first year, discuss transferability of lessons learned so far, and initiate dialogue on scaling-up the country projects after the project duration.

It will also include global policy dialogues to be attended by global actors such as WTO delegates, environment officials, trade experts, actors from the private sector and civil society to help with the design and selection of methodologies and approaches and exchange of country- and sector-specific analysis and to share broader lessons learned and provide further momentum for concrete capacity-building activities for stakeholders at national and international levels.

UNEP will also promote the findings of the project through contributions to technical and political workshops and conferences on trade and environment and meet regularly with other actors in the field (including UNCTAD, WTO, OECD, NGOs) in order to share experiences and foster dialogue on the trade aspects of a transition to a green economy.

RESULTS TO BE ACHIEVED:

Combining trade and the transition to a green economy can generate new opportunities for developing countries by opening new markets that would facilitate trade in environmentally-friendly goods and services. This approach will also bring related benefits such as a more active participation of developing countries in the design, harmonisation and implementation of international standards, and certification schemes, while ensuring, with their trade partners and multilateral bodies, that such schemes are neither barriers to trade nor utilised for green protectionism.

The following results are expected to be met by this project:

- trade opportunities associated with a transition to a green economy will be identified with respect to selected developing countries and sectors, leading to increased exports from those countries of environmentally-friendly goods and services;
- analysis on trade flows and trade opportunities in a green economy will provide assistance to policy makers and the private sector in shaping their legal and policy frameworks and promoting certain export sectors;
- national capacity to implement policies conducive to benefiting from trade opportunities in a green economy will be enhanced in the selected countries;
- the formulation of regional and international approaches on the green economy will benefit from open and inclusive dialogue on trade and green economy;
- increased awareness among stakeholders in developing countries of the benefits of a transition to a green economy will further reinforce the shift of green economy discussion from trade barriers to trade opportunities, as already witnessed in Rio+20; and
- trade negotiations at all levels will benefit from further trade-related analysis and examples of existing and potential trade opportunities.