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Policy Issues

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Environmental Policy

Executive Summary

WFP embraces the vision of the 2030 Agenda for a world free from hunger in a context of socially equitable and environmentally responsible sustainable development. WFP recognizes that the environmental, social and economic dimensions of the agenda's Sustainable Development Goals are interdependent and must all be consistently reflected in its work.

Achieving food security and ending hunger require healthy natural ecosystems and sustainable use of natural resources. Many food-insecure populations bear the consequences of degraded land and forests, scarce water, biodiversity loss, polluted soils, water and air, and unmanaged waste. These environmental factors have impacts on human health and limit the availability, accessibility, utilization and stability of food.

In line with WFP's commitments and donor requirements, this policy builds on lessons learned from experience and seeks to resolve a gap in WFP's policy framework by systematically integrating environmental considerations into the organization's work to address hunger. It builds on progress to date and complements ongoing consideration of social concerns.

A sound environmental policy with systems that consistently respond to environmental risks and opportunities for improvement will better equip WFP to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and end hunger.

The policy focuses on mechanisms for identifying, avoiding, addressing and managing environmental risks in WFP's interventions, while also recognizing that WFP's food assistance activities can generate environmental benefits. WFP will continue to pursue such benefits as it seeks to avoid harm.

Guided by a set of overarching principles, the policy will support WFP in: i) progressively enhancing the environmental sustainability of activities and operations; ii) protecting the environment; iii) increasing resource efficiency and minimizing its carbon footprint; iv) aligning its actions with good international practice and global standards for environmental sustainability; and v) strengthening the capacity of partners to plan and implement environmentally sound activities for food security and nutrition.

Focal points:

Mr K. Crossley
Deputy Director
Technical Assistance and Country Capacity
Strengthening Service
tel.: 066513-2964

Mr P. Ward
Director
Management Services Division
tel.: 066513-2917

The policy commits WFP to developing planning and implementation tools, which are outlined in separate guidance documents:

- environmental standards that lay out essential protection measures and minimum expectations;
- a screening and categorization process for identifying and managing environmental risks; and
- an environmental management system consistent with the international standard ISO 14001.¹

WFP's approach to environmental accountability affects both programme activities and in-house operations. It spans emergency humanitarian and longer-term development activities. Flexibility to deal with varying operational demands will be built into implementation procedures.

Embedding the environmental dimension of sustainable development into WFP's procedures will require additional resources and training. Environmental standards will be integrated into relevant corporate processes and country strategic planning. All WFP operations and global Headquarters will be supported in identifying, rating and managing environmental risks. Preparedness measures and standard operating procedures will seek to anticipate and minimize the environmental impacts of emergency operations. An environmental management system will address day-to-day decisions relating to facilities and support services. Environmental accountability will be incorporated into WFP's monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms.

The policy underlines the need for collaboration and takes into account the policies and guidelines of WFP's principal partners, including donors and multilateral funds. Policy implementation will leverage engagement with suppliers, cooperating partners and other humanitarian and United Nations organizations. This policy supersedes the 1998 policy entitled "WFP and the Environment".²

Draft decision*

The Board approves "Environmental Policy" (WFP/EB.1/2017/4-B/Rev.1*).

¹ ISO 14001 is administered by the International Organization for Standardization and is used in more than 300,000 organizations worldwide.

² WFP/EB.3/98/3.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

Overview

1. Achieving food security and ending hunger require healthy natural ecosystems and sustainable use of natural resources. Many food-insecure populations bear the consequences of degraded land and forests, scarce water, biodiversity loss, polluted soils, water and air, and unmanaged waste. These environmental factors have impacts on human health and limit the availability, accessibility, utilization and stability of food.
2. WFP's approach to environmental sustainability was first laid out in "WFP and the Environment" in 1998.² Global and internal developments since then make it necessary to revisit this approach and align it with WFP's Strategic Plan (2017–2021) and current international and United Nations standards. This policy builds on WFP's experience with "WFP and the Environment" and supersedes that policy.
3. WFP is committed to contributing to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals³ (SDGs), prioritizing SDG 2 on achieving zero hunger and SDG 17 on partnering to support implementation of all SDGs, including those that integrate environmental sustainability considerations.
4. WFP emphasizes the importance of managing the environmental and social impacts of programme and in-house activities in a coordinated way, as outlined in the 2011 Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System.⁴ This policy focuses on environmental sustainability, complementing existing WFP policies and practices related to social sustainability.
5. WFP's Environmental Policy is linked to and complements its Climate Change Policy,⁵ which defines how WFP will contribute to national and global efforts to prevent climate change from undermining work to end hunger. The Climate Change Policy addresses the impact of the environment on the food and nutrition security of WFP's beneficiaries, while the Environmental Policy addresses the impact of WFP's work on the environment on which WFP's beneficiaries depend.
6. This policy acknowledges that some of WFP's food assistance activities contribute to environmental benefits. It also provides the framework for WFP to deliver on United Nations-wide environmental commitments, including by embedding environmental management into the design and implementation of country strategic plans and in-house operations and implementing the Strategy for a Climate-Neutral United Nations.
7. The policy seeks to strengthen the planning of WFP's interventions so that they incorporate identification and management of environmental risks from the outset. In this way, the policy will contribute to sustainable solutions for food and nutrition security that are more cost-effective over time.
8. This policy has been informed by lessons from the previous policy and broader global dialogue on environmental and social sustainability. It reflects feedback from in-house workshops and consultations with the Executive Board.

³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

⁴ Environment Management Group. 2012. *A Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System*. New York. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2738sustainabilityfinalweb-.pdf>

⁵ Climate Change Policy, to be approved at EB.1/2017 in February 2017. (WFP/EB.1/2017/4-A).

The Global Context

Impacts of Environmental Degradation on Hunger

9. All life depends on a healthy environment for its continued existence. Millions of rural households depend on ecosystem services⁶ and natural resources – such as land, water and forests – for their livelihoods and well-being. Environmental degradation often leads to declining agricultural productivity and high risk of crop and livestock failure,⁷ with impacts on food and nutrition security, particularly for indigenous communities.
10. Poor urban households frequently live in highly polluted environments where lack of clean water, sanitation, drainage and solid-waste disposal services contribute to contamination of water and food, inadequate levels of hygiene, and exposure to vector-borne diseases such as malaria. All of these factors contribute to food insecurity and malnutrition.
11. For food-insecure populations, the impacts of human-induced environmental degradation compound the challenges of climate change, natural disasters, conflict, price volatility and water scarcity. Climate change is accelerating natural resource degradation, while natural disasters contribute to ecosystem deterioration and loss.⁸ Both have significant consequences for livelihoods.

Impacts of Human Activities on the Environment

12. For decades, short-term economic growth and social development goals have been pursued at the expense of the environment,⁹ often rendering early gains unsustainable in the medium term. Growing demands for food, water, timber, metals, fibre and fuel, combined with population growth, unsustainable consumption and the use of hazardous chemicals have put increasing pressure on ecosystems, biodiversity and the associated goods and services on which all people rely, especially the rural poor. This has resulted in widespread and sometimes irreversible degradation – forest and biodiversity loss, genetic diversity decline, desertification, soil erosion and salinization, water scarcity, and soil, water and air pollution.
13. Humanitarian operations can have negative effects on the environment if environmental considerations are not adequately addressed at the outset. Some humanitarian operations have been associated with groundwater depletion, water pollution, inappropriate waste management, excessive use of chemicals, or uncontrolled use of natural resources.¹⁰ In addition, the movements of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) frequently result in degradation of surrounding ecosystems and depletion of natural resources in and near camps, increasing tensions and potential conflict with host populations.

⁶ An ecosystem is made up of all the living organisms – plants, animals, microorganisms – in an area, and their physical environment of soil, rocks, minerals, water sources and the local atmosphere, which function together as a unit. Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human well-being, affecting people's survival and quality of life. They include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services such as flood and disease control; habitat or supporting services such as crop pollination and nutrient cycles that maintain the conditions for life on Earth; and cultural services such as spiritual and recreational benefits. <http://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Ecosystem>

⁷ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). 2011. *Strategic Framework 2011–2015*. Rome.

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 2016. *Climate change and food security: risks and responses*. Rome.

⁹ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). 2012. *Global Environment Outlook 5*. New York.

¹⁰ Joint Environment Unit of UNEP and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2014. *Environment and Humanitarian Action – Increasing Effectiveness, Sustainability and Accountability*. New York.

Environmental Sustainability and the SDGs

14. The links among environment, development and poverty were formally acknowledged more than 40 years ago at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. Since then, environmental sustainability has been progressively mainstreamed through major international agreements.¹¹ It is now well recognized that the economic and social benefits of development will be eroded unless they are based on sustainable use of natural resources and protection of ecosystem services. These principles were reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹² which sets out the SDGs; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, which is the global instrument for managing disaster risk; and the Paris Agreement, under which all nations have committed to ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.

Box 1: Environment in the SDGs

Environmental sustainability is embedded in the 2030 Agenda and is addressed in particular by these goals:

- SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
- SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

15. Environmental and social safeguards are now widely used by development and humanitarian actors, financial institutions, governments and the private sector. These safeguards aim to avoid irreversible environmental damage, foresee adverse impacts on beneficiary and surrounding populations, and ensure sustainable use and management of natural resources while enhancing the environmental benefits of activities. These are prerequisites for ending poverty and hunger.
16. The Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System provides a common methodology for integrating environmental and social sustainability considerations into the actions of the United Nations system, and improving consistency among the policies, programmes and internal operations of United Nations entities. The framework builds on internationally agreed norms, principles and best practices for sustainability and promotes the use of a shared language and approach throughout the United Nations system, thereby enhancing the efficiency and results of United Nations activities.
17. United Nations support for sustainable development includes environmentally responsible management of in-house operations. Three commitments shape this work: the 2007 Strategy for a Climate-Neutral United Nations on managing greenhouse gas emissions from United Nations facilities, transport and travel;¹³ the 2012 call at Rio+20 for the United Nations system to integrate

¹¹ These include – but are not limited to – the 1987 Brundtland Report *Our Common Future*, the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the 2000 Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, the 2012 Rio+20 Outcome document *The Future We Want* and, from 2015, the Financing for Development: Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the Paris Agreement.

¹² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) 2015, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

¹³ <http://www.greeningtheblue.org/sites/default/files/UNClimateNeutralStrategy.pdf>

sustainable development practices into its management of facilities and operations;¹⁴ and the 2013 commitment of the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) to establishing environmental management systems in United Nations organizations.¹⁵

WFP's Current Situation

Support for the SDGs

18. WFP embraces the 2030 Agenda's vision of a world free from hunger within a context of socially equitable and environmentally responsible sustainable development. WFP's focus is on ending hunger – SDG 2 – and partnering for achievement of all the SDGs – SDG 17.¹⁶ Because the individual SDGs are intrinsically linked and cannot be achieved in isolation, WFP will collaborate with partners, particularly FAO and IFAD, to leverage complementary capacities and strengths to achieve the SDGs, including the environment-related goals listed in Box 1. In designing its own approach and processes, WFP will build on the environmental sustainability work of FAO, IFAD and other partner organizations and learn from their best practices. WFP recognizes the need to reflect all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – in its work.

Social Sustainability

19. WFP's social sustainability framework is guided by United Nations conventions and includes policies such as those related to human and children's rights, the Humanitarian Principles, WFP's Humanitarian Protection Policy, WFP's Gender Policy (2015–2020), WFP's code of conduct, the United Nations Supplier Code of Conduct and the policy brief on Accountability to Affected Populations.¹⁷ Consideration of these and other policies on social issues¹⁸ is incorporated into the design and approval processes for WFP's Country Strategic Plans (CSPs)¹⁹ under the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021).
20. Within WFP, social protection and benefits are pursued through approaches such as the People Strategy, the Wellness Strategy, the Occupational Safety and Health Policy, the Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Authority Policy, and Electrical Safety Standards.²⁰

Environmental Sustainability

21. The foundations for WFP's programmatic contribution to environmental sustainability are laid out in policies such as the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy, the Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition²¹ and the 2017 Climate Change Policy. Guidance for WFP's in-house operations, such as manuals for logistics, fleet management or facilities and administration, contains basic environmental criteria for high-risk areas such as

¹⁴ <http://rio20.net/en/iniciativas/the-future-we-want-final-document-of-the-rio20-conference/> paragraph 96

¹⁵ United Nations High-Level Committee on Management, March 2013, agenda item 5.

¹⁶ "WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-A/1/Rev.2*).

¹⁷ WFP/EB.1/2004/4-C; WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1; WFP/EB.A/2015/5-A; and <http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/forms/wfp271928.pdf>

¹⁸ "Compendium of Policies Relating to the Strategic Plan" (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-D).

¹⁹ In this policy, references to CSPs cover all country strategic plans, interim country strategic plans, and limited emergency operations.

²⁰ WFP/EB.2/2014/4-B; WFP Wellness Strategy (2015–2019) <http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/medicalscontent/documents/forms/wfp277747.pdf>; WFP Policy on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) – OED2015/003 <http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/cd/wfp281356.pdf>; Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority – EDD2011/009 <http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/cd/wfp236761.pdf>; and Regulatory Framework for WFP Electrical Installations – Guidelines http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp281613.pdf

²¹ WFP Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (WFP/EB.2/2011/4-A); WFP Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition (WFP/EB.A/2015/5-C).

construction and pesticide handling, but does not address other potentially significant environmental impacts.

Existing Commitments

22. In recent years, in multilateral and bilateral settings, WFP has committed to integrating environmental considerations more thoroughly into its work. Access to funding mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund and to some bilateral donor contributions has been contingent on WFP updating its environmental policy and implementing environmental screening and categorization of new activities. An interim environmental and social screening and categorization process was developed in March 2016 as an important step towards meeting these requirements.
23. Regarding in-house operations, WFP was instrumental in securing the 2013 commitment of the United Nations HLCM to the “gradual, voluntary and flexible” adoption of environmental management systems by all United Nations agencies. In 2015, WFP committed to meeting the United Nations Secretary-General’s goal of a climate-neutral United Nations by 2020.

WFP’s Experience and Lessons Learned in Environmental Sustainability

United Nations Initiatives

24. For many years, WFP has participated in the global dialogue on environmental and social sustainability, contributing extensively to United Nations system-wide working groups coordinated by the Environment Management Group and the Sustainable United Nations facility of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).²² Since 2010, WFP has been involved in developing the Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System and was one of seven United Nations agencies to pilot use of this framework in 2015. Recommendations from the pilot included revising WFP’s 1998 environmental policy and adopting standards and screening processes. In 2015, WFP was one of four agencies selected to pilot the development and implementation of an environmental management system (EMS). WFP was also one of the first United Nations agencies to implement the Climate-Neutral Initiative²³ globally, and partnered UNEP in co-authoring the *Business Case for EMS in the United Nations System*²⁴ and designing interagency waste management guidelines and training.

Collaboration among the Rome-Based Agencies

25. The Rome-based agencies – FAO, IFAD and WFP – collaborate on corporate environmental responsibility to foster continuous improvement in their environmental practices and reporting. At the Headquarters level, focal points from the three agencies work to improve the sustainability of services such as energy provision, catering and stationery supply, using common contractors where possible and sharing best practices for application and scale-up in Rome and in the field.
26. At the country level, collaboration on thematic issues such as climate change, food losses and food waste or the Purchase for Progress (P4P) programme contributes to the environmental sustainability and environmental co-benefits of each agency’s programmes. Efforts to strengthen collaboration will continue to be based on the agencies’ respective mandates, comparative advantages and distinctive strengths.

Past Policy Experience

27. Despite these achievements, the framework that WFP outlined in its 1998 policy was under-resourced and inconsistently applied. WFP needs a framework for systematically assessing and managing the environmental risks and benefits inherent in its programme and in-house activities, and for strengthening associated monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

²² Including the Issue Management Group on Environmental Sustainability Management, which oversees implementation of the Strategy for a Climate-Neutral United Nations.

²³ <http://www.unsceb.org/content/action-climate-neutral-un>

²⁴ <http://www.unsceb.org/content/action-environmental-sustainability-management-un-system>

Programme Activities

28. Many of WFP's food assistance activities contribute to the work of communities, governments, civil society and other partners in protecting, developing or improving the use of natural resources to enable food security.²⁵ WFP's conditional cash and food transfers support communities and governments in managing natural resources and conserving ecosystems. These food assistance-for-assets programmes²⁶ contribute to improved soil and water conservation, land rehabilitation, reforestation and sustainable use of natural resources.
29. WFP's fuel-efficient stove and alternative energy activities involving refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), schools, and food-insecure communities take energy needs into consideration and seek to address them to ensure that beneficiaries are able to cook and consume food safely without negative impacts on the environment or human health, and without exposing people to protection risks.
30. As part of its support to smallholder farmers and agricultural markets, WFP is increasing its local purchases of food and encouraging greater efforts to reduce food losses along the value chain. Depending on the context of WFP operations, locally procured food can reduce the need for and cost of transport, thus benefiting the environment. Prevention of post-harvest losses can increase the availability of food worldwide without consuming additional natural resources.
31. WFP's shift from food aid to food assistance is already helping to reduce the impact of its work on the environment. For example, while WFP selects the most appropriate transfer modality based on context and effectiveness, the increasing use of cash-based transfers is reducing its environmental footprint while also improving efficiency.
32. Some of WFP's programmes have sought to address the risk of negative environmental consequences. For example, environmental management plans or environmental impact assessments have been implemented for road building in South Sudan, large warehouse complexes in Djibouti, water infrastructure activities in the Niger, the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative in Senegal, and activities funded by the Adaptation Fund of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A few country offices have also developed their own environmental and social screening processes for new activities. The new Environmental Policy requires mainstreaming of such initiatives to make them systematic and to ensure consistency.

WFP Operations

33. In 2008, WFP was one of the first United Nations agencies to report on its global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and has done so annually ever since. Through its GHG Emissions Reduction Strategy,²⁷ WFP is reducing its energy use in buildings, transport and travel through no- and low-cost initiatives.
34. In 2015, WFP became climate-neutral by purchasing high-quality carbon credits from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Adaptation Fund to offset the GHG emissions it could not avoid. Offsetting is an interim measure until technological advances, particularly in transport, make zero net emissions feasible. WFP continues to focus on absolute emission reductions.
35. WFP is progressively broadening its focus to address a wider range of environmental impacts, including those arising from the use of chemicals, procurement and waste and water management. For example, innovative non-fumigant alternatives such as hermetically sealed bags are being used to improve the safe and effective warehousing of agricultural commodities. Many of these in-house actions for environmental gains have been identified opportunistically. More widespread benefits will be realized through a more systematic implementation of this policy.

²⁵ "Food Assistance and Natural Resources – A Summary Review of Experiences" (WFP/EB.1/98/5/3).

²⁶ In 2014, 12.7 million people received WFP food while participating in such programmes.

²⁷ <http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/reports/WFP239723.pdf>

Box 2: WFP actions for resource efficiency and cost excellence

Energy – conducting online surveys to reduce energy consumption, increase energy efficiency and, where cost-effective, switch from fossil fuels to clean, renewable power such as wind and solar energy.²⁸

Logistics – prioritizing low-emission modes of transport – airlifts/airdrops are a last resort.

Fleets – upgrading to more fuel-efficient vehicles and rationalizing their use.

Travel – reducing travel by delivering training and holding meetings online.

Waste – developing waste management plans and training, including for hazardous waste from logistics workshops.

Water – being careful about how much it uses and avoiding contamination.

Procurement – providing training on sustainable procurement based on a life-cycle approach.

Staff – helping staff throughout WFP to adopt sustainable behaviours and raising their awareness of the direct effects that their actions can have on the environments and livelihoods of the people WFP serves.

Objectives

36. This Environmental Policy provides a framework for WFP's efforts to protect the environments of the people it serves while working towards a world free from hunger. The policy enhances the focus on accountability, aiming to fill gaps in existing management systems to ensure that WFP's activities are designed in an environmentally sound manner that avoids harming the environment and maximizes environmental benefits wherever possible.
37. The policy aims to support WFP and its partners in:
 - i) progressively enhancing the environmental sustainability of activities and operations, improving efficiency and outcomes over time;
 - ii) protecting the environment and preventing pollution by managing risks and maximizing the environmental opportunities of all activities and operations;
 - iii) minimizing the carbon footprint and increasing the resource-efficiency of operations and facilities management, particularly the management of materials, water, energy and waste;
 - iv) aligning WFP's approach to environmental sustainability with global standards and good international practice, including in donors' policies and expectations; and
 - v) strengthening the understanding and capacities of national governments, cooperating partners, suppliers and, particularly, beneficiary communities in planning and implementing sound activities for food security and nutrition.
38. WFP is committed to promoting these objectives not only in development settings but also in emergency or humanitarian interventions, recognizing that different contexts call for different responses.

²⁸ This work is supported by an internal funding mechanism – the WFP Energy Efficiency Programme (EEP) – and an energy survey tool, developed in collaboration with WFP's Innovation Accelerator.

Guiding Principles

39. *WFP's core values and principles.* This policy establishes a set of guiding principles to inform its implementation. These principles are consistent with WFP's core values and principles such as humanity, neutrality, impartiality, operational independence, centrality of protection, human rights, accountability to affected populations, unity of purpose, integrity and dedication, partnership, accountability and transparency:²⁹
- *Systematic consideration of the environment.* WFP will systematically consider the environment from the earliest stages in the design of its CSPs, operations and other activities, seeking to understand the correlations between healthy local ecosystems and the livelihoods of the people it serves.
 - *Global requirements.* In designing its activities and operations, WFP will take into account the local regulatory context as well as relevant international treaties, global standards and the requirements of United Nations governing bodies.
 - *Mitigation hierarchy.* WFP will work with communities and partners to seek first to avoid then to minimize, mitigate and remediate adverse environmental impacts of food assistance activities and in-house operations. It is more effective and more efficient to avoid and reduce adverse impacts in advance than to remediate them later.
 - *Sustainable consumption.* Where feasible, WFP will work with partners to engage local communities in the protection and sustainable use of natural resources, increasing awareness of the linkages between healthy ecosystems and food security.
 - *Precautionary approach.* If an activity might harm human health or the environment, measures to prevent potential impacts should be taken even when some cause-and-effect relationships are not fully established.³⁰
 - *Life-cycle thinking.* WFP's analysis of the environmental impacts of its interventions will take into account the full life cycle of an activity or operation, from acquisition or generation of raw materials to delivery, use, repair, maintenance and final disposal of associated goods and services.
 - *Continual improvement.* WFP will identify opportunities to improve its environmental performance and resource-efficiency according to risk management principles and will design actions that are scalable over time, to achieve progressively stronger outcomes for the environment everywhere.

²⁹ See WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) Annex II for the full list and descriptions of WFP's core values, principles and standards.

³⁰ Science and Environmental Health Network. 1998. Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle. <http://www.sehn.org/wing.html>

Box 3: Guiding principles in practice

WFP is already implementing most of the guiding principles set out in this policy:

- The three-pronged approach to the planning and design of resilience-building, productive safety nets, disaster risk reduction and preparedness activities includes consideration of environmental issues. National-level integrated context analysis assesses the geographic spread of land degradation and its links to food insecurity to inform where risk reduction and natural resource management are needed. Seasonal livelihood programming at the subnational level includes gender-based analysis of rural livelihoods and natural resource use and a multi-sectoral road map integrating natural resource management activities. At the local level, community-based participatory planning analyses the interrelations among people, livelihoods and ecosystems and identifies environmental rehabilitation measures to tackle hunger and land degradation.
- The mitigation hierarchy, which seeks first to avoid risks and impacts, then minimizes, mitigates and manages those that cannot be avoided, is applied in disaster risk reduction activities and energy and waste management.
- Through its Safe Access to Fuel and Energy initiative, WFP and its partners seek to address cooking energy needs to support long-term food security while protecting human health, safety and environments. Precautionary and life-cycle approaches are applied at the onset of a crisis to prevent risks linked to the lack of access to cooking fuel and to address issues related to the use of food assistance.
- Local food procurement through the P4P programme contributes to reducing the environmental impact of WFP's activities by minimizing transport requirements. This illustrates how the principles of life-cycle thinking and continual improvement can be applied in practice.

Policy Tools

40. This policy commits WFP to establishing and maintaining a set of core environmental standards, a process for screening and categorizing environmental risk and an environmental management system (EMS). These three commitments bring WFP's Environmental Policy into line with United Nations and internationally recognized standards. The framework that this policy establishes is informed by WFP's participation in designing and testing the United Nations Framework for Environmental and Social Sustainability.
41. *Environmental standards.* WFP will apply general environmental standards to the design, planning and implementation of all its activities and operations. These standards include conservation of biodiversity, protection of natural habitats, including against desertification, sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, prevention and management of pollution, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. WFP will work with suppliers and cooperating partners to maximize the effectiveness of these standards, recognizing differences in feasibility and the need for awareness-raising and capacity development. The standards will complement and build on WFP's existing social protection work and standards. They will be informed by international standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative, in line with globally accepted practice and the safeguards of major partners and finance mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund, and adapted to WFP's mandate, activities and operations. The standards will be outlined in a WFP guidance document, which will be regularly updated and aligned with developments in the global dialogue on environmental and social sustainability.
42. *Environmental risk screening and categorization.* WFP will improve its interim risk screening and categorization process and integrate it into the design of activities under CSPs. Screening procedures will be applied to all new activities related to CSPs or other corporate initiatives at the start of their design. Screening will determine the level of environmental risk of the activity, while categorization will clarify the scope of the assessment and management needed to respond to the risk, taking into account the type and scale of the activity. A two-track screening process will be drawn up to reflect the different timeframes of WFP's emergency and longer-term activities. The screening and categorization process will be described in a WFP guidance document, which will define responsibilities, detail the process's incorporation into the programme review and other relevant corporate systems, and include support tools and

checklists. It will be consistent with WFP's Enterprise Risk Management Policy and its Corporate Risk Register, and with other applicable corporate guidance.

43. *Environmental management system.* WFP will ensure that the environmental principles and standards associated with the policy are applied to in-house operations and ongoing activities through the adoption of an EMS, consistent with standard ISO 14001 of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The EMS will incorporate and supersede the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Strategy. It will build on existing advisory and funding mechanisms to support country offices and partners in responding effectively to environmental risks and opportunities, particularly by helping WFP staff to identify "win-win" solutions that deliver cost-effective improvements to resource efficiency and financial savings. Sustainable procurement of food, goods and services that applies life-cycle costing will contribute to those solutions. EMS development and implementation will be described more fully in a WFP guidance document defining the main steps and responsibilities and including support tools, checklists and timeframes. By facilitating the continual improvement of ongoing activities, the EMS will complement the screening and categorization process that will be applied to the transformative elements of WFP's work.

Partnerships

44. Strategic Goal 2 of WFP's Strategic Plan (2017–2021) – partner to support implementation of the sustainable development goals – is aligned with SDG 17. WFP works with a wide range of partners to achieve zero hunger and support implementation of the SDGs: national governments, United Nations organizations, humanitarian partners, other local, national and international bodies, civil society and private-sector actors. These partners will also contribute to and benefit from the functioning of this policy.
45. As WFP learns to reduce and manage the environmental impacts of its own programmes and operations, it will share lessons learned with government partners. WFP's environmental screening process has the potential to strengthen the capacity of partner governments to integrate environmentally sustainable criteria into the planning and implementation of food security and nutrition activities. Similarly, the EMS approach that all United Nations agencies will eventually adopt can help foster practical local solutions for sustainability, contributing to greener and more inclusive economies. In return, WFP will rely on partnerships with technical services in government ministries to obtain the local knowledge needed to address environmental issues effectively.
46. At the international level, WFP is a leading advocate of United Nations system-wide coherence in environmental and social sustainability, participating in knowledge exchange and the development of best practices. Collaboration with United Nations agencies, including those based in Rome, and other multilateral partners to deliver results at scale will help build WFP's capacity to deliver environmentally sustainable outcomes. Implementation of common approaches, such as those provided by ISO 14001, will contribute to the continuous improvement and enhanced transparency of WFP's environmental framework and processes.
47. Strengthening collaboration with non-governmental organizations and civil society is another priority for WFP. These partners provide essential local knowledge, technical capacity and relationships with communities, which can underpin the achievement of environmentally sound results. Private-sector partners are also crucial enablers, be they upstream suppliers or downstream transportation agents. WFP will work with these partners to apply the Environmental Policy constructively and flexibly, taking local operating contexts into account. Implementation of the policy will be phased, commensurate with capacity development and focusing on the biggest risks first.
48. Most importantly, partnerships with beneficiary communities will not only engage beneficiaries in the identification and resolution of the environmental issues they face, but will also contribute to empowering them and increasing their resilience to environmental degradation as part of WFP's overall efforts to end hunger.

Implementation, Training and Accountability

49. Implementation of the new policy will draw on lessons learned from the 1998 policy regarding the need for resources for systematic application and for monitoring and reporting mechanisms.
50. The Environmental Policy will have direct implications for WFP country offices, regional bureaux and Headquarters. These implications will arise progressively. Building on existing provisions, the policy will be implemented in two phases:
 - During the first two to three years,³¹ in consultation with regional bureaux and country offices, procedures and systems will be set up, tested and improved. Guidelines and tools will be developed, in-house capacities evaluated and training launched. Pilot countries will represent different operational contexts and different types and scales of activities. The initial focus will be on countries where environmental issues such as soil degradation, deforestation or depletion of water resources are significant or where WFP activities could have important negative impacts, such as unintended generation of hazardous wastes.
 - After this initial period, consolidated procedures and systems will be rolled out to all country operations. Training will be scaled up. Findings from screening will be analysed and regular reviews will identify areas of concern, further improvements and best practices for mainstreaming, consistent with continual improvement.
51. The procedures and systems to be set up include the following:
 - *An environmental screening and categorization process for new activities and operations.* The interim process established in early 2016 will be improved, based on feedback from WFP managers and field staff, prior to being integrated into the design of CSP activities. Guidance and tools for screening and categorization will be integrated into manuals. Tools will be designed to enable autonomous use, with support from Headquarters as necessary.
 - *An EMS for ongoing activities and operations.* An EMS is currently being piloted in WFP's Kenya country office based on the requirements of ISO 14001: 2015. Training programmes and documentation will be developed during the pilot. Site-specific implementation will occur progressively over several years. EMS guidance for each functional area – logistics, administration, information technology, etc. – will be incorporated into standard operating procedures (SOPs).
52. Environmental standards will inform all activities and operations and will support country offices in designing environmentally sound CSPs relevant to country contexts. With support from Headquarters and regional bureaux, country offices will ensure that all new activities are screened and categorized, necessary assessments are carried out, and appropriate mitigation or improvement measures are implemented. In countries where the environment is particularly vulnerable, environmental indicators will be included in existing monitoring systems.
53. Headquarters divisions, regional bureaux and country offices will use the EMS to check the environmental safety of their practices. The first step in an EMS is to carry out a baseline environmental review documenting risks, opportunities, obligations and current practices. Actions to facilitate environmental protection and resource efficiency are then mainstreamed into operating manuals, with responsibility for implementation and results assigned to appropriate staff levels and provision made for periodic review and reporting. An EMS calls for environmental actions that take into account WFP's operating context and that make progressive improvements.

³¹ Timeframes will be included in the roll-out plan for the policy.

54. Environmental risks in emergency operations will be addressed first through SOPs and preparedness measures, avoiding risks to the extent possible from the outset. Should the rapid screening process detect any high risks that have not been addressed, preventive or remedial action will be incorporated where feasible and lessons learned will be integrated into SOPs and preparedness measures ahead of future operations. This approach will serve not only to avoid environmental damage during the emergency response, but also to improve environmental outcomes in the aftermath of rapid-onset disasters.
55. Capacity development will be essential for successful implementation. It will range from raising awareness and fostering sustainable behaviour in all staff to facilitating sustainable procurement, to ensuring that technical specialists and managers are trained in the standards and the screening and categorization procedures. Enhanced capacities among WFP staff and, to the extent possible, partners will increase the quality of assessments, contributing to the sustainability and cost-efficiency of WFP's interventions.
56. Monitoring and reporting on compliance with the Environmental Policy will be through the Standard Project Report, the Annual Performance Report and relevant reporting mechanisms of the United Nations, consistent with WFP's information disclosure policy. Risk categorization and follow-up requirements for screened activities will be recorded by country offices in the System for Project Approval or Country Operational Management Plans, as appropriate, and reviewed by technical units at Headquarters. An environmental cross-cutting result and two indicators have been integrated into the Corporate Results Framework and will facilitate monitoring of implementation of the Environmental Policy. For in-house operations, annual reporting and monitoring of EMS results will be through improved indicators in the Annual Performance Report and United Nations-wide reporting mechanisms established by the United Nations Environment Management Group. The policy will be evaluated to assess its effectiveness within four to six years of implementation, in accordance with WFP norms.³² Such evaluation will take into account the results of any relevant internal audits and internal reviews.

Financial and Resource Considerations

57. WFP's access to significant multilateral and other donor funding depends on having a well-functioning environmental policy. Effective implementation of the new policy will require financial resources and staff time for the set-up and long-term management of the screening and categorization process and the EMS. Without adequate resourcing, the policy's objectives will not be met.
58. Costs related to the screening and categorization process will include those for developing guidelines and tools, staff training and technical support. Some skills can be mainstreamed into existing roles; where that is not possible, more specialist expertise will have to be brought in from outside WFP. Staff time will be needed for the initial screening and for the coordination of more in-depth environmental assessments, if required. The costs of any additional assessments and resultant mitigation requirements for individual activities will also need to be funded. The use of secondments and support from standby partners will be explored to help meet particular needs and to promote mutual learning.
59. For facilities management and operations, many actions for resource efficiency can be implemented cheaply or with no direct cost beyond staff time; most will repay their investment costs; others will require additional investment. WFP has previously committed to prioritizing cost-effective actions with average payback periods of three years.³³ It also needs to invest in improved data management systems that capture activity data efficiently and in practices for identifying improvement actions.

³² "Evaluation Policy (2016–2021)" (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1).

³³ A 2013 scoping study found that implementation of an EMS could achieve annual savings of USD 16–20 million.

Conclusion

60. Progressive implementation of this policy will ensure that WFP's CSPs and supporting operations are framed to contribute to environmental sustainability in the communities that WFP serves. Mainstreaming of the policy into WFP practice will also equip the workforce with additional skills and knowledge. Integrating environmental considerations into WFP's planning will enhance the quality and cost-effectiveness of its activities over time. It is both more efficient and more effective to avoid environmental damage today than to attempt to repair it tomorrow.

Acronyms Used in the Document

| | |
|------|---|
| CSP | country strategic plan |
| EMS | environmental management system |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| GHG | global greenhouse gas |
| HLCM | High-Level Committee on Management |
| IDP | internally displaced person |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| ISO | International Organization for Standardization |
| P4P | Purchase for Progress |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SOP | standard operating procedure |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |