UNFSS Briefing Session: Panama
May 9th, 2013

Co-organized by: Ministry of Trade Panama; Cuidad de Saber; National Authority for Environmental Management (ANAM); UNFSS

Location: Cuidad de Saber, Panama City
Participants:

A total of 39 participants representing public and private sector; as well as several media representatives, including:

✧ Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario (MIDA);
✧ Centro Nacional de Producción mas Limpia (CNP+L);
✧ Ministerio de Comercio e Industria (MICI);
✧ Centro de Acopio y Manejo (CAM);
✧ Instituto de Investigación Desarrollo Agropecuarias de Panama(IDIAD);
✧ Asociación Nacional de Avicultores de Panamá (ANAVIP);
✧ Universidad Tecnóloga de Panamá (UTP-CNPML);
✧ UNDP; UNEP; FAO; UNCTAD
List of Speakers:

Ing. Helvecia Bonilla, Director- *Protección a la Calidad Ambiental Encargada*- National Environmental Authority (ANAM)

Mr. Christopher Wunderlich, UNFSS coordinator

Ms. Leif Pedersen: UNDP/Green Commodities Facility

Dra. Ines Freier: UNEP

Ing. Abdiel Gaitán: CNP+L/ Global Gap

Presentations available on UNFSS website: unfss.org
Structure of Workshop:

The workshop was held in the Cuidad de Saber, Panama and was officially opened by the Ingeniera Helvecia Bonilla in representation of ANAM.

The workshop then began with an overview presentation of the UNFSS-its objectives, structure, and its prioritized activities to date. This was followed by presentations from UNDP/Green Commodities Facility and UNEP on their institutions and programs activities standrelated to VSSs and the key issues they see on both the benefits and constraints of VSSs and the role of government.

This was followed by a presentation on Global Gap highlighting the experiences they have had in the region and in particular in Panama.

The participants then divided into two working groups (one focusing on the perspective of the private sector and one on the public sector), to discuss what they saw as the key relevant issues around VSSs and how the UNFSS could help to address those issues (i.e. What activities they recommend it undertakes).
Suggested Themes:

The presentations and discussion focused on the growing importance of VSSs in international trade and their potential use as a development tool, which can support environmental, economic and social advancement.

At the same time, it was also discussed that there are potential constraints related to VSSs, such as high costs and the potential to marginalize smallholders due to their complexity and difficult compliance criteria.

It was further emphasized that there is a clear need to further develop the role of the government in the governance, communication and implementation of VSSs to promote sustainable development goals. In the same way, it was stressed that practical and efficient ways to bring together the private and public sectors around the issue of VSSs was needed.
Suggested Focus and Activities (from working groups):

Public Sector Perspective:

- Support that stakeholders transform their view of the relationship between the environment and productive agriculture, using stronger standards that can promote sustainability;
- Help develop government incentives to promote sustainable development;
- Raise awareness within the society regarding sustainable development;
- Support inter-institutional cooperation to promote sustainability;
- Provide analysis and increase understanding on the strengths and weaknesses of VSSs;
- Promote the adaptation of standards to the local context and priorities; assuring that real action and progress occurs and not just talk;

- Focus sectors: Agriculture and construction; or any activity that has critical environmental impact.
Suggested Focus and Activities (from working groups):

Private Sector Perspective (1):
Create a multi-stakeholder platform of key actors (Public, private sector and consumer groups), with the goal of:

- Harmonizing and standardizing certifications;
- Create dialogue space to share experiences/knowledge and update on current requirements to achieve certification and access markets successfully;
- Share case studies on implementation;
- Provide follow-up on implementation;
- Benchmark certifications against each other and to key sustainable development objectives;
- Refer technical assistance experts working on certification.
Suggested Focus and Activities (from working groups):

Private Sector Perspective (2):

2. Motivate joint initiatives (PPPs) with governments to invest in social improvements required to achieve certification.

3. Prioritize and promote the certifications that are most important in priority export sectors.

4. Create alliances and knowledge centers to disseminate information and promote key actors in the private sector involved the issue (i.e. agriculture exporters/traders)
Next steps/follow-up activities:

1. Integrate recommendations into UNFSS workplan and approach.

2. Discuss with participants the formation of a committee or “knowledge center”.

3. Expand the activity to a regional level to develop (initially) more support and participation at the Central American level.
For more information:

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