

Meeting on Fundraising (Virtual)

5 April 2023

Present: Aditya Petwal, Devisha Poddar, Elizabeth Petykowski, Karishma Vohra, Dr. T R Manoharan, Rijit Sengupta, Dr. Ruchika Singh, Seth Cook, S Vijay Kumar, Unmesh Brahme, Vishal Dev, Nitya Chhiber

Regrets: Jagjeet Singh Kandal, Dr. K.M Jayahari

Discussion on Idea/Concept: Supporting political landscape on sustainable trade by making the investment case for India's sustainable agriculture sector

- Need to consider the language so it is in-line with the government and to keep in mind past experiences of working with FTA which are not so easy to sign as well as the fact that currently, FTAs entail upholding sustainability parameters.
- Policy issues are complex and very often, we must feel our way; India is very cautious in terms of proceeding on solutions until a good solution is in sight as India does not prefer to box itself when it comes to choosing a stance on policy.
- There is a need to consider the opportunity factor when considering a policy perspective.
- Trade and forestry have not really aligned/come together and there is a need to build bridges between these two communities and develop analytical work; then accordingly, use that positioning to engage with the government.
- There is scope of positioning FOLU India CREST to support the government in terms of helping the government to identify solutions/ options; for example, via position papers, convenings which will help with the ability to present the trade-offs involved when presenting to the GoI. However, conditions apply which include no pre-existing plan and/or ideological position and keep in mind that the workable solution will need to recognize the ground realities.
- The Niti Aayog is the think tank for the GoI and in this regard, FOLU India CREST is uniquely positioned, keeping in mind the need the representation of sustainability and trade perspectives and hence Niti Aayog can be approached to leverage such interactions to provide some workable options to the Government of India
- Suggestion to start work on multiple fronts; for example, greening of domestic production as well as of imports and exports; another area of interest of the government of India is to ensure national security in commodities; need to consider the broad range and to consider the broad range of perspectives.

Discussion on Idea/Concept: Form strategic alignment with Indonesia and China on palm oil

- It would be good to look at climate mitigation narrative via the lens of sustainable land management

- Timber and rubber can be added to the list of prospective commodities but as we add further commodities, there is a need to consider the framing; in this regard, a research and mapping exercise can be carried out to inform way forward
- Other FOLU country platforms, include Indonesia and China and hence the interest in the commodities of palm oil; furthermore, NICFI as has been grant funder between 2022-2023 is interested in commodities linked to deforestation, which includes palm oil and hence it is scalable from a donor perspective; of course, there will be a need for cross-country collaboration keeping in mind the geographic spread of FOLU country platforms
- IDH shared that it is working with Niti Ayog on minimum import criteria and has been submitted to Niti Aayog in the form of a proposal which is pending; external study on market signals for various players in India even if there is no minimum import criteria; engaging with the private sector may be more remunerative as traction with the government is difficult
- Possibly consider a two -step approach whereby there is consideration of trade and imports from a commodity perspective as well as consider the work, for example the production perspective, existing policies that relate to that particular commodity
- Create an opportunity for national platforms to come together to discuss sustainable trade and production; this can be facilitated in an emerging country context leveraging the south-south conversation, which will be in contrast to the traditional sustainability conversation as it will not be applicable; development of an emerging economy narrative for sustainable palm oil production and consumption whereby the respective stakeholders can contribute
- It was shared that Secretariats of the respective country platforms convene once every quarter; there is interest to support the work on palm oil due to the interest by NICFI; propose to start with a broad framework (deforestation-free commodities in supply chains, trade) and make a special case on palm oil so that other sectors can also learn from the palm oil experience