

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY



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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 acknowledging 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) protecting the environment; ii) increasing its resource efficiency and minimizing its carbon footprint; iii) aligning its actions with good international practice and global standards for environmental sustainability; iv) strengthening the capacity of partners to plan and implement environmentally sound activities for food security and nutrition; and v) improving the efficiency and quality of outcomes over time.

The policy commits WFP to developing 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 to identify and manage environmental risks; and
- an environmental management system consistent with International Organization for Standardization 14001.

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. The screening and categorization process will be integrated into country strategic planning and country offices will be supported in identifying, rating and managing environmental risks. Standard operating procedures will seek to minimize the environmental impacts of emergency operations and day-to-day decisions relating to facilities and support services. Environmental accountability will be incorporated into WFP's reporting mechanisms.

The policy acknowledges the need for collaboration and takes into account the policies and guidelines of WFP's principal partners, including donors and multilateral funds, and will leverage engagement with suppliers, implementing partners and other humanitarian and United Nations organizations. It supersedes the 1998 policy entitled "WFP and the Environment".¹

¹ WFP/EB.3/98/3

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 position on environmental sustainability was first laid out in "WFP and the Environment" in 1998.¹ Global and internal developments since then make it necessary to revisit this approach and align it with WFP's Strategic Plan and current international and United Nations standards. This policy builds on WFP's implementation of "WFP and the Environment" and supersedes that policy.
3. WFP is committed to contributing to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals² (SDGs), prioritizing SDG 2 on achieving zero hunger and SDG 17 on partnering to support implementation of the other SDGs, including those that integrate environmental sustainability considerations.
4. In keeping with the 2011 Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System,³ WFP accepts the importance of managing the environmental and social impacts of programme and in-house activities in a coordinated way. This policy focuses on environmental sustainability, complementing existing WFP policies and practices related to social sustainability.
5. WFP addresses environmental issues in its programming through its policies on disaster risk reduction, resilience and climate change.⁴ 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, its in-house operations and implementing the Strategy for a Climate-Neutral United Nations.
7. The policy seeks to strengthen the outcomes of WFP's interventions so that wherever possible they do not stop at short-term hunger alleviation but also contribute to sustainable, resource-efficient 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.

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

³ Environment Management Group. 2012. *A Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations System*. New York. <http://www.unemg.org/>

⁴ 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); WFP Policy on Climate Change: Responding to the Food Security and Humanitarian Impacts of Climate Change, to be approved at EB.1/2017 in February 2017.

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 services⁵ 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,⁶ 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.⁷ Both have significant consequences on 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,⁸ 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, soil erosion and salinization, water scarcity, and soil, water and air pollution.
13. Humanitarian operations can also contribute to negative environmental outcomes if environmental considerations are not adequately addressed at the outset. 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. Some humanitarian operations have been associated with groundwater depletion, water pollution, inappropriate waste management, excessive use of chemicals, or uncontrolled use of natural resources.⁹

⁵ An ecosystem is made up of all the living organisms – plants, animals, micro-organisms – 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>

⁶ International Fund for Agricultural Development. 2011. *Strategic Framework 2011-2015*. Rome.

⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2016. *Climate change and food security: risks and responses*. Rome.

⁸ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). 2012. *Global Environment Outlook 5*. New York.

⁹ Joint Environment Unit of UNEP and the 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.¹⁰ 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,¹¹ which sets out the SDGs.

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 across the United Nations system, thereby enhancing the efficiency and results of United Nations-supported activities.
17. United Nations support for sustainable development also 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;¹² the 2012 call at Rio+20 for the United Nations system to integrate sustainable development practices into its management of facilities and operations;¹³ and the 2013 commitment of the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) to establishing environmental management systems in United Nations organizations.¹⁴

¹⁰ 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 and the Paris Agreement.

¹¹ 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>

¹² <http://www.greeningtheblue.org/sites/default/files/UNClimateNeutralStrategy.pdf>

¹³ <http://rio20.net/en/iniciativas/the-future-we-want-final-document-of-the-rio20-conference/> ; paragraph 96

¹⁴ United Nations High-Level Committee on Management, March 2013, agenda item 5.

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 the achievement of the other SDGs – SDG 17.¹⁵ Because the individual SDGs are intrinsically linked and cannot be achieved in isolation, WFP will collaborate with partners, including FAO and IFAD, to leverage complementary capacities and strengths to achieve the SDGs, including the environment-related goals listed in Box 1. 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 relevant 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.¹⁶ Consideration of these and other policies on social issues¹⁷ is incorporated into the design and approval processes for WFP's Country Strategic Plans (CSPs) under the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021).
20. Within WFP, social protection and benefits are pursued through approaches such as the People Strategy, Wellness Strategy, Occupational Safety and Health Policy, Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Authority Policy and Electrical Safety Standards.¹⁸

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, Policy on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition and 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 construction and pesticide handling, but does not address other potentially significant environmental impacts.

¹⁵ "WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021)" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-A/1/Rev.2)

¹⁶ 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>

¹⁷ "Compendium of Policies Relating to the Strategic Plan" (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-D).

¹⁸ WFP/EB.2/2014/4-B; WFP Wellness Strategy (2015–2019) http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/medicals-service_content/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

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 updating WFP's 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. Regarding in-house operations, WFP was instrumental in enabling 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

23. 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).¹⁹ 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 this framework in 2015. Recommendations from that process included revising this policy and adopting standards and screening processes. In 2016–2017, WFP is one of four agencies selected to pilot the development and implementation of an Environmental Management System (EMS). Prior contributions include being one of the first United Nations agencies to implement the Climate Neutral Initiative²⁰ globally, and partnering with UNEP to co-author the *Business Case for EMS in the United Nations System*²¹ and to design interagency waste management guidelines and training.

Past policy Experience

24. These achievements notwithstanding, 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 to its programme and in-house activities.

Programme Activities

25. 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.²² WFP's conditional cash and food transfers support local communities and governments in managing natural resources and conserving ecosystems. These food assistance-for-assets programmes²³ contribute to improved soil and water conservation, land rehabilitation, reforestation and sustainable use of natural resources.

¹⁹ Including the Issue Management Group on Environmental Sustainability Management, which oversees implementation of the Strategy for a Climate-Neutral United Nations.

²⁰ <http://www.unsceb.org/content/action-climate-neutral-un>

²¹ <http://www.unsceb.org/content/action-environmental-sustainability-management-un-system>

²² "Food Assistance and Natural Resources – A Summary Review of Experiences" (WFP/EB.1/98/5/3)

²³ In 2014, 12.7 million people received WFP food while participating in such programmes.

26. WFP's fuel efficient stove and alternative energy activities involving refugees and IDPs, schools, and food insecure communities take energy needs into consideration and seek to address them to ensure that beneficiaries are able to safely cook and consume food without negatively impacting the environment, health or exposing them to protection risks.
27. As part of its support to smallholder farmers and agricultural markets, WFP is encouraging greater efforts to reduce food losses along the value chain through simple and affordable measures such as improving storage infrastructure and sharing storage best practices. Prevention of post-harvest losses in food systems can increase the availability of food worldwide without requiring additional resources or placing an additional burden on the environment.
28. 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 reducing costs. 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 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

29. 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,²⁴ WFP is reducing its energy use in buildings, transport and travel through no- and low-cost initiatives
30. WFP has progressively broadened its focus to address a wider range of environmental impacts, including procurement, waste and water management. 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.

Box 2: Actions for resource efficiency and cost excellence

- **Energy** – conducting on-line 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.²⁵
- **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 for logistics workshops, including for hazardous waste.
- **Water** – being careful about how much it uses and avoiding contamination.
- **Procurement** – training on sustainable procurement based on a life-cycle approach.
- **Staff** – helping staff throughout WFP to adopt sustainable behaviours and raising awareness of the direct effects their actions can have on the environments and livelihoods of the people WFP serves.

²⁴ <http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/reports/WFP239723.pdf>

²⁵ 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.

31. 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.

Objectives

32. This environmental policy outlines WFP's approach to achieving the environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The policy enhances the focus on accountability issues, aiming to fill gaps in existing management systems to ensure that WFP's activities consider environmental consequences, do not harm the environment and maximize benefits wherever possible. It provides a framework for developing processes that will address negative environmental outcomes of both programme and in-house activities.
33. The policy aims to support WFP and its partners in:
- i) protecting the environment and preventing pollution by managing risks and maximizing environmental opportunities of all activities and operations;
 - ii) minimizing the carbon footprint and increasing the resource-efficiency of operations and facilities management, particularly the management of materials, water, energy and waste;
 - iii) aligning WFP's actions on environmental sustainability with good international practice and global standards, and with donors' policies and expectations;
 - iv) strengthening the understanding and capacities of national governments, implementing partners, suppliers, and particularly beneficiary communities to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate environmentally sound activities for food security and nutrition; and
 - v) progressively enhancing the environmental sustainability of activities and operations, improving efficiency and outcomes over time.
34. WFP applies these commitments to protecting the environments of the people it serves in both development contexts and emergency or humanitarian interventions. Acknowledging that these different contexts call for different approaches and timelines, WFP will adapt processes to emergency and longer-term activities.

Guiding Principles

35. *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:²⁶
- *Systematic consideration of the environment.* WFP will systematically consider the environment in the design of its CSPs and related 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 United Nations governing body requirements.
 - *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, rather than remediate them later.

²⁶ See WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021) Annex II for the full list and descriptions of WFP's core values, principles and standards.

- *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 scientifically.²⁷
- *Life-cycle thinking.* WFP’s analysis of the environmental impacts of its interventions will take into account the full life cycle of a CSP or operation, from acquisition or generation of raw materials to the 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.

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 roadmap 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.

Policy Tools

36. 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.
37. *Environmental standards.* WFP will apply general environmental standards to the planning and implementation of its activities and operations. These will include conservation of biodiversity, protection of natural habitats, 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 implementing partners to maximize the effectiveness of these standards, recognizing differences in feasibility and the need for awareness-raising and

²⁷ Science and Environmental Health Network. 1998. Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle. <http://www.sehn.org/wing.html>

capacity-building. 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.

38. *Environmental risk screening and categorization.* WFP will improve its interim risk screening and categorization process and integrate it into the new CSP process. Screening procedures will be applied to all new CSPs and operations 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 defining responsibilities, detailing the process's incorporation into the programme review, CSP and EMS processes, and will include support tools and checklists. It will be consistent with WFP's Corporate Risk Management Policy and its Corporate Risk Register.
39. *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 International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14001. 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 resource-efficiency improvements 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 activities, the EMS will complement the screening and categorization process, which will be applied to the transformative elements of WFP's work.

Partnerships

40. 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.
41. WFP's national government partners pass national environmental laws and ensure national implementation of international environmental treaties. Partnerships with technical services in the ministries of agriculture, environment, social welfare and disaster risk reduction are particularly relevant for addressing environmental issues. WFP will first focus on reducing and managing the environmental impacts of its own programmes and operations, testing the tools developed through this policy. Capacity development for national governments will follow once WFP has validated its own processes. Where legislation is incomplete or inconsistently applied, WFP's environmental screening process could help strengthen governments' capacity to plan and implement environmentally sound food security and nutrition activities. Programming under WFP's policies on disaster risk reduction, resilience and climate change will contribute to the same end. The EMS approach that all United Nations agencies will eventually adopt should help foster local solutions and infrastructure for sustainability, enhancing capacity and contributing to greener and more inclusive economies.

42. 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.
43. 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-building and focusing on the biggest risks first.
44. 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

45. 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.
46. 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 years, in consultation with regional bureaux and country offices, procedures and systems will be set up, tested and improved, guidelines and tools developed and training needs evaluated. Priority will be given to countries where environmental issues, such as soil degradation, deforestation, or depletion of water resources, are significant or where WFP activities could have important environmental 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 mainstreamed. Findings from screening will be analysed and regular reviews will identify areas of concern, further improvements and best practices for scaling up, consistent with continual improvement.
47. 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 CSPs. 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).

48. Country offices will use the screening and categorization process to integrate environmental considerations into the design of their CSPs. With support from Headquarters and regional bureaux, country offices will ensure that necessary assessments are carried out and mitigation or improvement measures implemented as appropriate. In countries where the environment is particularly vulnerable, environmental indicators will be included in existing monitoring systems.
49. Headquarters divisions 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.
50. 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.
51. Capacity-building will be essential for successful implementation. It will range from raising awareness and fostering sustainable behaviour in all staff to developing specific procedures and ensuring that technical specialists and managers are trained in the standards and 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.
52. Monitoring and reporting on compliance with the environmental policy will be through the Standard Project Report, Annual Performance Report and relevant reporting mechanisms of the United Nations, consistent with WFP's information disclosure policy. For CSPs, risk categorization and follow-up requirements will be recorded in the System for Project Approval by country offices 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 contribute to 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.

Financial and Resource Considerations

53. WFP's access to significant multilateral and 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.
54. 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; more specialist expertise will need to be brought in from outside WFP. Staff time will be needed for the initial screening and 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.

55. 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.²⁸ It also needs to invest in monitoring equipment and improved data management systems to capture significant volumes of activity data and practices efficiently for identifying improvement actions.

Conclusion

56. 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.

²⁸ A 2013 scoping study found that implementation of an EMS could achieve annual savings of USD 16–20 million.

Acronyms used in the document

CSP	Country Strategic Plan
EMS	environmental management system
GHG	greenhouse gas
HLCM	High-Level Committee on Management
IDP	internally displaced person
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOP	standard operating procedure
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme