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Agriculture, energy sectors to shape sustainability of future development – UN



2 June 2010 – How the world contends with the agriculture and energy sectors will serve as a bellwether for development in the 21st century, largely determining whether growth will be sustainable for billions of people, according to a new United Nations-backed report.

With current production and consumption of fossil fuels and food draining freshwater supplies, triggering losses of forests and other ecosystems and raising pollution levels, the study concludes that dramatically reforming, rethinking and redesigning how the planet's people are fed and fueled could spur environmental, social and economic returns.

It stresses that reaching sustainability goals should start in the home, through dramatically changing heating and cooling systems, gadgets, appliances and the way people travel.

Perhaps controversially, the report – by the [International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management](#) – also calls for a shift away from animal-based protein diets to more vegetable-based foods to ease pressure on the environment.

“Decoupling growth from environmental degradation is the number one challenge facing governments in a world of rising numbers of people, rising incomes, rising consumption demands and the persistent challenge of poverty alleviation,” said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), which hosts the Panel.

“Thus setting priorities would seem prudent and sensible in order to fast-track a low-carbon, resource-efficient Green Economy,” he stated.

Launched today in Brussels, the publication notes that more intelligent fiscal policies and creative policy-making are among the tools that can be used to combat unsustainable patterns.

“Some tough choices are signaled in this report, but it may prove even more challenging for everyone if the current paths continue into the coming decades,” Mr. Steiner said.

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