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Innovative agriculture key to meeting future demand for water and energy – UN



FAO Assistant Director-General for Natural Resources Alexander Mueller

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Innovative agricultural approaches will be crucial to respond to increasing competition for water and energy resources, said the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), calling for more integrated planning and policies that protect small farmers and promote sustainable rural growth.

“Tackling the challenges of food security, economic development and energy security in a context of ongoing population growth will require a renewed and re-imagined focus on agricultural development,” [said](#) FAO Assistant Director-General for Natural Resources, Alexander Mueller.

“Agriculture can and should become the backbone of tomorrow’s green economy,” he said, speaking on the sidelines at the Bonn 2011 Nexus Conference, where development leaders are discussing new approaches to manage water, energy and food resources.

FAO estimates that to feed the world population, which is forecast to reach nine billion by 2050, global food production will need to be increased by 70 per cent. In addition, global energy demand will increase by 36 per cent by 2035, intensifying competition for water for farming and industrial purposes, as well as for consumption in cities.

“It’s time to stop treating food, water and energy as separate issues and tackle the challenge of intelligently balancing the needs of these three sectors, building on synergies, finding opportunities to reduce waste and identifying ways that water can be shared and reused, rather than competed for,” Mr. Mueller said.

Instead of the ‘business-as-usual’ approach to economic development and natural resource management, FAO is encouraging innovative agricultural approaches that make better use of resources, minimizing waste and reusing resources whenever possible.

“Climate-smart farming systems that make efficient use of resources like water, land, and energy must become the basis of tomorrow’s agricultural economy,” Mr. Mueller said.

Among the issues being discussed at the Bonn Nexus Conference is the intersection between bioenergy production, water supplies and food security. In a news release issued by the agency, FAO warned that while bioenergy offers a potential source of cleaner energy, biofuel crop production must be done in such a way that it promotes rural growth, provides small farmers and rural workers with employments, and minimizes negative environmental impacts.

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