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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

JNCC'S GLOBAL IMPACTS PROGRAMME: CURRENT AND PLANNED WORK

Paper by Tony Weighell

1. Background

- 1.1 JNCC's Global Impacts programme was established in 2005, following the Joint Committee's endorsement of a new organisational strategy the previous year. Since then, the programme has developed rapidly, in particular in its links to partners within Government and elsewhere.
- 1.2 The overall aim of the programme, as set out in the corporate plan for 2007-10 is to:

assess the impact of the UK on global biodiversity, identify mechanisms to minimise or avoid negative impacts, and encourage best practice working with strategic partners in Government and beyond.
- 1.3 The main areas of UK influence on global biodiversity are trade (imports), overseas investment, overseas aid and tourism.
- 1.4 The Global Impacts programme currently comprises two linked strands of work. One strand of work is concerned with developing a system that provides non-specialists within Government and elsewhere with easy access to robust, policy-relevant information that they can use in the context of their own work. The second strand is concerned with developing evidence-based policy advice on specific issues.

2. Information system

- 2.1 A database and associated web delivery tool have been developed and are currently being tested by external users. The database and website:
 - i. provide access to policy-relevant statistics (particularly in relation to trade and business investment);
 - ii. link these statistics to specific ecosystem impacts (with documentary evidence); and
 - iii. present best-practice guidance and policy options.
- 2.2 The information is provided in the context of individual countries and their biodiversity priorities. The underlying philosophy of the information system is to link evidence to policy in the context of specific issues (such as biofuels production or UK investment) in priority countries.

- 2.3 The database can currently be accessed through a password-protected website. A user-group meeting is being arranged for July to seek feedback on the current content of the website and to plan further work over the next 12 months. JNCC will be seeking greater user involvement in content planning to ensure the information and means of delivery meet individual user needs while adhering to the overall model.
- 2.4 More work is needed to populate the system with additional information of value to JNCC and partner organisations (see 5.1 below).
- 2.5 Our vision for the future of the database and website, based on current understanding of partner needs, is an integrated system that can quantify UK trade and investment relationships with key partner countries, link these to specific ecosystems, establish the nature of the impacts (positive or negative), and identify sustainable solutions (best-practice options). The role of JNCC will primarily be to develop the system to give access to the wide range of information and documentation already available or emerging from ongoing research. In some cases JNCC will initiate research to fill identified gaps.

3. Policy advice

- 3.1 Work on the database and website offers an opportunity to develop JNCC advice on a range of policy issues. Work currently underway will allow identification of priority geographical areas and critical impacts within these areas (e.g. in the context of fisheries, forestry and biomass), along with evidence of impacts, relevant international instruments and the policy options for individual departments and for JNCC. This will provide a platform for a range of JNCC work at the EU or international level on a stand-alone or collaborative basis.
- 3.2 A hierarchical system is being developed to allow global analysis of commodity flows, leading to analysis at national level (within sourcing countries) of social, economic and environmental impacts, including those on biodiversity. JNCC has commissioned a number of studies designed to develop this concept, define the type of evidence available, and produce short briefing notes that can be made available through the website.
- 3.3 JNCC is planning to establish a number of projects based on forestry, fisheries and agricultural products that are imported into the UK or EU. A significant amount of work has been done to date on biofuels, which provides an example of how the approach could be applied to any type of commodity that might have ecosystem impacts in the country of source.
- 3.4 The objectives of the work on the global impacts of biomass production are to:
 - i. develop a standard approach for assessing the biodiversity implications of biomass for energy use that can be used at a national level for priority countries;
 - ii. develop an information set and basic analysis of bioenergy policy in priority countries and populate the database with this information;

- iii. develop a set of African case studies.

4. Stakeholder relationships

- 4.1 JNCC's Global Impacts programme is timely in that various government departments, non-governmental organisations and EU institutions are currently working along similar lines, looking particularly at sustainable consumption and production issues and trying to establish evidence for global ecosystem impacts of UK and/or EU consumption of natural resources.
- 4.2 The JNCC programme is well placed to link across a number of government departments, drawing on our own research and theirs, and providing access to a common data and document set to assist in developing evidence-based policy in respect of global biodiversity issues. Various departmental studies have been incorporated within the information system, which also offers a means of navigating through the complexity of the evidence and issues concerned to establish priority geographical areas, priority issues and policy options for each department.
- 4.3 The needs of government departments are helping to determine the pace of the JNCC programme. The relevant departmental work areas are summarised below.
 - i. Within the *Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, officials (both in London and overseas) who have a sustainable development role require information on a range of issues, including the sustainable use of natural resources.
 - ii. *Defra* is interested in using JNCC's work to support their sustainable development dialogues with seven priority countries¹. In response to this interest, the initial focus for the information system will be on the priority countries, although not to the exclusion of others of relevance to other departments.
 - iii. The *Export Credit Guarantee Department*, in discussion with JNCC, has identified a need for basic country-based information on biodiversity to assist in screening major projects.
 - iv. As yet, JNCC has not forged close links with the *Department for International Development*, but some documents produced by them have been included within the database.
- 4.4 Collectively, these four departments will be brought together as an informal user group during the summer to discuss the scope and nature of future work.
- 4.5 Links have also been made to WWF and ProForest (an organisation concerned with sustainable resource management), who are collaborating with JNCC as potential contributors to the information system. Both have an interest in developing evidence of the impacts of consumption and production on global

¹ Russia, China, Indonesia, India, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil.

ecosystems and providing access, through the information system, to reports on key issues, including best-practice guidance.

- 4.6 Within JNCC, there is a potential role for the global impacts information system, in particular in relation to the Overseas Territories and European countries beyond the EU, and more generally to identifying global priority countries, ecosystems and issues. The system could establish a common approach to gathering and manipulating evidence for JNCC's international work and be a source of information for JNCC staff to use in preparing policy advice.

5. Priorities for the programme in 2007/08

5.1 For the information system, priorities over the next year will include:

- i. integrating Millennium Ecosystem Assessment reports into the system on a country or regional basis, in collaboration with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the FCO;
- ii. continuing to develop a procedure for including national Biodiversity Action Plans for priority countries in the system;
- iii. undertaking a comprehensive study to track UK overseas investment into priority countries, identify the business sectors involved, evaluate ecosystem impacts, and identify industry best practice for each sector;
- iv. through the inter-departmental user group, defining and prioritising the needs of individual departments and integrating these within the work programme;
- v. adding geodiversity information for priority countries to the database.

5.2 For the development of policy advice, priorities will include:

- i. continuing to develop an analytical and evidence-based approach that can be used both by JNCC and others to assess the biodiversity implications of biomass programmes in priority countries;
- ii. developing a similar approach to the fisheries and forestry sectors, using global trade statistics and national sources of information for priority countries to track UK/EU consumption to specific ecosystems, quantify impacts and link evidence of impacts to policy options;
- iii. seeking ways in which to apply the same evidence-based approach to the geodiversity impacts of UK/EU actions in priority countries.