SDGs, AND THE NEXUS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, AGRICULTURE AND TRADE

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Abstract

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that underpinned 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets was adopted in September 2015. The SDGs require for their achievement, integrated and coherent measures in their implementation. As the process moves forward, it needs a wide range of tools and analysis to navigate its complexity and to realize its ambition. By design, all SDGs interact with one another as they are an integrated set of global priorities and objectives. But with 17 global goals to understand, knowing where to start is key. In this regard, each government must set its development priorities that align with the SDGs so that it makes an impact that helps, not hinders, a country to achieve its goals. This paper introduces a nexus framework between climate change, agriculture and trade as a conceptual tool and evaluates the direct and indirect interactions among the corresponding SDGs. Because of climate change and growing natural resource scarcity, the inter-connectedness of these sectors has become more apparent. Also, climate change impacts have narrowed the production-base of essential agricultural commodities, as such the utilization of trade as a pull factor for wedging climate impacts on food security has presented many opportunities. This paper explores the relationship between the SDGs and how the proposed nexus approach can benefit the goals and be a tool in achieving them. The principal objective of this paper is to initiate a cross-sectoral dialogue between policy-makers and other stakeholders on how the nexus approach can be used as a framework for understanding the SDGs.

Keywords: SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals, Trade, Food Security, Climate Change, Agriculture, Nexus, and Policy.

> "I congratulate African leaders for taking the leap into history by signing the African Continental Free Trade Area ... this is an important step towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and delivering on the African agenda of peace and prosperity."
>
> Mr. António Guterres,
> Secretary-General of the United Nations

1. Introduction

By the year 2030, the Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to end poverty and promote worldwide economic, social and environmental development by paying particular attention to those who are most marginalized. The Agenda further outlines different targets in achieving sustainable livelihoods, inclusive societies growth while aiming to combat climate change. Many studies have been developed to explore the integrated nature of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (UNWater, 2016; Nilsson, 2017 & UNEP, 2016;). While the agenda is achievable, possible challenges to the implementation include the lack of harmonized and integrated approaches across sectors (Risse, 2017). As a result of "trade-offs" between outcomes, understanding the range of positive and negative interactions among SDGs is key to unlocking their full potentials (ICSU, 2017). Thus, business as usual approach is no longer an option.

The SDGs address interconnected challenges in a comprehensive way bringing together 17 goals to determine how they can be translated into workable but ambitious development plans. Ensuring the progress made from these interactions are mostly context-specific and depend on the policy options and strategies chosen to pursue them by the government. The entry point of evaluating progress towards achieving the SDGs should be based on countries own priorities, needs, stage of development and capacities, resources, strategies, and alliances (ICSU, 2017). However, because of growing natural resource scarcity, making progress in one area, such as food security, will likely adversely affect progress towards desired outcomes in other areas like climate change. Due to the complexity of global challenges such as urbanization and climate change, the need for integrative solutions has increased. Consequently, the nexus approach has been gaining momentum because of business, as usual, is not helping the sustainability approach, which has in hand required the need to embrace a radicalized way of thinking (Kurian, 2016). In this regard, the SDGs needs to be addressed within a nexus perspective that incorporates a framework for exploring the interlinkages across the goals to support real-world sustainable development policies.

Table 1. The Nexus SDGs and the corresponding targets with trade orientation

Targets of SDG 2 Sensitive to climate change		Targets of SDG 2 Requires Trade measures/interventions
2.4. By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement **resilient agricultural practices** that increase productivity and production, that help **maintain ecosystems**, that strengthen capacity for **adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters** and that progressively improve land and soil quality.	**SDG 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture 2 ZERO HUNGER	**2.3** By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, **markets and opportunities for value addition** and non-farm employment.
2.5. By 2020, **maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species**, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.		**2.a.** Increase investment, including through enhanced **international cooperation**, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.
		2.b. Correct and prevent **trade** restrictions and distortions in **world agricultural markets**, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round.
		2.c. Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of **food commodity markets** and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility

2. Conceptual Approach

The 17 SDGs integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental aspects with interwoven targets. Sustainable development is significantly challenged by climate change, with broad impacts not only on the environment but also on social development and economic growth (health, infrastructure, jobs, and livelihoods, as well as food, energy, and water security) (IPCC, 2014). For example, Africa, Asia, and Latin America are expected to suffer the most from the adverse impacts of climate change since their economy is highly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors (such as agriculture and fisheries); (Nilsson, 2017; IFPRI, 2016; UNEP, 2016 & UNWater, 2016). The report made by IPCC, 2014 indicated that in parts of Africa even under more optimistic scenarios, climate change could reduce food-crop yields by 10 to 20 percent compared to a no climate change scenario threatening their economic and social development.

Even though many studies suggest that climate change will have negative impacts in the future, some positive new findings challenge this. For instance, impact assessment research from the Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Program (AgMIP) suggests some places in Africa will benefit as a result of climate change by having a net positive effect on farmers' livelihoods (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Besides, changes in temperature, rainfall, and severe weather events are expected to alter crop yield positively for many regions of the developing world, particularly for sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia (Yohannes, 2016; IFPRI, 2016 &. IPCC 2014). Those studies have also highlighted that there exist climate triggered shifts in ecosystems, alterations in agro-ecological zones, and change in crop habitats that are prominent for agricultural production. This implies that the change in agro-ecological zones for crop production requires imbalance in food production capability of countries while some will be more affected by climate change regarding their ability to produce food from agriculture, whereas some countries may do better than others. In this regard, trade and food import play a significant role in coping with climate change. Thus, the basis for the nexus of climate change, agriculture, and trade.

The main SDGs analyzed in this nexus approach is **SDG 2** *(End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture)* and **SDG 13** *(Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts)* which are mostly synergetic with the other SDGs. Also, the Sustainable Development Agenda recognizes international trade as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction and is an essential means to achieve the SDGs (UN, 2017). In line to this, **Goal 17** is understood to be linked to all the goals in addressing means of implementation since several of the SDGs have targets that require trade and market for their realization (Annex 1), thus the basis of this nexus. Furthermore, the primary trade-related Global Indicators of the SDGs are, under Goal 17 namely SDG targets 17.10, 17.11, and 17.12.



3. The Nexus of Climate Change, Agriculture, and Trade

The nexus approach represents a new perspective in understanding the direct benefits, co-benefits, trade-offs and side effects across system interactions, while highlighting its potential of improving cooperation and collaboration among different stakeholders, sectors, and actors (Kurian, 2016). Since its initial inception during the World Economic Forum in 2011, the nexus approach has taken on many forms with different components (Hoffs, 2011). So far, this approach has been utilized to enhance synergies and reduce trade-offs across sectors (Howels et al. 2013). The 2030 agenda also acknowledge that some of the thematic areas under each SDG goals are interrelated where the nexus approach comes to play a significant role (e.g., the gender-education-health nexus, the water-energy-food nexus, and the climate-land-energy-water nexus, among others) (UN ECOSOC, 2016). For instance, the water-energy-food nexus is of considerable significance for economic and human development prospects where several studies have been conducted to address those issues (Mohtar and Daher, 2012; Bizikova et al., 2013 & UN-ESCAP, 2013). Also, Conway et al. (2015) explored climate change and its impact on the water-energy-food nexus in southern Africa in detail to indicate the complex issues a nexus approach tend to address.



Figure 1: the nexus between climate change, agriculture and trade

Using climate change- agriculture-trade nexus, this paper touches upon the relationship between the SDGs and how the proposed nexus approach can be a framework for understanding the SDGs. There are close interlinkages and interdependencies between climate change, agriculture, and trade (Figure 1). Climate change alone puts pressure on food security around the world, particularly in resource-constrained regions and those expected to be adversely impacted by climate change. Climate change is expected to affect SDG 2 through changing crop yields and changing land available for crop agriculture (FAO a, 2016). In this regard, trade is expected to play an essential role by adjusting the shifts in agricultural and food production patterns resulting from climate change (FAO, 2016; IFPRI, 2016). Box 1 gives an overview of some of the climate stressors that are impacting the agriculture sector.

"There is enough food for everyone on the planet today, yet almost 800 million people suffer hunger. Tackling hunger and malnutrition is not only about boosting food production, but also to do with increasing incomes, creating resilient food systems and strengthening markets so that people can access safe and nutritious food even if a crisis prevents them from growing enough themselves" (FAO b, 2016)

Box 1: Climate Stressors

Climate change has already led to **yield reductions by 1 % to 2 %** in the last century and the prediction is that this will get worse

(Weibe et al. 2015; IPCC 2014; Gourdji et al. 2013)



Maize and wheat yields have already **decreased by 3.8 % and 5.5 %** respectively, as a result of climate change

(Lobell et al. 2014).



Food prices are expected to rise by an estimated 3 percent to 84 percent by 2050

(IPCC 2014)

To maintain current patterns of **food consumption globally**, production between 2010 and 2050 needs to increase by approximately **60 %**

(IFPRI, 2016)



El Niño weather conditions disturbed rain patterns in the **horn of Africa** and drove up to 15 million people in the region to food aid and exposed up to **40 million people to droughts in 2016 alone**

(Parker et al. 2016)

50%

Out of the 169 SDG targets, about 50% (86 targets) pertains to climate impacts

4. Linkages between the Nexus and SDGs

All SDGs by construct, interact with one another but SDG2 is vital to the 2030 agenda because it links all the other 16 goals (ICSU, 2017). For instance, food and nutrition security (targets 2.1 and 2.2) are inseparably linked to reducing and eradicating poverty (targets 1.1 and 1.2). SDG 2 cannot be addressed solely by increasing food production since the most direct effect of climate change on food security is food availability through the reduction of net crop production. In this regard, a well-functioning market, increased incomes for smallholder farmers, equal access to technology and land, and additional investments will also play a significant role (FAO a, 2016).

Box 2 gives an overview of the current progress in achieving SDG 2 by 2030 as reported by SDG report in 2017. SDG13 directly impact over half of the 17 SDGs. Poverty (SDG1), food and agriculture (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), water and sanitation (SDG 6), renewable energy (SDG 7), human settlements (SDG11), sustainable consumption and production (SDG12), oceans (SDG14), and terrestrial ecosystems (SDG15). Besides, out of the 169 targets, about 50 percent (86 targets) pertains to climate impacts, including a minimum of one in each of the 17 SDGs (UNEP, 2015). This shows the enormity and importance of considering climate change impacts while working to achieve the SDGs.

Trade is an essential engine for economic development; it is a means to pursue the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development by generating substantial private and public financial means. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes international trade as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and an essential means to achieve the SDGs (UN, 2015). For instance; Trade is an engine of economic growth and poverty reduction, employment, and industrialization (SDG 1, SDG 8 & SDG 9). Trade affects access, availability, and stability of food security (SDG 2). Trade can provide opportunities for the economic empowerment of women (SDG 5). Trade and global value chains are drivers of technological innovation and the production of renewable energy sources (SDG 7). Trade-led growth has often contributed to reducing inequality between countries (SDG 10). Trade is a crucial means of implementation for sustainable development (SDG 17).

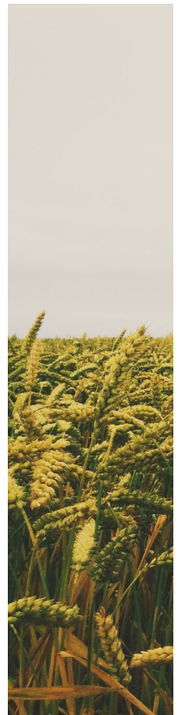
Box 2: Current progress made in meeting the zero-hunger target

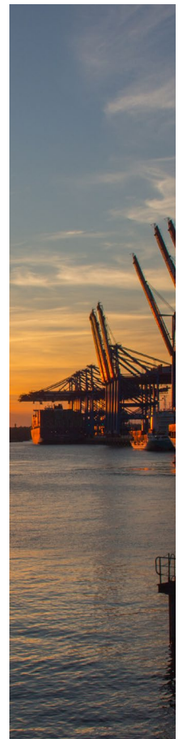
Source: UN, 2017



Table 2: Potential linkages between the Nexus and SDGs

	Impacted by Climate Change	Requires Trade	Nexus Solution
1 NO POVERTY	X	X	X
2 ZERO HUNGER	X	X	X
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	X	X	X
5 GENDER EQUALITY	X	X	X
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	X	X	X
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	X	X	X
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	X	X	X
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	X	X	X





The tripartite links in this nexus tend to positively impact the socio-economic challenges, including those around food security, poverty, environmental sustainability, labor markets, gender empowerment and equity, and health which are all part of the broad range of social and economic development issues covered by the SDGs. For instance, SDG3, good health, and well-being can in part be attained as a result of poverty and hunger reduction by applying the nexus approach. Implying that those regions that will witness a reduction in poverty by harnessing the opportunities from the nexus will indirectly and positively be impacted, in that they will have more means to invest in their health and vice versa.

As an integral component, SDG 5 (gender equality) will be realized in the nexus approach. Since women play a vital role in agricultural production, distribution and utilization – the three components of food security; and undertake a range of community-level activities that support agricultural development, such as soil and water conservation, afforestation and crop domestication (Doss, 2011; FAO, 2011). Given the same opportunities as men, women can contribute to a country's competitiveness and productivity, positively impacting economic growth. For instance, per FAO, 2011, national agricultural production could rise by 2.5 per cent to 4 percent and the number of malnourished people could decrease by 12 percent to 17 percent if women farmers were given the same access to resources (such as land, credit) as men. Thus, applying the nexus approach will not only empower, but it also is a means to broader agricultural development and food security.

Sustainable consumption (SDG 12) would require minimizing post-harvest losses through efficient supply chain management and value addition. Trading agricultural commodities (both bulk and processed) will have implications for farmer's income which will ensure household food security and enable them to integrate newer technologies thus, in turn, minimize food waste. For instance, 1.3 billion tonnes of food are wasted every year while almost 1 billion people go undernourished and another 1 billion hungry (UN, 2015). Mostly bulk commodities are exported from developing countries as they lack necessary infrastructure, skills, technology, and investment to process foods and avoid food waste.

5. Conclusion

Achieving the SDG agenda is of paramount importance for tackling the global sustainability challenge of ensuring human well-being, economic prosperity, and environmental protection. In this regard, each government must set its development priorities that align with the SDGs so that it makes an impact that helps and not hinders, a country to achieve its goals. By proposing a nexus of climate change, agriculture, and trade as a framework for understanding the SDGs; this paper investigated the interlinkages among the SDGs for designing sustainable development programmes. The findings suggest that the nexus among climate change, agriculture, and trade should be recognized in the relevant development programmes. Policymakers should be able to understand the linkages of the SDGs, by formulating and implementing favourable nexus policies to have climate-aware, trade-driven and food-security enhancing outcomes. Such outcomes, complemented by coherent and synergetic systems at the national and regional levels could lead to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.



SDGs and the Nexus of Climate Change, Agriculture and Trade

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Annex 1: The SDGs and corresponding targets with trade orientation

Targets with trade orientations
2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment
2.a. Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries
2.b. Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round
2.c. Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility
3.b. Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all
8.a. Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries
9.1. Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all
9.3. Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets
10.a. Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements
12.c. Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities
14.6. By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation
14.b. Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets
15.7. Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products (15.7.1 Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked)
17.10. Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda
17.11. Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020
17.12. Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access

Source: UN, 2015



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