

## Cross-cutting themes

In light of the preceding chapters, it appeared necessary to present three cross-cutting themes that frame and illustrate the introduction of sustainable development in France. Beyond the sustainable development strategy and the climate plan, the theme of sustainable production and consumption must be addressed, even though the French approach, which is fairly original, is still evolving.

Our production and consumption patterns have direct impact on sustainable development: when we buy a product, we are also buying the conditions in which the product is made, changed and destroyed, and hence their human and environmental impact. The theme of sustainable production and consumption lies at the intersection of the three major aspects (economic, social, environmental) of sustainable development. Changing consumption and production patterns is one of the seven strategic objectives of the European sustainable development strategy, which is reflected in the French national sustainable development strategy. This theme formed a separate part of the Grenelle Environment Forum and the government is already implementing some of its recommendations. The theme will also be a specific focus during France's 2008 Sustainable Development Week.

### National sustainable development strategy (NSDS)

The French 2003-2008 NSDS was adopted by the government on 3 June 2003. It is the result of work done jointly by civil society and supported by the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCS: 90 representatives of civil society and local authorities) and government ministries. This strategy provides a framework for intervention in the field of sustainable development and serves as a guideline for government action with respect to all of its policies over a five-year period.

The inclusion, on 1 March 2005, of the Environment Charter in the French Constitution gives sustainable development institutional status. Article 6 states, in particular, that "public policies must promote sustainable development".

France was the first country to undergo a "peer review" of its national sustainable development strategy (experience-sharing exercise), in 2005. On 13 November 2006, the *Comité Interministériel pour le Développement Durable* (CIDD) (interministerial committee for sustainable development) approved the updated NSDS for the period 2003-2008. This updated strategy, which follows on from the 2003 NSDS, is based on experience gleaned and peer country proposals. On the one hand it is aligned with the European sustainable development strategy revised on 16 June 2006, thus vertically integrating national and regional level policies; and on the other, the new NSDS takes on board the measures adopted in France since 2003 as well as a number of new measures. Last but not least, it prepares the revision to be carried out in 2008. This update was performed approximately at the "mid-term" point and six months ahead of the deadline set by the European Union.

France takes part in disseminating the experience of National Sustainable Development Strategies in several developing countries, and in particular peer reviews. It took part in the National Sustainable Development Strategy peer review of Burkina Faso, organised by the Francophonie organization (IEPF) in December 2007.

### Water

French water policy is covered by the application of the European Water Framework Directive published in 2000, which sets an objective for the condition of water and aquatic environments to be achieved by 2015. Water management in France is governed by two main laws on water enacted in 1992 and 2006.

The State regulates relations among water stakeholders, while complying with the principle of consultations among the actors. The State is not directly involved in managing water use, which is the responsibility of local actors (municipalities, industrial enterprises, farmers). It holds ultimate authority over water availability and provides the water police. Last but not least, it sets out the main national water policy guidelines and takes part in defining European policy in this field.

One ministry in two is directly or indirectly involved in the water issue in France, but it is the water department in the Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning that coordinates State activities. The *Office National de l'Eau et des Milieux Aquatiques* (ONEMA) (national office for water and aquatic environments) supports it in this task. The prefect and a basin delegate coordinate action taken in the various departments and basins.

The main French water policy issues are both qualitative (implementation of the European Water Framework Directive and achievement of the objectives set for 2015, effort to reduce urban pollution and diffuse agricultural pollution) and quantitative (adaptation to climate change and extreme phenomena - floods and droughts).

There are two bodies for each basin: the *Comité de Bassin* (basin committee) that supports consultations among all stakeholders (local authorities, State, industrial enterprises, farmers, environmental protection and consumer associations) and the *Agence de l'Eau* (water board):

- The *Comités de Bassin* (basin committees) formulate management plans called SDAGE (*Schémas Directeurs d'Aménagement et de Gestion des Eaux*) plans, which define the timetable for achieving good condition of water and aquatic environments. Two main principles underpin sustainable development and the achievement of objectives set in the European Framework Directive: making socio-economic development compatible with conservation of aquatic environments and achieving balanced use of water;
- The *Agences de l'Eau* (water boards) are autonomous public establishments. Their responsibilities were redefined in the water law of 2006. They collect fees from water users according to the volume of pollution discharged and the volume of water withdrawn. Through financial aid paid to municipalities, industrial enterprises and farmers, they contribute to the funding of operations in the public interest relating to water development, pollution control and rehabilitation of aquatic environments.

In France, access to water is a local service which has been managed by the municipality since 1789. The municipality is therefore the basic legal structure that manages drinking water supply and waste-water sewage services. Municipalities choose the most appropriate management methods for these services. In municipalities with a population of over 10,000, an advisory committee on local public services brings together representatives of the stakeholders (municipal authorities, users, operators) to support the necessary consultations and transparency in decision-making.

Water has a cost since it requires withdrawal, purification, distribution, storage, discharge and treatment. Two main principles underpin water sector financing in France:

- "water pays for water": users bear most of the costs of managing the water they consume, through their water bills; the municipal budget for water and sanitation services must be self-supporting, with income covering expenditure;
- "the polluter or the consumer pays", essentially in the form of pollution or withdrawal fees paid to the water boards.

The price of water in France is in line with the European average. France comes in fourth place after Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Experience gleaned at national level structures France's international water policy. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international policy of France, the world's fourth largest donor in this sector, has been substantially updated and amplified. The policy strikes a balance between integrated and efficient water management on the one hand and enhanced access to water and sanitation on the other. It strives to implement the principles of sustainable development by seeking to ensure local actor ownership and operation of projects; establish good governance; ensure the right to water and sanitation; and develop decentralized cooperation and multiple public-private partnerships. French public and private sector actors bring together their activities in the *Partenariat Français pour l'Eau* (French partnership for water). This policy is in line with the planned doubling of global French official development assistance, particularly in Africa. Its implementation and evaluation take on board the move from a focus on means to a focus on results in line with the MDGs.

The broad-based participatory debate initiated in France in 2007 – the Grenelle Environment Forum – resulted in major proposals concerning water:

- discontinuation of national and European aid to intensive crop irrigation in regions where it is to be phased out in the short or medium term;

- drastic reduction in diffuse agricultural pollution, particularly due to plant protection products and nitrates, while protecting agriculture and farm employment;
- more pro-active policy aimed at achieving the objectives set out by the European Water Framework Directive;
- major applied research effort to develop the tools and policies needed to adapt to climate change, in developing countries for example.

## **Climate change**

In ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, France undertook to stabilize its greenhouse gas emissions at their 1990 level in the 2008-2012 period. To achieve this objective, the government launched the *Plan Climat 2004-2012* (2004-2012 climate plan) in July 2004, the first comprehensive plan defining national climate change prevention activities. The *Plan Climat 2004-2012* sets out measures to be taken in all economic sectors and in the day-to-day life of the citizens. The goal is to cut French emissions by some 10% between now and 2010, in order to maintain the current trend toward stagnation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or to do better, and to cut emissions by a factor of 4 between now and 2050.

The impact of the *Plan Climat 2004-2012* currently being implemented and the measures since adopted by the government is estimated at 33.5 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent saved per year. The State's budget appropriation for the climate change control policy is very large: the annual contribution for the various government policies on climate change is estimated at 2 billion euros.

Following the Grenelle Environment Forum organized in 2007, the fight against climate change has been organized around five key issues: building, transport, urban planning, carbon content of goods produced and research, especially with respect to adaptation plans.

Other cross-cutting themes could have been addressed in this part of the report, especially sustainable tourism, in which France is heavily involved both at national and at international level. Nevertheless, the three themes presented illustrate the determination of both the government and the population to address the century's new goals: development shared by all, without compromising the development of future generations.

## **General conclusion**

The chapter on Africa and the five other theme chapters presented in this report illustrate a number of sustainable development actions carried out by France at national level. Sustainable development is not addressed as a separate issue but is mainstreamed in the various sectoral policies. The introduction of sustainable development and cross-cutting themes entails changes in priorities and working methods at all levels. The issues addressed in drawing up the report highlight innovative policies, strategies and action plans in the fields of cooperation and agriculture among others. The international focus is one important way to encourage the ramp-up of sustainable development in France.

Apart from the factual aspects of the national reports, it will be interesting to compare France's position with respect to sustainable development to that of the other members of the United Nations. The experience sharing made possible by the Commission on Sustainable Development is a source of enrichment for all French stakeholders working to achieve sustainable development and conscious of the progress that remains to be made, particularly with respect to methodology.

To supplement this report, the many sustainable development initiatives taken at local level in France should be noted. There are many innovative initiatives being taken in local Agenda 21 activities, charters and climate plans. They are one of the main tools for implementing sustainable development throughout the country and for raising awareness of the issues of the future and of the need to meet the commitments made by France at international level.

The introduction of sustainable development strategies is a long-term exercise. Yet in view of current progress and of the commitments made by the government following the Grenelle Environment Forum, it is clear that France is extremely involved in furthering sustainable development.