

# Green Economy

## What is a Green Economy and Why Does it Matter?

How we manage our natural capital not only affects the environment but also directly impacts on long-term economic prosperity. Natural capital comprises land, soil, water, forests, animal and plant biodiversity, mineral resources, and the flow of all benefits from the use or existence of these resources. The development of a green economy, according to the UN Environment Programme, 'should maintain, enhance and, where necessary, rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and source of public benefits.' In a green economy, growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investments that reduce

carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, create green jobs, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Building green economies in the Sahara and Sahel can help advance the objectives of the Great Green Wall, including improving the living conditions of local populations and generating new economic opportunities.

## A Win-Win Development Pathway

African leaders are increasingly acknowledging that a green economy pathway can be a win-win solution. With much of Africa's land still under exploited, moving straight to

organic or conservation farming, or introducing new cultivation technologies could in fact be more straightforward to implement than in many developed countries, given that soils have not yet been altered by the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides. Equally, renewable energy could be much cheaper and easier to develop in Africa, than in countries where large legacy systems and vested interests lie in the way of more widespread adoption of clean energy. Indeed, *the Green Economy Modelling Report of South Africa*, UNEP (2013) shows that a green economy approach - such as investing in low-carbon technologies, green buildings, and renewable energy - could create more jobs than a business as usual approach and lower

emissions of greenhouse gases and environmental damage, whilst sustaining the same level of economic growth.

### Land and the Green Economy

One of the most significant natural capital assets for a green economy in the Sahara and Sahel region is productive land and fertile soil. Land is a vital resource for the provision of essential ecosystem services such as ensuring food security, providing energy as well as conserving biodiversity and storing carbon. Sustainable land management (SLM) is key in helping to manage the food-water-energy nexus while balancing all direct, indirect, on-site and off-site costs and benefits, and safeguarding land's economic productivity for future generations through the continued provision of ecosystem services.

### Towards a Green Economy

While governments can play an important role in setting up conducive conditions for developing a green economy, the private sector's contribution to sustainable

development and a green economy in Africa is also essential. Several multinational agribusinesses are working with farmers in Africa to help them use more sustainable agricultural methods and SLM practices in their supply chains, while also increasing yields and raising incomes. For these companies such engagements are not only part of their efforts to act as responsible businesses, but

are vital in boosting the capacity of smallholders and other African businesses and building more robust supply chains for commodities such as coffee and cocoa.

