

Conclusion

Sino-EU seminar on land resource allocation

Brussels, European Commission DG Environment April 15

Adequate space allocation is needed to fulfil all short- and long term societal needs, including the sustainability of food supply, economic growth and ecological security. Determination of sufficient space allocation for different uses in the changing world requires a dynamic approach, where a feedback mechanism is applied to assess the consequences of different land use scenarios for the priority targets.

Land and soil experts from China and Europe gathered in Brussels on the 15th April 2013 to discuss the most stressing issues related to land resources allocation in these two regions of the world.

Chinese and European conditions differ, and local characteristics are diverse within their regions as well. However, interlinkages between the economic systems and dependencies from global trends (climate change, social development etc.) make common thinking and harmonized solutions necessary.

Key findings of the seminar:

- Urban expansion is continuing at a very rapid rate in China, but Europe is also experiencing constant land-take from open (vegetated) surfaces.
- Decrease of vegetated soil surfaces is concerning all land use types both in China and Europe but the conversion rate of built-up areas is the highest from croplands.
- In addition to threatening food security the extension of built up areas also has a series of negative environmental consequences, including increased flood risk, urban heat island effect, air- and water pollution.
- Competition for land and intensification of soil use threaten soil resources both in Europe and China and optimisation of land resource allocation usually do not account for sustainability.

Conclusions:

Allocation of land resources is a complex task involving many ecological, technological, economic, social, cultural and political aspects. These different perspectives need to be brought together to ensure that the problem is addressed in a timely manner.

Urgent actions needed in the domains of research, capacity building and policy, including the use of legal instruments and financial incentives.

Sino-EU cooperation in all of the above domains can be very effective to meet land use allocation challenges locally and globally.