

25x'25 Sustainability Principles



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In September of 2007, the 25x'25 Steering Committee chartered a work group composed of a cross section of agricultural, forestry, industry, environmental and conservation leaders to help further define sustainability in a 25x'25 renewable future. The mission of the work group was to develop recommendations for sustainability principles that would help guide the evolution of 25x'25.

The sustainability principles outlined in this report are the product of the 28-member 25x'25 National Steering Committee. Though the assumptions and principles were drawn from the consensus recommendations developed by the work group, they represent the views and position of the 25x'25 National Steering Committee rather than any individual 25x'25 Alliance partner.

Sustainability Principles for a 25x'25 Energy Future

Preamble

In the Energy Independence and Security Act passed in December 2007 the U.S. Congress formally adopted 25x'25 as a national goal, affirming that it is the goal of the United States to derive 25 percent of its energy use from agricultural, forestry and other renewable resources by 2025.

The 25x'25 Action Plan *Charting America's Energy Future*, authored and released by the 25x'25 National Steering Committee in February 2007, outlines specific steps that need to be taken to put the United States on a path to secure 25 percent of its energy needs from renewables by the year 2025. The 25x'25 goal and Action Plan stand on a foundation of five key principles—efficiency, partnership, commitment, sustainability, and opportunity.

Sustainability has always been considered as central to the success of the 25x'25 renewable energy initiative and is defined as follows in the Action Plan:

Sustainability – To be a long-term solution for America, renewable energy production must conserve, enhance, and protect natural resources and be economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially acceptable.

Underpinning the concept of sustainability is the ideal of stewardship or the responsible use and orderly development of natural resources in a way that takes full and balanced account of the interests of society, future generations, and other species, as well as private needs, and accepts significant answerability to society.

In developing these principles, a number of basic underlying assumptions were identified and agreed to:

- Renewable energy production must comply with all existing federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
- All regions will have an opportunity to engage in the production of bioenergy feedstocks and renewable energy.
- Renewable energy production should address the multiple-values of the land-base including environmental, economic, social, and historical.
- Balance of stakeholder interests must be a central theme in renewable energy production.
- The principles set forth for sustainability are mutually reinforcing.

The 25x'25 National Steering Committee recommends the following principles to 25x'25 partners and would support their adoption by renewable energy producers and policy makers.

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Access:

Renewable energy producers and consumers should have fair and equitable access to renewable energy markets, products, and infrastructure.

Air Quality:

Renewable energy production should maintain or improve air quality.

Biodiversity:

Renewable energy production should maintain or enhance landscape biodiversity and protect native, rare, threatened, and endangered species and habitat.

Community Economic Benefits:

Renewable energy production should bolster the economic foundation and quality of life in communities where it occurs.

Efficiency and Conservation:

Renewable energy production should be energy efficient, utilize biomass residues and waste materials when possible, and conserve natural resources at all stages of production, harvesting, and processing.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions:

Renewable energy production should result in a net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions when compared to fossil fuels.

Invasive and Non-Native Species:

Introduced or non-native species can be used for renewable energy production when there are appropriate safeguards against negative impacts on native flora and fauna, and on agricultural and forestry enterprises.

Market Parity:

Renewable energy production should have parity with fossil fuels in access to markets and incentives.

Opportunities:

All regions of the nation should have the opportunity to participate in renewable energy development and use.

Private Lands:

Renewable energy production on private working farm, forest, and grasslands should improve the health and productivity of these lands and help protect them from being permanently converted to non-working uses.

Public Lands:

Renewable energy production from appropriate public lands should be sustainable and contribute to the long-term health and mission of the land.

Soil Erosion:

Renewable energy production should incorporate the best available technologies and management practices to protect soils from loss rates greater than can be replenished.

Soil Quality:

Renewable energy production should maintain or enhance soil resources and the capacity of working lands to produce food, feed, fiber, and associated environmental services and benefits.

Special Areas:

Renewable energy production should respect special areas of important conservation, historic, and social value.

Technology:

New technologies, including approved biotechnology, can play a significant role in renewable energy production, provided they create land use and production efficiencies and protect food, feed, and fiber systems, native flora and fauna, and other environmental values.

Water Quality:

Renewable energy production should maintain or improve water quality.

Water Quantity:

Renewable energy production systems and facilities should maximize water conservation, avoid contributing to downstream flooding, and protect water resources.

Wildlife:

Renewable energy production should maintain or enhance wildlife habitat health and productivity.

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