

Green Jobs

The Challenge

Two major 21st-century challenges need to be tackled simultaneously. The first is to avert dangerous climate change and a deterioration of natural resources that would seriously jeopardize the quality of life for present and future generations. The second is to deliver social development and decent work for all.

Climate change, climate-related disasters and over-use of natural resources already affect hundreds of millions of men and women around the world.

Adaptation to climate change and efforts to arrest it, by reducing emissions and shifting to more sustainable production and consumption patterns, have far-reaching implications for economic and social development and thus for enterprises and for jobs.

Solutions to these two challenges can work in synergy to simultaneously realize the right to development, create decent jobs – in particular for youth and for women – and lift hundreds of millions out of poverty while moving to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.

The transformation towards a green economy will affect employment in four different ways: new jobs will be created, other jobs, especially in the highly carbon-intensive sectors, will be substituted or even eliminated and many existing professions will be re-defined with new profiles and skills.

Green jobs are central to the positive link between climate change and development. Providing decent work for women and men, green jobs make Millennium Development Goal 1 (poverty reduction) and Millennium Development Goal 7 (protecting the environment) mutually supportive.

The ILO Response

All ILO work on employment derives its current mandate from the Global Employment Agenda (2003) and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008). In June 2007 the ILO Director-General launched the “Green Jobs Initiative” in his report *Decent work for sustainable development*. The notion of Green Jobs summarizes the transformation of economies, enterprises, workplaces and labour markets towards a sustainable, low-carbon economy providing decent work for all.

Built around partnerships with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Organization of Employers (IOE), the initiative mobilizes governments, employers and workers to engage in shaping and implementing coherent policies and effective programmes. Green Jobs:

- reduce the environmental impact of enterprises and economic sectors to levels that are ultimately sustainable;
- contribute to cutting the need for energy and raw material, avoiding greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing waste and pollution, to adapt to climate change and to restoring ecosystem services such as clean water, flood protection or biodiversity;
- can be created in all countries, across all sectors and types of enterprises, in urban and rural areas, and include occupations ranging from manual to highly skilled.

The 2009 Global Jobs Pact promotes the shift to a low-carbon, environment-friendly economy that helps to accelerate the jobs recovery, reduces social gaps and supports development goals.

A significant number of countries have already adopted economic stimulus packages with major investments to green their economy. Large green recovery packages are in place in China, the European Union, the Republic of Korea, Japan and the United States of America.

In order to make green jobs a reality, the ILO has established a Global Programme on Green Jobs which bundles relevant ILO expertise and capacity across the Office. The Programme assists governments and employers' and workers' organizations through:

- generating knowledge and analytical tools;
- policy advice and assistance for implementing practical measures;
- capacity building.

The ILO Programme currently concentrates on five priorities:

1. Tools for diagnosis of labour market impacts and to inform policy formulation;
2. Practical approaches for greening of enterprises;
3. Waste management and recycling;
4. Renewable energy and energy efficiency;
5. Sustainable jobs and enterprises in adaptation to climate change and a just transition to a low-carbon and sustainable economy.

The Green Jobs Programme has been growing rapidly since it was established. Activities include:

- active participation in international policy; debates such as the climate negotiations, the G8 and the G20;
- global analysis and research;
- Green Jobs Country Programmes in Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Philippines, Somalia, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania;
- awareness raising, knowledge sharing and capacity building of employers and workers as well as of other key partners – the basis for active participation in the formulation and implementation of relevant policies.

The ILO International Training Centre in Turin has set up a specific training website and offers a range of training courses on Green Jobs.

The Green Jobs Initiative responds to “Delivering as One on Climate Change” as a priority for the UN system. The ILO actively participates in the negotiations and work under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The aim is to advance inclusion of the social and decent work dimensions of climate change and of related policies.

Key Tools and Resources

ILO. 2007. *Decent work for sustainable development – The challenge of climate change*. Governing Body document GB.300/WP/SDG/1 300th Session (Geneva).

—. 2008. *Employment and labour market implications of climate change*. Governing Body document GB.303/ESP/4 303th Session (Geneva).

—, UNEP, IOE, ITUC. 2008. *Green jobs: Towards decent work in a sustainable, low-carbon world (The Green Jobs Report)* (Geneva).

For training courses on green jobs at the International Training Centre, Turin, Italy, see <http://greenjobs.itcilo.org/>



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ILO Employment Sector