



NAIROBI, Oct. 16 — Investments being made in enabling the world to achieve food security are being done at the expense of the environment, threatening the very foundation that will deliver more food to the world, a new report by the UN Environment Program (UNEP) said on Tuesday.

The report launched in Nairobi urges the world to shift its focus also to environment to ensure that food production is sustainable and assured.

In its report “Avoiding Future Famines: Strengthening the Ecological Basis of Food Security through Sustainable Food System”, the UN agency also reveals that inefficiencies along the food delivery chain further result in estimated one-third of food produced for human consumption being lost or wasted, amounting to 1.3 billion tonnes per year.

“The environment has been more of an afterthought in the debate about food security,” said UNEP Chief Scientist Joseph Alcamo at the launch of the report.

“This is the first time that the scientific community has given us a complete picture of how the ecological basis of the food system is not only shaky but being really undermined,” the official added.

The report offers recommendations on the redesign of sustainable agriculture systems, dietary changes and storage systems and new food standards to reduce waste.

“The era of seemingly ever-lasting production based upon maximizing inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides, mining supplies of freshwater and fertile arable land and advancements linked to mechanization are hitting their limits, if indeed they have not already hit them,” UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said.

“The world needs a green revolution but with a capital G: one that better understands how food is actually grown and produced in terms of the nature-based inputs provided by forests, fresh waters and biodiversity,” said the official.

The report notes that while agriculture provides 90 percent of the world’s total caloric intake, and world fisheries provide the other 10 percent, these life-supporting industries face many threats, all of which are exacerbated by underlying driving forces such as population growth, income growth and changing lifestyles and diets linked to urbanization.

On agriculture, the report identifies major threat as the competition for water.

“Some experts believe that future food demands need to be met by additional irrigated land, but there is already strong competition from rapidly growing domestic and industrial water withdrawals.”

It notes that climate change and its impacts will compound the preceding threats to agriculture by shifting crop-growing zones and bringing an eventual decrease in crop productivity.

It identifies overfishing as the foremost force in undermining the ecological basis of fisheries. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that as of 2008, 53 percent of global marine stocks are fully exploited.