



# **A Fair Green Economy?**

## **Studies of Agriculture, Energy and Waste Initiatives in Malaysia**

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## **Contents**

<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The Elusive Social Dimension of Green Economy</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Malaysia's Green Economy Framework</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Localizing Green Economy</b>	<b>6</b>
Green agriculture through a System of Rice Intensification	7
Rural electrification using renewable energy	9
Women's empowerment through waste-to-wealth initiatives	11
<b>Preconditions for a Fairer Green Economy</b>	<b>12</b>
Urban bias in green economy interventions	13
Policy implementation and coordination	13
Problem framing and scaling of responses	13
Securing livelihoods through income-generation activities	14
Mainstreaming participatory learning	14
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>UNRISD Occasional Papers on Green Economy and Sustainable Development</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Figures</b>	
Figure 1: Conceptual development of the green economy goal	2
<b>Tables</b>	
Table 1: Malaysia's policy instruments on green economy	5
Table 2: Summary of green economy initiatives by the communities	9

## Acronyms

<b>FELCRA</b>	Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority
<b>FELDA</b>	Federal Land Development Authority
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Fund
<b>GR</b>	Green revolution
<b>HYV</b>	High-yielding variety
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communication technology
<b>KEDA</b>	Kedah Regional Development Authority
<b>MARDI</b>	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
<b>MCED</b>	Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development
<b>MGBC</b>	Malaysia Green Building Confederation
<b>NEM</b>	New Economic Model
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PACOS</b>	Partners of Community Organisation
<b>RM</b>	Ringgit Malaysia
<b>SEDA</b>	Sustainable Energy Development Authority
<b>SMA</b>	Single Mother Association
<b>SREP</b>	Small Renewable Energy Power
<b>SRI</b>	System of Rice Intensification
<b>TNB</b>	Tenaga Nasional Berhad
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

## Summary

This paper proposes that a green economy needs also to be a fair economy. Following broader global trends, in 2009 the Malaysian government established the basic architecture for green economy by incorporating a green technology portfolio into the newly established Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water. This was followed by a suite of interventionist policy instruments. However, Malaysia's approach raises the question whether the full range of social, economic and environmental goals is considered in its policy objectives, since a strictly economic approach to sustainability risks marginalizing the social equity aspects of green economy.

Parallel to the debate on sustainability, the social dimension of green economy has proven elusive both in definitional and substantive terms. There is no single understanding of integrated/comprehensive greening coming from either green growth, green economy or global green new deal discourses. However, the allocation of green goods and services is considered key, and it is recognized that this will eventually demand greater resources (not just economic) to achieve the necessary level of greening. For these reasons, although green economy does present an alternative pathway for development, it only partially resurrects the broader vision of sustainability as originally outlined by the sustainable development concept. For instance, focusing on green growth does not automatically lead a community to pathways to sustainability. Likewise, pro-poor investment alone cannot guarantee the diffusion of green projects that can lead to positive socioeconomic development outcomes. Since established poverty reduction programmes do not necessarily target the environment and vice versa, a green economy must integrate both poverty and environmental objectives.

Malaysia's national green economy framework reflects a mainstream economics framing, such as that of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). That is, it attempts to strengthen the economy via incentives, the tax system, pricing, regulatory frameworks and prioritized investments. Its target group, however, is industries located in urban centres and not the poor communities living in the rural areas of Malaysia. Consequently, the social dimension is not clearly spelled out in terms of programme and policy tools, despite the fact that "improving the quality of life for all" is one of the four pillars of Malaysia's National Green Technology Policy. This is manifested in the country's green policy design, evincing an urban bias. Given this scenario, the empirical section of this paper surveys piecemeal greening projects in a subnational context, particularly in Malaysia's rural frontier where poverty is still a major challenge. These projects are not officially considered a part of the country's recent response to the green economy agenda. Through case studies of agriculture, renewable energy and waste-to-wealth initiatives, the paper illustrates that green economy in Malaysia has most potential when it arises from the engagement of communities. The paper explores the contribution of these three sectors in meeting social policy objectives, as well as the challenges. Specifically, the paper investigates the benefits from a greener economy that will accrue to society members

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