



Submission by CAN-International General approaches to address Agriculture in the UNFCCC

5 March 2012

Climate Action Network-International (CAN-International) is the world's largest network of civil society organizations, with more than 700 members in over 90 countries, working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis.

Introduction

The AWG-LCA, at the fourth part of its fourteenth session, invited Parties and accredited observer organizations to submit to the secretariat by 5 March 2012, their views on issues related to agriculture. The secretariat will compile these submissions by Parties into a document for SBSTA, which will use it to “consider issues related to agriculture at its thirty-sixth session, with the aim of exchanging views and the Conference of Parties adopting a decision on this matter at its eighteenth session...”¹

Given the broad and inclusive nature of the call for submissions, and that this is the first direct UNFCCC decision regarding the agriculture sector, CAN-International submits below its recommendations for a general approach to agriculture within the UNFCCC negotiating process.

The importance of agriculture

- Global food production and thus food security are threatened by climate change. Every person in the world depends on agriculture for his/her very sustenance; most of the rural poor depend on agriculture for their livelihoods while agriculture has tremendous importance as a means of driving sustainable development. Local and mostly small-scale food producers feed the vast majority of the global population.² Climate change puts all of this at risk. The sustainability of agriculture and enhancement of food security, now and into the future, are of critical importance.
- Globally, agricultural activities contribute a significant percentage of greenhouse gas emissions. Addressing these emissions will be critical if we are to achieve the UNFCCC goal of limiting average global temperature increase to two degrees Celsius.

Policy goals

Thus, to the greatest extent possible, policies at all levels should be designed and implemented to meet four goals:

1. In sustainable ways, maintain and increase the security of food supplies for food insecure people, particularly in developing countries;
2. Enable small-scale food producers and other vulnerable populations to become more resilient to climate change;
3. Sustainably reduce emissions from the agricultural sector; and
4. Reduce emissions from the conversion of other land to agriculture.

¹Draft decision [-/CP.17], Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention, pars. 75-77, available at

http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/durban_nov_2011/decisions/application/pdf/cop17_lcaoutcome.pdf.

² ETC Group. 2009. Who will feed us? Communiqué Issue 102, p. 4.

Guiding principles

Countries agreed in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to prevent dangerous climate change: to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner. Climate policies that encompass agriculture must include safeguards that:

- protect and promote ecosystems and biodiversity,
- protect and promote rural people's gender-equitable access to natural resources,
- protect and promote food security and the right to food,
- protect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples and local populations,
- promote poverty reduction and climate adaptation
- protect and promote farm animals' health and ability to express natural behavior, and
- protect and promote the rights of vulnerable groups, in part by requiring sufficient transparency, consultation, and active involvement of affected communities:
 - Adaptation policies need to be embedded appropriately in the local context.
 - A rights-based approach must be adopted while designing and implementing adaptation policies, ensuring the active involvement of the affected communities. This includes having access to relevant information (transparency) and the right to complain.

Priority issues - Improving ecosystem health and building resilience

- Systems for biodiverse, socially and gender equitable, and resilient agriculture need to be developed, demonstrated, tested, and implemented so as to transform many currently unsustainable agricultural systems into ones which improve the health of ecosystems, communities, and cultures, even in the face of a changing climate.
- Small-scale food producers should be enabled to practice farming systems that 1) are resilient in the face of climate change, 2) are biodiverse and 3) strengthen the ecosystems of which they are part.
- Agro-ecological small-scale food producers and other forms of sustainable, ecological and climate resilient food production should be promoted.

Strengthening climate-resilient agriculture through the UNFCCC

- Climate policies relating to agriculture should be in line with the guiding principles identified above, and reflect recommendations from relevant international institutions including the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development (IAASTD) amongst others.
- In the current UNFCCC agenda, discussions on climate and agriculture should be coordinated and consistent with discussions relating to adaptation, technology, mitigation, LULUCF, REDD+ and flexible mechanisms.

Contributing to policy priorities

Funding for agriculture must address both adaptation and mitigation, and prioritize sustainable, adequate, and predictable sources of adaptation finance.

Recommendations for the UNFCCC

- The UNFCCC should facilitate the potential for countries to:
 - Promote biodiverse climate-resilient small-scale agriculture based on agro-ecological principles;
 - Support appropriate technology development and transfer that enhance sustainability of food production systems;
 - Include safeguards which protect biodiversity, equitable access to resources by rural peoples, food security, the right to food, the rights of indigenous peoples and local populations, as well as the welfare of farm animals, while promoting poverty reduction and climate adaptation;
 - Explore opportunities to sustainably reduce emissions from the agricultural sector; and

- Reduce emissions from the conversion of other land to agriculture.
- For developing country agriculture the priorities should be sustainability, climate resilience, and food security, and Parties must provide resources for promoting biodiverse, resilient small-scale agriculture and appropriate technology development and transfer.
- Developed countries must progress toward full and comprehensive accounting of the emissions associated with their agricultural activities, including bioenergy production and use.
- Climate policies relating to agriculture should be in line with the guiding principles identified above, and to reflect recommendations from relevant international institutions, including the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) report on climate change and its impacts on food security and nutrition by its High Level Panel of Experts to be presented at the next CFS in October 2012; and the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development (IAASTD) amongst others.