

Oxfam Submission to the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice Concerning Issues Related to Agriculture

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Climate change is creating serious harm to small-scale food producers and to food security in developing countries. Seventy five percent of the world's poor people live in rural areas in developing countries, and the livelihoods of 2 billion people are dependent on 500 million small-scale farms¹. Women farmers typically are major contributors to this food production through their labour – paid and unpaid - while having systematically less access to resources and services and power in decision making².

For small-scale food producers, the consequences of a changing climate include declining yields, increasing water scarcity, and often devastating losses from the widespread effects of climate-related disasters such as floods and droughts. Women farmers – with fewer assets to cushion them from crises - feel the brunt of the scarcity of resources in rural households. As a result, climate change has profound repercussions for food security in developing countries and places at risk the well-being of billions of people in developing countries.

To address these increasingly damaging impacts from climate change, it is essential that the UNFCCC and SBSTA must place the following principles at the center of any consideration of climate change and agriculture:

- The needs, interests and rights of small-scale food producers, particularly women, must be placed at the center of agriculture and climate change policies and practices, including through their full participation and input.
- The priority of small-scale agriculture is to secure livelihoods and promote food security.
- Adaptation, particularly for small-scale food producers, must be the first and foremost priority for addressing climate change and agriculture.
- Consideration of mitigation should be focused on developed countries, which should move fastest and furthest, including in the agriculture sector, based on their overall responsibility and capability.
- Any agriculture mitigation measures in developing countries must be consistent with and not impair the needs, interests and rights of small-scale food producers, especially their foremost priorities of adaptation and food security.

¹ "World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development," World Bank, Washington, 2008; International Fund for Agricultural Development, <http://www.ifad.org/operations/food/farmer.htm>

² "State of Food and Agriculture Report, 2010-11: Women in Agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development." Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome, 2011;"Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook," World Bank, FAO, and IFAD, Washington, 2009.

Adaptation

Adaptation, with a focus on small-scale food producers, must be the highest priority for addressing agriculture and climate change. In light of this objective, substantial financial resources will be needed to enable adaptation in small-scale agriculture. At least half of international climate finance for developing countries must be directed to investments in adaptation.

Further, adaptation strategies involving small-scale farmers and food producers requires specific approaches that are appropriate to their circumstances. This is particularly so for women, who rely heavily on natural resources and are at greater risk when facing the impacts of extreme weather events. As a result, when examining, developing and implementing agricultural adaptation approaches in developing countries the needs and interests of small-scale farmers and other small-scale food producers, particularly women farmers, must be placed at the center.

In the context of the UNFCCC and SBSTA:

- Research on and analysis of agricultural adaptation approaches should be undertaken with the full participation and input of small-scale food producers.
- Women farmers in particular should help set priorities and shape the direction of adaptation strategies.
- Local, traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices, which can provide sustainable solutions, must be recognized, properly researched and supported as the basis for adaptation strategies.
- The scope for scaling up agro-ecological approaches should be fully considered in the light of evidence which suggests their potential for reducing rural hunger and poverty, increasing the resilience of small scale food producers, as well as providing adaptation benefits³.
- Support to agricultural adaptation needs to be integrated with holistic, community based risk management strategies which are accessible to small scale food producers.

Mitigation

Since agriculture globally is recognized as a significant contributor to greenhouse gases, mitigation involving agriculture will be essential to address. Above all, agricultural mitigation efforts must clearly recognize the overall differences in emissions responsibility and capability between developed and developing countries, and take account of this context for action on agriculture sector emissions. Developed countries' agricultural sectors should therefore take the lead and move fastest and furthest in reducing agriculture emissions. Within this context, mitigation involving agriculture must be additional and supplementary to other emissions reductions, such as in industrial and consumption-based sectors, and agricultural sinks should not be inappropriately counted to evade responsibility for reductions in those sectors.

³ See for example, "Reducing Food Poverty with Sustainable Agriculture; A Review of New Evidence", Pretty, J. and Hine, R., University of Essex, 2011; "Agroecology and the right to food: Report presented to the 16th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on 8 March 2011", De Schutter, O., Geneva, 2011.

Additionally, the ways in which developed country consumption drives unsustainable agricultural production and land use practices in developing countries, such as with biofuels production, should be considered and addressed in assessing responsibility and developing policies for emissions reductions.

In some developing countries, under certain conditions, there may be mitigation benefits from agricultural practices in small-scale farming, and the potential of these should be appropriately investigated. However, there is currently little clear evidence on the level of mitigation benefits that could come from small-scale agricultural practices. Moreover the benefits and risks for small-scale food producers stemming from mitigation practices and policies are not well understood. Above all, small-scale farmers in developing countries should not face unfair or inappropriate expectations regarding mitigation, and any examination of agricultural mitigation must in particular recognize the differences in levels of emissions between small-scale and large-scale industrial agriculture, as well as between different production technologies (e.g. high external and low external input).

Moreover, food supplies are reliant on small-scale agriculture in many developing countries, and food security and the need to adapt to the consequences of climate change are paramount for small-scale food producers. Any consideration of mitigation by small-scale food producers must therefore ensure that mitigation approaches place adaptation and food security as first order priorities. It is thus essential to understand the trade-offs involving mitigation measures before they are promoted. Most importantly, farmers must retain the flexibility to adopt and shift practices in anticipation of, or in response to, a changing climate.

This is a particular concern where quantitative emissions-based approaches to mitigation may unduly focus farmers' resources on meeting metrics that are not fully in line with their needs to ensure adaptation and livelihoods. Indeed, quantitative emissions-based mitigation measures, particularly when introduced at the farm level, may prioritise mitigation in ways that sideline or inappropriately deprioritise adaptation and food security objectives and may create logistical complications and transaction costs that small-scale farmers cannot bear economically. These concerns are particularly relevant in the case of offsets, which should not be promoted in the absence of a clear evidence base showing that they do not undermine the interests of small-scale food producers in adaptation and food security.

It will also be vital to ensure that any agricultural mitigation approaches in developing countries are developed with the engagement and meaningful input of small-scale farmers, especially women farmers. Agricultural mitigation approaches should be researched and analyzed with the full participation of small-scale food producers.

Furthermore, agricultural mitigation policies must not negatively affect the rights of small-scale food producers and should ensure their participation in the development of any mitigation efforts. In particular, land tenure rights and rights to water must not be undermined by any agricultural mitigation strategies, and any mitigation policies or programs must clearly protect those rights, including for indigenous peoples. The rights of women, who frequently lack land tenure rights and have less access to decision-making processes, must in particular be assured.

In order to ensure that agricultural mitigation involving small-scale food producers fully addresses the primary objectives of food security, adaptation and the rights of small-scale food producers, particularly women farmers, extreme caution is needed, requiring a careful phased approach to address these issues. Significant additional research is

needed into what practices improve livelihoods, increase food security, ensure adaptive capacity and also have emissions reductions benefits. This research, which should be undertaken with the full participation and input of small-scale food producers, will need to assess the risks that mitigation policies in agriculture may pose for small-scale farmers and food producers. Any mitigation approaches, policies and measures involving small-scale food producers should only be taken forward if they are clearly able to affirmatively address these critical risks, including any potential to:

- Establish prohibitive costs or other obligations or negatively affect land tenure, water and other rights;
- Disincentivise action on small-scale farmers' highest priorities (in effect steering away from adaptation or food security in favour of mitigation incentives);
- Limit farmers' ability to change their actions consistent with their highest priorities (i.e. inappropriately locking them into particular activities); or
- Reduce the focus on developed countries to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, including in the agriculture sector.

REDD+ approaches in developing countries may also increasingly intersect with agricultural mitigation strategies, especially in terms of efforts to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation as well as agricultural emissions themselves. It will be important that the same considerations regarding agricultural practices and the rights, needs and interests of small-scale food producers are fully taken on board in any REDD+ related examinations that involve agriculture.

Agriculture and climate in the UNFCCC and SBSTA

Consistent with the above, any work programme or other engagement under the UNFCCC and SBSTA on agriculture and climate change, including research and analysis, should address the following criteria:

- Ensure that adaptation and food security for small-scale food producers are recognized as the paramount priorities for addressing climate change and agriculture.
- Ensure that climate change and agriculture investment priorities are set by small-scale food producers, and that these decisions can change over time as needed to enable adaptation in response to climate change impacts.
- Ensure that any climate and agriculture measures promoted or designed protect and respect the rights and livelihoods of small and marginal food producers, women and indigenous peoples, and recognise traditional knowledge and practices. They should also promote successful agroecological approaches and accessible risk management strategies.
- Undertake research on climate change and agriculture approaches with the full participation and input of small-scale food producers, and ensure that adaptation practices and policies are based on their needs and interests.
- Focus on building and supporting agriculture and climate change policies in an equitable manner, including basing mitigation measures on countries' historical responsibility for emissions and capability for making reductions, and clearly

addressing differences between large-scale industrial and small-scale agriculture (as well as high external and low external input agricultural systems). .

- For agriculture mitigation, follow a phased approach that ensures the development of a clear evidence base on the risks and benefits of mitigation efforts for small-scale food producers, including in relation to adaptation, before promoting, undertaking, or further scaling up specific policies or programs.
- Particularly before promoting any quantitative emissions-based mitigation approaches in developing country agriculture, especially through offsets, ensure there is a clear evidence base showing that these approaches will not interfere with or undermine the rights, interests and needs of small-scale food producers, particularly adaptation and food security objectives,.
- Support the provision of at least fifty percent of international climate finance flows to adaptation, and ensure that any agricultural mitigation measures promoted will not limit donor, government, or private sector investments in sustainable livelihoods and adaptation for small-scale food producers.