

Issues related to agriculture for consideration by the SBSTA in the context of Article 4.1(c) on cooperative sectorial approaches and sector-specific actions

Submission of AVSF, GERES, GRET, Planète Urgence and non-accredited CARI¹, on behalf of the alliance Coordination SUD, to the UNFCCC on 26th april of 2012.

The COP, in its decision 2/CP.17, requested the SBSTA to consider issues related to agriculture at its 36th session, in the context of deliberations on **Cooperative sectorial approaches and sector-specific actions, in order to enhance the implementation of Article 4, paragraph 1(c), of the Convention.**

The COP invited Parties and admitted observer organizations to submit their views on these issues related to agriculture in advance of the upcoming SBSTA. This document represents **Coordination SUD** views on the topic related to the deliberation mentioned above and welcomes the opportunity to share our views below.

The alliance **Coordination SUD (Solidarity, Emergency and Development)** is a national umbrella organization for more than 130 French NGOs working in the fields of relief and development in developing countries. A large part of these organizations work directly with smallholder farmers in particular in Western Africa.

With this submission, Coordination SUD and its member organizations want to remind Parties what is really at stake when considering the linkages between agriculture and climate change in developing countries. Based on experience working in rural development in the global South, we make propositions on what we think the SBSTA should put emphasis on in its work.

I. Context

Differentiating agricultural models

At a global scale, the responsibility for greenhouse gases emissions in the agricultural and livestock sectors lies mainly on industrialized agricultural models that have little or no relevance to least-developed countries. The African agriculture, for example, contributes for less than 10% to the emissions from the agricultural sector at the global level². *Per capita* GHG emissions from the agricultural sector are far higher in industrialized countries. With only 17% of the world population, Annex I countries are responsible for 26% of N₂O emissions from agricultural soils, 30% of CH₄ emissions from enteric fermentation, and 52,2% of CH₄ and N₂O emissions related to manure management³.

Smallholder farming from least-developed countries has a very low contribution to global emissions. It often represents a favorable and interesting working field for developing sustainable agricultural practices such as agroecology, recognized as a promising model to ensure food security while limiting environmental impact⁴.

¹ Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières/VSF-CICDA, Groupe Energies Renouvelables, Environnement et Solidarités, Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques, Association Planète Urgence, Centre d'Actions et de Réalisations Internationales.

² UNFCCC, 2005 : Inventory of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases. Sixth compilation and synthesis of initial national communications of non-annex I Parties to the Convention.

³ P. Smith et al. 2007. Policy and technological constraints to implementation of greenhouse gas mitigation options in agriculture. *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* 118: 6-28.

⁴ Olivier de Schutter, United Nations Spécial Rapporteur on the Right to Food, *Agroecology and the right to food*, 2011.

Importance and vulnerability of family farming

Smallholder farming in southern countries is low-emitting, but by contrast it is particularly exposed and sensitive to the impacts of climate change, with major socio-economic consequences for southern countries. Family farming is the pillar of food security in numerous countries, where it determines the means of existence of a predominantly rural population. Family farming plays an important role in land-use and natural resources management, employment/income generation and social stability. Family farming produces 60% of the food consumed at the global scale⁵. This rate reaches more than 80% at national level in some developing countries like those in Western Africa. The estimated number of smallholder farmers is about 1,3 billion which represent 85% of the farmers in developing countries.

However, for several decades, family farming has been facing economical hazards, combined with a very low consideration in public policies, together prejudicing its viability. Statistics are impressive: already, 70% of people affected by food insecurity are poor rural people. Among the constraints that increase the vulnerability of smallholders, we can mention:

- economical hazards and volatility of agricultural prices, especially owing to insufficient agricultural stocks, the increase in biofuel production and, finally, the disengagement of Governments from the management of agricultural markets.
- difficulties in access to resources, particularly agricultural land ;
- structural constraints : shortage in services and infrastructures, lack of access to information and training, deficiency in technical support and scientific research to improve agricultural techniques.

This unfavorable background could be changed by better suited agricultural policies, and a massive reinvestment towards smallholder farming from donors and the governments of developing countries.

In this context of already strong vulnerability for family farming, climate change acts as an additional factor of instability.

Smallholder famers have always had to develop strategies to face hazards and deal with difficult production conditions. However, because of their current situation of vulnerability, farmers from the South already operate in precarious conditions, and have little leeway (investment capacity, access to knowledge networks, capacity to influence public policies), to innovate and invest in more resilient agricultural models – whereas the timeframe of climate change needs a pro-active management.

Agriculture in the UNFCCC

<p>For a large majority of smallholders and livestock farmers in the world, the only priority and the first emergency are to be supported so they can both adapt their production systems to climate change and improve their overall resilience.</p>
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The current approach on this issue by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) makes Coordination SUD NGOs fear that this priority may not be respected. The Coordination SUD alliance is concerned that:

- Not all Parties to the UNFCCC have a say in decision-making, and most of peasant organizations are not consulted. **The given time limit for sending submission to SBSTA, i.e. 2 months after COP17, was too short to allow countries that still do not have negotiators trained on this issue, to draw up submissions that were consistent with the interests of their own agricultural and livestock sector.** These countries must be able to organize national

⁵ IFAD/UNEP: Joint briefing on sustainable agriculture claim, 2011.

consultations involving all the organizations of this sector which is crucial for their economy and stability. NGOs from Coordination SUD noted that farmer's organizations from French-speaking Africa, which are usual partners, are neither enough represented nor heard in the UNFCCC.

- The agricultural issue has been approached, until now, under the chapter of Cooperative sectorial approaches for mitigation, what tends to concentrate Parties towards dealing with agricultural emission mitigation as a priority. This orientation outweighs largely the development issue that the agricultural and livestock sector underlies in a lot of countries. It may place in the background the major challenge of supporting smallholder farming in adopting more resilient production models.

II. Principles of action

For Coordination SUD, the following principles should guide the action of the UNFCCC and the work of SBSTA on agricultural issues:

- Smallholder farming must be recognized in all its diversity, specificity, multi functionality, and as a viable production model that is also resilient and low carbon.
- Peasant organizations, in their diversity, must be involved in decision-making for the agricultural sector in the UNFCCC, and, in particular, play a key role in the drawing up of national programs, and their application. Western African organizations, in particular, must be represented and heard with regard to their specificity.
- Vulnerable men and women smallholders must be the priority target for financial, technical and research efforts concerning the approach to adaptation at a global scale.
- Linkage between sectorial and territorial planning, and consistency of policies and actions at all scales from the national to the local level should be sought. Adaptation policies should take into account the difficulties raised by smallholders themselves, and rely on the acknowledgement of concrete know-how developed by local stakeholders, among which communities and non-governmental organizations. They should promote the hybridization of knowledge and the articulation between know-how/concrete experiments of these local stakeholders, and applied research proposals from NGOs, research centers or public agricultural development institutions.
- We estimate that mitigation efforts in the agricultural and livestock sectors should target the models that are the highest emitters of greenhouse gases, both historically and today, in absolute terms, per unit area and per unit of labor input. Thus, mitigation efforts for the agricultural sector must target before all developed countries and, to a certain extent, emerging countries, and not family agriculture from least-developed countries.
- Food security and sovereignty are often not a problem of productivity or availability of food on a global scale, but rather a problem of access and quality. Adaptation to climate change should seek the increase of food sovereignty, considering not « feeding the world » but « helping the world feed itself ». The access to quality food is ensured by a relocated production, and by rural development actions that contribute to raise the resilience in farms.
- Measures taken on agriculture within the UNFCCC should be consistent and articulated with those of the other two Rio Conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification⁶.

⁶ And its Global Mechanism to develop financial strategies for sustainable management of lands.

III. Comments on the priority work for SBSTA

We think the following points are of priority concern for the work of SBSTA within its mandate:

Inclusion of all actors and equity of decision-making

- **Promoting the participation of all countries, in particular French-speaking countries from Africa and their peasant organizations, in the climate negotiation.** The contexts and issues of the agricultural and livestock sectors are very different from one country to another, including across the African continent. Countries from sub-Saharan Africa, and even more those from Western Africa, are characterized predominantly by smallholder (80%)⁷ and female (70% of the agricultural labor⁸) agriculture. The participation of these countries can be increased by the training of various stakeholders (technical public services, peasant organizations...), support to national consultations and the access to a French translation during all negotiation sessions.
- **Favoring the active participation of all stakeholders concerned by agriculture issues** in the process of drawing up proposals and decisions, ensuring in particular the involvement of smallholder farmers associations, peasant women, and landless peasants.

Support to smallholder agriculture and livestock farming for determining and implementing adaptation strategies

1. **Proposing mechanisms for the Green Climate Fund to support, through grants, the adaptation of family farming to climate change.**
2. **Identifying the measures and programs that are necessary to increase the quality of climate projections in LDCs**, in particular at local scales (by agroecological zone), seeking consistency with operating scales. Making these projections accessible for communities is also crucial.
3. **Proposing support programs for improving information systems and seasonal forecasting** in LDCs. Information must be adapted and accessible to local stakeholders, in order to allow them to better anticipate the climate risk in their farming activities.
4. **Improving knowledge about the impact of climate change on smallholder agriculture** in LDCs, considering interaction with other external constraints (evolution of the economic context and environmental degradation particularly). The reduction of smallholder vulnerability should take into account the various types of hazards (climatic, economic, social and politic...).
5. **Improving knowledge on local know-how and propose a monitoring and assessment of existing smallholder strategies to adapt to constraints**, considering their replicability (especially with a view to exchanges between peasants from southern countries), their inclusiveness (taking into account vulnerable groups such as pastoralists, women, landless and migrant communities) and their positive and negative impacts.
6. **Proposing risk-management solutions that articulate** investments aiming at strengthening the resilience of family farms (product and activity diversification, access to education, public services...), and prevention and response mechanisms: information and early warning systems, risk management planning, insurance mechanisms, emergency food aid.
7. **Supporting national and local policies for the adaptation of smallholder farming in LDCs.** They must allow the funding of schemes that integrate all aspects of smallholder agriculture

⁷ CGIAR/CCAFS Report N°6, 2011

⁸ FAO : Gender equity in Agriculture and Rural Development, 2009.

consolidation, especially resilience to climate change, access to market, and secured access to natural resources. These schemes must meet local needs in terms of infrastructure, applied research and technical support.

8. The framework for adaptation to climate change, and the various policies that concern smallholder farming, must be consistent and harmonized, and converge towards the same objective: to allow rural populations to ensure a sustainable living (from a socio-economic as well as an environmental point of view) that meet their aspirations.

Development of sustainable and low-carbon farming models

- SBSTA should study in priority the options to reduce agricultural GHG emissions in industrialized countries and, to a lesser extent, in emerging countries.
- SBSTA's work should rely on a clear orientation towards the promotion of the ecological intensification of agriculture and livestock farming (agroecology).
- For Coordination SUD, two other important conditions for the development of a sustainable and low-carbon agriculture are :
 - to seek the relocation of agricultural and livestock activities on the territories (“to product for the territory”), and
 - to promote an evolution towards more sustainable consumption habits in northern and emerging countries.

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