Statement by Argentina in the SBSTA workshop on the identification and assessment of agricultural practices and technologies to enhance productivity in a sustainable manner, food security and resilience, considering the differences in agro-ecological zones and farming systems, such as different grassland and cropland practices and systems – 23 May 2016

Argentina welcomes the opportunity to present its views in this workshop in relation to the identification and assessment of agricultural practices and technologies to enhance productivity in a sustainable manner and food security.

We associate with the statement delivered by Egypt on behalf of the G77 and China, while we reaffirm the contents of earlier communications and interventions on this area, as well as of the submission by Argentina dated last April. In particular, we would like to stress the need to consider at SBSTA the particular vulnerability of the agricultural sector to the adverse impacts of climate change, taking into account the principles and provisions of the UNFCCC.

According to the IPCC, there is sufficient evidence that climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme climate events. Latin America and the Caribbean is a region particularly vulnerable to these phenomena, which severely affected the region in recent years.

Agriculture is one of the sectors most affected by the adverse effects of climate change, which is of grave concern considering that this very sector serves the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security. Such a crucial role and delicate balance has been recognized in the Paris Agreement, which also established in its purpose the need to ensure that food production is not threatened. This role of agriculture becomes even more significant if it is also considered that the sector is of critical importance to economic and social development and the eradication of poverty, since a large part of the population of many developing countries depend on agriculture for subsistence.

Argentina has committed itself to increasing its food supply to the world, so that it moves from feeding 400 million people at present to feeding 680 million people in 2020, thus substantially contributing to the achievement of world food security. Responding to the challenge of satisfying a greater food demand inevitably requires the increase of food production under changing climatic conditions.

The agricultural sector needs to be strengthened including by increasing national capacities and international cooperation for technology development and transfer, for the improvement of the adaptive capacity of agricultural systems and of its productivity, so that the sector can continue meeting the world population`s food needs.

Considering the foregoing, Argentina finds it necessary to continue advancing technical and scientific work in the SBSTA, in order to take the adaptation measures required to prevent and minimize the adverse impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector, thus contributing to social welfare, economic development and the alleviation of hunger and poverty.

Some national experiences and programs being implemented in Argentina to meet the challenges of the agricultural sector posed by the adverse impacts of climate change, and thus to increase productivity in a sustainable manner, are:

1. The project on “Adaptation and resilience of family farming in the Northeastern region of Argentina in the face of the impact of climate change and its variability”: Funded by the Adaptation Fund, it is aimed at enhancing the adaptive capacity of small producers of that region in the face of the impacts of climate change.
2. The project“Increasing climate resilience and improving sustainable land management in the Southwestern region of the Province of Buenos Aires”: Also funded by the Adaptation Fund, it has the objective of reducing the vulnerability of ecosystems to desertification processes caused by climate change in agricultural systems of the Southwestern region of the Province of Buenos Aires.
3. Research program on climate risks, impacts, vulnerability and adaptation: It is a project led by the National Institute of Agricultural Technology(INTA) to deepen the knowledge about climate patterns in the different regions, which is essential for planning activities leading to achieve more sustainable production and to ensure the livelihood of producers.
4. Rural territorial planning: Between 2011 and 2013, the Project "Strengthening of Capacities Allowing to Deal With Rural Territorial Planning Processes" was carried out together with the FAO, with the objective to train stakeholders in the design of a territorial plan, and thereby, contributing to core aspects of climate change adaptation. Also, there are programs to obtain geo-referenced maps of areas that are fit and unfit for particular agricultural activities, taking into consideration climate-related limitations.
5. Actions regarding the spread of pests: There is monitoring of data on pests and adverse climatic conditions which affect the vulnerability of agricultural systems.
6. Early Monitoring and Assessment of Desertification: In a context in which arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas represent 75% of the total area of Argentina, the National Action Program to Fight Desertification monitors and assesses the effects of deterioration, desertification and drought, in order to contribute to the planning of strategies for the achievement of the sustainable development of the affected areas.
7. National System for the Prevention and Mitigation of Agricultural Emergencies and Disasters (Law 26,509): In the event of climate disasters and emergencies, a state of emergency is declared, and strategies are adopted to financially assist victims for the reconstitution of the productive systems, assist farmers to reduce losses, and reduce vulnerability to future events.
8. Agricultural Weather information systems: INTA has a network of automatic weather stations for keeping records and files on agro-climatic variables, with 150 operating agricultural weather stations.
9. The adoption of no-till farming: This system is widely used in Argentine agriculture (more than 80% of the area) and is “environmentally virtuous” practice since not turning over the soil makes it possible to preserve plant debris, which helps to stop erosion and to increase agricultural production, contributing to food security.

10. Development of crop and livestock varieties: Argentina has extensive scientific knowledge about varieties which are adapted to water, thermal and saline stress and to different pests. For example, it is important to highlight the development, inter alia, of drought-resistant soybeans, salinity-resistant soybeans, and feed crops adapted to water and saline stress.

11. National Irrigation Plan: The objective is to double the irrigated area, particularly in regions where rising temperatures are expected increasing the water demand for crops.

12. Modifications in the sowing dates of crops: As a result of changes in temperature patterns, sowing schedules were modified to avoid stress periods.

Taking into account the referred national experiences, the processes under the Convention - that is under this agenda item of the SBSTA- have helped to increase the scientific and technological knowledge on adaptation of agricultural systems to the adverse effects of climate change. Argentina considers that, recalling article 9 of the Convention, and on the basis of the objective, principles and provisions of the UNFCCC, the SBSTA could continue to undertake scientific and technological work, following its agreed mandate, in the following issues:

- Study on the impacts of climate change on pests and diseases as well as weed distribution, which affect different production systems

- Obtaining germplasm adapted to thermal and water stress, in crops such as wheat, rice and maize

- Identification of specific technologies being used or developed with special emphasis on the analysis of the economic, technical, institutional, social, and environmental barriers that prevent or delay local development or transfer of identified technologies, and the evaluation of potential technological alternatives

- Sharing of adaptation knowledge and practices which increase productivity in a sustainable manner and contribute to food security, taking into account specific local, regional and national contexts and differences in agricultural systems.