

SUBMISSION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Views on issues related to agriculture

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Introduction

At COP 17, Parties were invited to submit their views on issues related to agriculture. Canada welcomes this opportunity, and looks forward to participating in the exchange of views at SBSTA 36 aimed at reaching agreement on an agriculture decision at COP 18. In this submission, Canada provides ideas on the possible objectives, scope and expected outcomes of work on agriculture under the SBSTA, starting with the exchange of views at SBSTA 36 that will advance efforts to enhance food security and the sustainability of agricultural systems.

Canada values this exchange of views because it recognizes that as both producers and consumers of agricultural products, all countries see agricultural production as vital. Meeting the demand for food is paramount and will require addressing the important linkages between agriculture and climate change. Specifically, increased production resulting from growing demand for food is leading to increases in greenhouse gas emissions from a sector that, in turn, is highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Failure to adequately address issues of both adaptation and mitigation could ultimately threaten the sustainability of agricultural systems and agricultural livelihoods. Yet while food security, adaptation and mitigation are critical elements of agricultural production, so too are the fundamental interlinkages among them; individual actions to address one element often affect the other elements.

Given this context, Canada believes that agriculture requires a unique and holistic approach that encompasses food security, adaptation and mitigation. A holistic approach can lead to actions that take advantage of synergies among the elements, thus boosting the resilience and sustainability of agricultural production. Such an approach must be

based on a sound scientific and technical foundation. The exchange of views related to agriculture, and subsequent work on agriculture under the SBSTA, provides Parties the opportunity to build that foundation.

Objectives and scope

In Canada's view, a key objective of the exchange of views and subsequent work on agriculture should be the sharing and development of sound scientific and technical information that helps Parties make informed decisions on approaches to and actions in agriculture that ensure food security and that maximize synergies between food security, adaptation and mitigation in a sustainable manner.

The scope of the discussions and work on agriculture must be consistent with the mandate of the SBSTA, as outlined in Article 9 of the Convention. Accordingly, the scope might include:

- Assessment of scientific knowledge relating to climate change and its effects on agriculture;
- Identification of innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies, and know-how and advice related to agriculture, as well as means for their development and transfer; and
- Provision of advice on scientific programmes, international cooperation in research and development related to climate change and agriculture, as well as on ways and means of supporting endogenous capacity building in developing countries.

While recognizing that each Party has specific interests and needs, Canada believes that scientific and technical work in a number of broad thematic areas of relevance to all Parties—such as tools for action in agriculture, measurement methodologies, and holistic approaches to agriculture and climate change—could usefully be undertaken within this scope. This could help to ensure that food security, adaptation and livelihoods are not

compromised by mitigation efforts, while at the same time ensuring that greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture are reduced to the extent feasible through actions that improve the greenhouse gas efficiency of agricultural production.

It is important that discussions draw upon work related to agriculture that has already been undertaken under the Convention, including the technical paper on challenges and opportunities for mitigation in the agriculture sector (FCCC/TP/2008/8), and the in-session workshop held during AWG-LCA 5. Discussions should also be informed by the significant existing work by organizations outside of the UNFCCC. For example, Canada, like many countries, systematically supports and participates in scientific and technical work on agriculture in countries worldwide, as well as in a variety of international research institutions and multilateral fora. There is an opportunity to learn from existent work and to determine what research is needed moving forward. Modalities—including workshops, expert group meetings, and preparation of relevant materials by expert groups from within and outside of the Convention as well as jointly—could facilitate this process.

Expected outcomes

Canada expects that dedicated discussion of agriculture under the SBSTA, over time, could lead to a range of important outcomes, including:

- (a) Improved understanding of the synergies and inter-relationships between food security, adaptation and mitigation in agriculture, and of efficiency-based approaches that help capture these synergies;
- (b) Increased capacity to share and use knowledge of existing and new practices, technologies, and decision-making tools that facilitate synergies and support informed decision making;
- (c) Improved understanding of the potential for cooperative research and development, both within and outside of the UNFCCC system, on practices, technologies and decision-making tools to provide the scientific and technical basis for further action in agriculture; and

- (d) Improved information and advice to the COP and its subsidiary bodies on the scientific and technical aspects of food security, adaptation, mitigation and their interlinkages in agriculture.

In Canada's view, these outcomes might be best achieved through work organized within a programme of work on agriculture under the SBSTA. A programme of work will enable Parties to organize their work in a coherent and effective manner. An outline of such a programme of work could comprise part of a COP 18 decision on agriculture.

Conclusion

The agriculture sector faces a unique set of complex challenges in its efforts to feed a growing world population, including those related to climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas mitigation. A holistic approach to agriculture will help to achieve the adaptation, mitigation and food production objectives of the Convention.

The exchange of views at SBSTA 36 can serve as a forum for exploring, in a coordinated manner, opportunities to enhance the long-term sustainability of the global agriculture sector at the international, national, and local levels. By increasing collective knowledge through the scientific and technical work they establish under the SBSTA, Parties have an important opportunity to inform decision makers, help shape future research agendas, and provide guidance to donors. Canada looks forward to participating in discussions under the SBSTA, and hopes they will help frame a decision on agriculture at COP 18 that outlines a path forward on this important issue.