SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONFEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL UNIONS

Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions

This submission is made by SACAU in response to the SBSTA 38 conclusions that invited Parties and Observer organisations to submit views on the current state of scientific knowledge on how to enhance the adaptation of agriculture to climate change impacts while promoting rural development, sustainable development and productivity of agricultural systems and food security in all countries, particularly in developing countries ….taking into account the diversity of agricultural systems and the differences in scale as well as possible adaptation co-benefits (Document FCCC/SBSTA/2013/L.20 para 2).

Preamble

Farmers from Southern Africa wish to emphasise that agriculture is the foundation for the economies of most of African countries, and contributes significantly to food security, employment, livelihoods and poverty alleviation for millions of households on the continent. Agriculture is the most climate sensitive sector and the most vulnerable to climate change. Rain-fed agricultural systems on which most farmers depend will be adversely affected by extreme weather conditions and events. Farmers note the severe impacts that climate change is already having on agriculture, rural livelihoods and economies in Southern Africa, especially on the production of major food crops, livestock and fisheries, and express concern that these are predicted to worsen in the future. Farmers lack the assets, technologies and capabilities that are required to cope with these challenges.

The priority for African farmers is to ensure food security, eradicate poverty, socio economic growth, and environmental sustainability through increasing productivity and adapting production systems to the effects of climate change while taking full advantage of potential adaptation co-benefits. Farmers urge SBSTA to build a better understanding of the direct impacts of climate change on the diverse African farming systems, the prevalence of pest and diseases associated with predicted climate trends, and the most efficient adaptation options for African farmers.

Priority areas for enhancing adaptation of the agricultural sector to climate change

Farmers in Southern Africa have identified the following priority areas on which the UNFCCC through SBSTA should focus to enhance the adaptive capacity of the agricultural sector:

1 Compilation of impacts of climate change on agriculture and related ecosystems including inter alia agricultural productivity, pests and disease prevalence, land degradation, biodiversity loss, seasonal variability of rainfall patterns, the associated risks, vulnerabilities, adaptation and mitigation technologies and techniques including indigenous technologies and knowledge and their socio-economic impacts with a view to identifying gaps and needs of the African countries and ways to deal with them.

2 Assessment of current and projected impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector under different climate scenarios (temperature) on national, regional and international levels, in particular on the African continent.

3 Development of technological options and practices for agricultural adaptation and adaptation co-benefits, including understanding positive impacts and monitoring systems for adaptation. The motivation for research and technological options is the need to develop innovations tailored to the local scale that directly and indirectly enhance adaptive capacity of Africa's agriculture in a changing climate.

4 Enhancing knowledge and deepening understanding of issues related to Research and Development, scaling up of technologies for increased agricultural productivity and climate change adaptation.

5 Developing approaches to maximizing adaptation co-benefits in agriculture targeted at farmers in developing countries and the institutions that support them.

6 Identifying tools, methods and models for climate forecasting in order to improve seasonal forecasting, early warning systems and future projection of vulnerability and impacts in agricultural systems. These tools also need down-scaling and integration with indigenous knowledge systems to make them more meaningful at a local scale.

7 Assessing the capacity needs of farmers and farmers' organizations with a view to recommending implementable mechanisms for capacity building for farmers, farmers' organizations, and other institutions that support farmers in Africa.

8 Developing mechanisms for technology transfer, especially targeted at making technology available to farmers in Africa and the institutions that support them.