

Statement of Pat O’Toole, Ladder Ranch, Savery, Wyoming USA
October 14, 2021

Intersessional Workshop on Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture:
Strategies and modalities to scale up implementation of best practices, innovations and technologies that increase resilience and sustainable production in agricultural systems according to national circumstances

Colleagues and partners- my name is Pat O’Toole, and I am here today representing the UNFCCC Farmer Constituency. I’m a rancher on the Colorado/Wyoming border and a member of the board the board of directors of Solutions from the Land.

Our family raises cattle, sheep, horses, dogs and children. We’ve been on the same landscape for 140 years. We’ve seen the ups and downs and the volatility of weather and the changing climate—now it’s clear that the cycle of life has been disturbed. The epic drought we have been experiencing across the western United States, especially in the last two years, and other issues are different than in the past. Our community has found that solutions are local. We find that solutions are from the land.

Today I would like to talk to you about some of the fundamental principles that we practice in our part of the world, which extrapolates to the to the entire world of people who produce food. Farmers, ranchers, foresters and fishers all across the world work in the extremes of elements and volatile weather, and we share that love of the land. We cumulatively see the pressure on the land we manage and our water supplies. Sadly, strategies are evolving worldwide to take water from farmers, from food production, and redirect it to other uses.

I’m very lucky to live in a ranching and farming community in a watershed on the headwaters of the distressed Colorado River. We have worked for 30 years on building resilience, leading to some of the most significant watershed restoration and agricultural productivity projects in the country, as we work with federal and state partners to manage our land for multiple outcomes- protein production, fisheries, wildlife, health forests and viable rural economies. The key to our success has been local leadership and uncommon collaboration with diverse partners to address our unique challenges and opportunities.

The following guiding principles underpin my work and insight into farmer-led climate initiatives, and I recommend them for adoption and use by member states and other parties.

- **Profitability for the farmer must be a paramount objective** for any roadmap to transform agricultural systems to meet climate and other sustainable development goals. If a farmer is not profitable, he or she will not be able to deliver the outcomes that society hopes or expects.

- **Farmers must be at the center of all discussions and decision-making**; significant input will be needed from a wide range of farmer and other producer organizations outside of typical policymaking structures.
- **There is no “silver bullet” solution for enhancing the resilience of agriculture**: policymakers must embrace a systems approach that recognizes the tremendous diversity of agricultural landscapes and ecosystems and enables producers to utilize the systems and practices that best support their farming operations.
- As affirmed in the communique from the 8th Meeting of G20 Agricultural Chief Scientists (MACS), **science-based decision making**, in conjunction with **farmer and indigenous innovation**, must be the foundation for the adoption of climate smart technologies and practices for sustainable agriculture and global food productionⁱ.
- Since crops, livestock and production forest dominate the world’s land area, agricultural systems must be advanced that **increase both production and production efficiency** per unit of land and water; that **meet the food and nutrition needs of the future**; and that also **greatly enhance ecosystem health** by regenerating soils, watershed and habitat for biodiversity at scale, while serving as a critical sink for greenhouse gasesⁱⁱ.
- As reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, we should **mobilize innovation across all elements and participants in the food and agriculture system**, unlocking solutions that meet the whole set of production, environmental and social well-being outcomes, rather than relying on predetermined technologies, production types or design components.
- **Adaptation strategies will require system approaches**ⁱⁱⁱ that utilize a combination of improved efficiency, substitution (e.g. new crop varieties and breeds), and redesign/system transformation to reflexively respond to continuous short- and long-term changes in climate’s impacts on cultivated and natural ecosystem conditions.
- Climate smart agriculture knowledge and recommendations from farmers, businesses and peer- reviewed academic research **must be integrated into processes and investments**.
- **Context-specific priorities and solutions** must be aligned with national policies and priorities, be determined based on the social, economic, and environmental conditions at site (including the diversity in type and scale of agricultural activity), and be subject to evaluation of potential synergies, tradeoffs, and net benefits^{iv}.

In closing, I urge you reflect on the following question- “How do we take the examples of those people who have successfully built resilience over years and use it to help train willing people who haven't and who want to?”

We all must become more adaptable and open to change. We must learn from those who have experience. Farmer to farmer mentoring is a valuable tool for solution building.

We must become more effective in communicating to the world the value of farmers and ranchers. Our societies are confused. The basic principles of existence are under pressure. The steady rhythms of food production are crucial the understanding our challenges and finding solutions. Thank you for listening and carefully considering our recommendations.

ⁱ G20 Japan. *8th Meeting of Agricultural Chief Scientists (MACS) Communiqué* [Press Release]. (2019). Retrieved from <http://www.affrc.maff.go.jp/docs/press/attach/pdf/190427-3.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Campbell, B. M., Thornton, P., Zougmore, R., Van Asten, P., & Lipper, L. (2014). Sustainable intensification: What is its role in climate smart agriculture? *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, *8*, 39-43.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tittone, P. (2014). Ecological intensification of agriculture—sustainable by nature. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, *8*, 53-61.

^{iv} North American Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance (2015). *A platform for knowledge sharing and application of climate science to agriculture* [Report]. Retrieved from: https://www.sfldialogue.net/files/sfl_formation_plan_2015.pdf