



General approaches to address agriculture in the UNFCCC¹

Climate Action Network-International (CAN-International) is the world's largest network of civil society organizations, with more than 700 members in over 90 countries, working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis.

The importance of agriculture

- Global food production is threatened by climate change. Smallholder farmers produce the majority of the world's food, and they are extremely vulnerable to climate change, therefore food security of the majority of the world's population is threatened.
- Globally, agricultural activities associated with intensive high input industrialized agriculture, contribute a significant percentage of greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy goals

Thus, to the greatest extent possible, policies at all levels should be designed and implemented to meet four goals:

1. Sustainably reduce emissions from the agricultural sector;
2. Reduce emissions from the conversion of other land to agriculture;
3. Maintain or increase the security of food supplies;
4. Enable small-scale food providers and other vulnerable populations to become more resilient to climate change.

Guiding principles

Countries agreed in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to prevent dangerous climate change: to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner. These agreements require adherence to the following principles in order to be effective:

- In order for small scale farmers to be able to adapt and to build their adaptive capacity, they must be enabled to practice farming systems that are resilient to long term climate change, biodiverse and that strengthen the ecosystems of which they are part. This form of agroecological smallholder farming and other forms of sustainable, ecological and climate resilient food production should be promoted.
- Climate policies that encompass agriculture must include safeguards that protect and promote biodiversity, equitable access to resources, food security, the right to food, and the rights of indigenous peoples and local populations, while promoting poverty reduction and climate adaptation.
- Systems of biodiverse and resilient agriculture need to be developed, demonstrated, tested, and implemented to transform many currently unsustainable agricultural systems into ones that

¹ Conservation International, the Environmental Defense Fund, and The Nature Conservancy do not endorse this position.

improve the health of ecosystems, communities, and cultures, even in the face of a changing climate.

Strengthening climate-resilient agriculture through the UNFCCC

- Climate policies relating to agriculture should be in line with the guiding principles identified above, and take into account recommendations from relevant international institutions including the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development (IAASTD) amongst others.
- In the current UNFCCC agenda, there is scope to address issues related to agriculture within the items under adaptation, technology, mitigation, LULUCF, REDD+, and flexible mechanisms. Parties should utilize these agenda items – and potentially others – to address important issues like accounting, MRV, policy frameworks to promote capacity-building and biodiverse and resilient agricultural systems, and preparing vulnerable populations for climate change.
- There is significant uncertainty in the quantification of emissions by sources and removals by sinks in the agriculture sector. In the light of this uncertainty the use of agriculture to offset industrial emissions is not appropriate, and it is not possible to reliably assess payments made solely on the basis of carbon sequestered.
- Specific areas of uncertainty include soil carbon sequestration, which has a high degree of uncertainty in regards to potential to store carbon, a lack of data and measurements and that soil carbon content can be highly variable depending upon elements including fires, strong winds, droughts, pests, and human activities such as change in land management practices and deforestation².

Recommendations for the UNFCCC

- Developed countries must progress toward full and comprehensive accounting of the emissions associated with agricultural activities, including bioenergy production and use.
- For developing country agriculture the priority should be adaptation, rather than mitigation, and Parties must provide resources for promoting biodiverse and resilient agriculture and appropriate technology development and transfer.
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² <http://www.csiro.au/files/files/pwiv.pdf>