

Recommendations by the **Climate and Development Commission** for the Paris conference on climate change

 November 30th - December 11th 2015, Paris (France)

FAMILY AND SMALLHOLDER FARMERS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE: TIME TO WAKE UP!

Globally, family farmers¹ are able to ensure the food and nutritional security of a growing population while also preserving national resources and dealing with climate change. As of today, nearly 800 million people suffer from chronic hunger; 600 million more will do so in 2080 if we continue to emit greenhouse gases (GHGs) at our current rate.

Agriculture, soil and land are particularly vulnerable to climate change. They account for nearly one quarter of all GHG emissions, but can contribute to reducing the existing atmospheric concentration of those gases. Not all types of farming emit the same amount of GHGs, however: industrial agriculture and agriculture that makes heavy use of chemical inputs, fossil fuels and capital emit far higher levels of GHGs.

In 2011, the countries that are stakeholders to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) finally agreed to begin focusing on the issue of agriculture. As development actors working with smallholder organisations and small producers in Southern countries, whose positions are echoed by Coordination SUD's member organisations, we call for smallholder family farmers to be placed at the heart of the UNFCCC discussions on farming. Based on the IPCC's latest report, we also believe that those discussions should deal with food security, as well, especially so as to address the challenges that climate imbalances pose for the right to food².

¹ <http://www.coordinationsud.org/nos-positions/agriculture-alimentation/agriculture-familiale/>

² Cf. [Hunger: The Other Face of Climate Change. International Conference of Civil Societies on the Climate Agreements](#)



1 For open and transparent negotiations

1. Allowing for direct and indirect involvement of civil society organisations, in particular those of smallholders

Family farmers in developing countries represent the vast majority of the world's 500 million farmers, and are the first people affected by climate change³. Although smallholder organisations are "represented" within the UNFCCC's Farmers' Constituency, it is essential that their participation grow and be reaffirmed. It is also essential that consultation and capacity-building systems be implemented at national level in order to incorporate the smallholder organisations' viewpoints in the positions taken by their countries (in alignment with article 6 of the Convention⁴).

2. Placing smallholder organisations at the heart of SBSTA's agriculture work programme

Since 2011, the UNFCCC's scientific and technical body, SBSTA, has undertaken discussions and consultations on a dedicated work programme. It rapidly became apparent, however, that differences of opinion between countries would make the adoption of an agenda on agriculture difficult. The agenda therefore remained "blocked" until June of 2014. At that point, SBSTA launched a work programme, focusing on four themes⁵. The conclusions of that work should feed into the COP21 and 22 negotiations. That being said, in order to remain relevant, this agriculture work programme must be built from the bottom up and take into account the reality of local smallholders, which is far from the case today.

SBSTA's agriculture workshops: a slow process that does little to tackle the real challenges

The first two SBSTA workshops on agriculture took place in June 2015⁶. The first focused on early warning systems and contingency plans to deal with extreme events; the second on risk analysis and the vulnerabilities of agricultural systems to various climate change scenarios. In the first workshop, few countries recalled the importance and difficulty of implementing services/alerts useful to crop and livestock farmers. No specific analysis measured the degree to which climate-related information/early warning systems are used, or the impact they have on adaptation capacities and the reduction of food insecurity. The discussions therefore still do not sufficiently reflect the needs of family farmers in developing countries. In the second workshop, little mention was made of the need for analyses of weaknesses or of participatory and differentiated capabilities, especially as regards gender. No analysis was presented on the various vulnerabilities arising from different agricultural systems, despite the fact that that is a key question. Such analyses, however, could have helped make progress in the debate about which agricultural models the UNFCCC should endorse to reduce emissions and promote adaptation. Finally, neither civil society nor smallholder organisations were invited to participate in the debate.

3. Strengthening synergy between the various forums of governance

Better coordination between forums of governance that work on agriculture and climate is essential. In particular, this is true of the link between the UNFCCC and the two other Rio Conventions (on Desertification and Biodiversity), as well as of strengthening the links between the UNFCCC and the Committee on world Food Security (CFS), both at the level of the involved international organisations as well as that of States Parties. Consistency between these different forums will be particularly important in the coming years, with the CFS needing to deal with "sustainable agricultural systems" in particular.

Where do family farmers fit into the "4 per 1000 Initiative"⁷?

Smallholders produce 70% of the world's food, and have a central role to play in land development. It is therefore important for them to be closely linked to the development of this initiative. The "4 per 1000 initiative" cannot be limited to research and to large international organisations: any initiative intended to have an effect on both climate and agriculture must place family farmers at the heart of discussions and of implementation.

Is the concept of land degradation neutrality useful to family farmers?

As part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 15, target 15.3), land degradation neutrality (LDN) was adopted at the COP12 of the Desertification Convention in October 2015. That gives LDN a strong role to play in issues of land and land management, including agriculture. LDN is based on three elements: avoidance, reduction and rehabilitation.

What is new in this idea is that LDN makes direct reference to greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, as well as poverty reduction goals through sustainable management of ecosystems. Land and farming have thus been placed on the climate agenda. The issue of how to implement and finance this objective, however, has not been resolved. One idea being considered is the creation of a special fund, but this raises numerous questions.

Such a fund would be based on the mobilisation of private funding, in particular to allow private actors to restore large tracts of land; for smaller plots of land, the idea of microcredit is being discussed. How family farmers would be involved remains a complete mystery.

Land rights are critical to this: ownership of 68% of world farmland is claimed but not recognised⁸.

3 Hilal Elver, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food: [A/70/287](#), August 2015

4 <http://article6.rec.org/>

5 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2014/sbsta/eng/l14.pdf>

6 Cf. *Coordination SUD's submission to the UNFCCC's SBSTA Work Programme on Agriculture*, March 2015 ;

CCD Note, *Early Warning Systems and Information about the Climate: A Key to Long-Term Resilience*, May 2015

7 Cf. CCD and C2A Note: « *4/1000 Initiative* »: *Caution!*, October 2015

Initiative website: <http://4p1000.org/>

8 ILC <http://www.landcoalition.org/fr>

2 Promoting agricultural models that respond to the challenges of food security and climate change

We cannot avoid the issue of the differentiated impact that agricultural models have on GHG emissions and ecosystems, nor can we avoid the issue of differentiated capacities for adaptation.

1. Putting agricultural models in perspective and supporting the agroecological transition

Agroecology constitutes an efficient, resilient and sustainable model of production that meets the challenges of both adaptation and mitigation. The many benefits of this knowledge-intensive approach have been proven on the ground⁹. Practiced on smallholder family farms, agroecology helps make best use of the potential of ecosystems and of natural biomass cycles, as well as of land management, broken down into its different environmental, social and economic components. This then favours the autonomy of local populations and the preservation of natural resources. It also helps reduce the use of synthetic inputs and increases carbon sinks in the organic soil and biomass matter, thus reducing GHG emissions.

Paradoxically, industrial agricultural models are more and more present and even encouraged in emerging and developing countries. They are very heavy GHG emitters, however, because the entire sector uses a lot of synthetic inputs, fossil fuels and water. They are also one of the causes of deforestation in the South, which is responsible for a significant share of land-related GHG emissions.

A distinction must therefore be made between these different models¹⁰. Amongst other things, the SBSTA work programme must underline that mitigation efforts have to focus on the agricultural sector that emits the most and must target industrial farming, in particular in developing and emerging countries.

⁹ [Agroecological innovations in a context of climate change in Africa](#), September 2015

¹⁰ Cf. [Position paper by the Climate and Development Network for the Bonn session, 19-23 October 2015](#), p.2

¹¹ <http://www.coordinationsud.org/wp-content/uploads/Fiche-ACSA-CCD-C2A.pdf>

¹² <http://www.climatesmartagconcerns.info/cop21-statement.html>

The Global Alliance for a Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA)

This international alliance, intended to promote climate-smart agriculture, was launched in September 2014 during the Climate Summit in New York. A large majority of civil society organisations, including the member NGOs of Coordination SUD, had strongly expressed their doubts about this Alliance¹¹. One year later, 355 civil society organisations from around the world denounced an agenda that was mainly established to green agribusiness activity¹² and that of "business as usual".

Some of the major criticisms of this Alliance are as follows:

- ▶ There are no criteria nor are there any social or environmental standards framing the promoted practices;
- ▶ Distinctions between agricultural models and their needs are not identified;
- ▶ The actors involved do not respect a North/South balance;
- ▶ No monitoring and evaluation mechanism has been set up within the Alliance;
- ▶ The reference to human rights leaves much to be desired.



2. Accompanying sustainable adaptation of family farmers

In addition to financial support, smallholder family farmers must be supported in their efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change, starting with those in least developed countries.

► Via the widespread distribution of adaptation practices

Improvement of sustainable farming practices and agroecology are essential to allowing smallholder farmers to adapt. This includes the development of agroforestry; efficient and fair practices of management and resource conservation, in particular of water and land; a good link between crop and livestock farming, etc. These improvements must be accompanied by access to seasonal and multi-annual weather forecasts in order to allow smallholders to deal with the ever more uncertain climate. Additionally, strengthening capacity-building of smallholders and local authorities is essential, both as regards analysis and management of climate-related risks and as regards land planning. Access to appropriate and low-carbon storage infrastructure must also be developed. Finally, no lasting adaptation measure is possible without reducing inequalities, particularly those of gender, especially in terms of access to and control of resources.

► By taking better account of nutritional issues

The quality of agricultural output is affected by climate change. Indeed, growing wheat, rice or barley in a high-CO₂ environment can reduce the protein content of those grains by 10 to 14%, as well as their zinc and iron content¹³. This also concerns all the factors contributing to undernutrition (health care, access to water, hygiene and sanitation, gender, food security). The forecasts are alarming: if nothing is done to tackle the challenge of climate change, by 2050 the fall in available calories will cause child malnutrition to rise by 20%. Agricultural strategies must from the outset take into account their impact on nutrition and target those who are most vulnerable. Agricultural diversification strategies that encourage resilience of the most vulnerable and that ensure the promotion of the best crops from a nutritional point of view must receive support.

¹³ <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v510/n7503/full/nature13179.html>

¹⁴ http://www.avsf.org/public/posts/1424/fiche_innovation_avsf_equateur_parcage_eau_2013.pdf

<http://www.camaren.org/foro-de-los-recursos-hidricos/>

¹⁵ <http://www.jolisaa.net/>

► By sharing knowledge and good practices

Sharing concrete knowledge and experiences, including research results and smallholder knowledge and skills, is essential. This is based on a dialogue between smallholders (for example, as part of the "farmer field schools") and their organisations, civil society, research bodies, and agricultural development organisations.

Strengthening links between scientific research and smallholders could, for example, be done by involving them in agricultural innovation platforms at national and regional level^{14/15}. These could aim at strengthening and promoting the main agroecological principles of soil, water and landscape management, etc.

► Via structured policy responses

Adaptation to climate change and climate-related risks by family farmers in Southern countries requires links between agricultural and territorial policies, as well as ensuring they are consistent at different levels, from the national to the local. National adaptation plans have been defined in many countries, but too few of them have led to concrete action plans and implementation, notably due to a lack of financial resources and institutional support.

These policies must take into account the difficulties that the smallholders themselves have raised, by drawing up local adaptation plans (taking into account land-related problems) which are based on locally developed knowledge. These local action plans could, for instance, be fed by proposals from the agricultural innovation platforms mentioned above.



3 Making adaptation by smallholder family farmers a funding priority

1. Highlighting the vast potential of family farming

Smallholder family farmers have a strong potential to adapt to constraints imposed by the climate. They are also a source of innovation, both in terms of production methods as well as at social and institutional level. It is therefore necessary to make additional public funding available that is dedicated specifically to smallholder family farmers. It is also necessary to redirect certain farming subsidies to them, which currently promote highly polluting industrial agricultural models which are incompatible with the necessary changes.

This funding must serve to identify and replicate local knowledge and innovations (technical, social and institutional) in the field of adaptation. It must help improve climate forecasts and predictions, as well as help better evaluate vulnerabilities, in particular the factors of and evolutions in malnutrition. The Green Fund must include adaptation of smallholder family farmers as one of its priorities. This means creating a funding scheme that would allow local organisations to access it, and which would sustainably support proposed action.

2. Carbon markets: a false solution

Voluntary agricultural carbon offset markets are one of the false solutions that pose a threat to food security¹⁶. They have already led to the widespread acquisition of land and forests¹⁷. In addition to endangering the right to food, this type of project has sometimes been carried out at the expense of the land rights of local populations.

In addition, the way they work is not viable. Given the high transaction costs, unequal risk sharing (with risk mainly falling on small producers) and an often limited carbon revenue per hectare, the relevance of these types of projects for family farmers is far from certain. Finally, the strong uncertainty of demand for carbon credits and difficulty of access for small producers and local operators make this a very fragile funding mechanism, with few tangible results as regards mitigation.

The Green Climate Fund, agriculture and food security

Launched in 2011, the Green Climate Fund's goal is to transfer funds from the most advanced countries to those that are most vulnerable in order to implement projects to fight against the effects of climate change (50% of the funds will go to mitigation projects and 50% to adaptation projects). Commitments for the coming four years stand at 10.2 billion dollars (mainly as donations and loans). In addition to the weak commitment from countries to contribute to this fund, other doubts remain regarding the selection criteria of the accredited bodies, the facilitated access of the private sector to the Fund and the additional value it provides compared to public aid. The share of funding that could be dedicated to the agricultural sector is not defined even though that sector needs major support in order to carry out an agroecological transition. Big projects that allow for large-scale mitigation, which are still considered climate-smart, risk taking precedence over projects to support the adaptation efforts of smallholders who farm small plots of land.

16 C2A note no. 21: [The Fight against Hunger and the Effects of Climate Change: Beware of False Solutions!](#), 2015

17 Anseeuw, W., L. Alden Wily, L. Cotula, and M. Taylor, *Land Rights and the Rush for Land: Findings of the Global Commercial Pressures on Land Research Project*, ILC, 2012



This document was produced by the following member organizations of the Climate and Development Commission:

Action contre la Faim, Agrisud International, Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, Association la Voûte Nubienne, CARE-France, CARI, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, GERES, Gret, Oxfam France, Secours Catholique-Caritas France



Credits: AVSF

Coordination SUD is the French national platform of international solidarity NGOs. Founded in 1994, it brings together more than 160 NGOs active in the fields of humanitarian aid, development assistance, environmental protection, the defense of disadvantaged people's human rights and international solidarity education and advocacy.

14, passage Dubail 75010 Paris • Tél. : +33 1 44 72 93 72 • www.coordinationsud.org

The **Climate and Development Commission (CCD)** of Coordination SUD works to influence the strategies of the development actors, to pass on good practices and to influence international negotiations. It brings together about 20 international solidarity NGOs: 4D, Acting for Life, Action contre la Faim, Agrisud International, Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, Association la Voûte Nubienne, ATD Quart-Monde, CARE-France, Centre d'Actions et de Réalisations Internationales, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, Electriciens Sans Frontières, Fondation Energies pour le Monde, Fondation GoodPlanet, Groupe Energies Renouvelables, Environnement et Solidarités, Gevalor, GRDR, Gret, Initiative Développement, Institut de recherches et d'applications des méthodes de développement, Médecins du Monde, Oxfam France, Peuples Solidaires-ActionAid France, Planète Urgence, Secours Catholique-Caritas France, WWF.

Climate and Development Commission contact: **Vanessa Laubin, GERES**. Email : v.laubin@geres.eu

This document has been funded with financial support from the AFD.

The information and views set out in this document do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the AFD.

