



## Which public policies to promote adaptation of family farming to climate changes?

Family farming in the countries of the South is one of the sectors most directly affected and threatened by climate change. In the past ten years, the issue of adaptation, and especially of adaptation of agriculture, has become a big topic in national and international political agendas. Its importance in the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) bears witness to this, even though States have been evasive for the last few years about launching a specific work program on agriculture.



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It is within this context that, in 2017, the member organizations of Coordination SUD's Agriculture and Food Commission (C2A ) decided to produce a report on the issue of public policies and adaptation of family farms to climate change. Indeed, public policies will play a decisive role in the future when it comes to encouraging the implementation of strategies and adaptation options of family farms and of people in general. This issue of Notes of SUD summarizes this report, whose two aims are as follows:

- to take stock of i) the way in which adaptation of family farms to climate change is being incorporated into national climate policies and into agricultural policies of Southern countries, ii) the results obtained so far, and iii) the difficulties encountered;
- to draft recommendations to provide for better incorporation of these issues into public policies.



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Family farming plays a crucial role in the economic, social, ecological, and political balances of many Southern countries. At the same time, it is one of the sectors most directly affected and threatened by climate change, be it from the increased occurrence and intensity of climate events, or from underlying climate trends. For this reason, family farm capacity to adapt to current and future climate change is a fundamental challenge for these countries.

Generally speaking, farmers seek various objectives (income, food security, maintenance of soil fertility, etc.) and must deal with many constraints. Climate change aside, they already have to deal with many risks of an agro-environmental or socio-economic nature, and they must adapt to changes in their environment. Adaptation to climate change represents an extra objective that the farmers must incorporate coherently into their other objectives. The methods by which family farms and local populations can do this, in the form of adaptation options, are many in number and often complementary. They include adaptation of production systems, diversification of sources of income, constitution of reserves, concerted territorial management, and solidarity mechanisms. Whether or not these options are put into motion depends largely on the economic and social environment of these farms and of the public policies that are implemented.

### Consistency and linkage between climate and agricultural policies

It is against this backdrop that the increasing importance of climate issues, and especially that of adaptation, can be seen in national political agendas over the last 10 years.

However, there still remains much to be achieved in order to guarantee real consistency between climate and agricultural policies, as well as their effective linkage. This consistency and linkage largely depend on existing institutional measures and the extent to which States want and are able to guarantee this integration. The chances for good linkage are stronger when sectoral institutions are closely involved in defining the overall climate strategy, which can then fully incorporate the specificities and needs of the various sectors. Furthermore, the sectoral institutions feel more committed to then implementing the overall orientations by incorporating them into their own policies. As for linkage, it is better when the institution in charge of defining climate strategy is truly supported by the head of the executive branch, so as to guarantee real incorporation of climate issues into sectoral policies. Linkage is also facilitated when there is no competition among public institutions in the search for legitimacy of power and for access to national or international funding.

Sometimes, the international development cooperation institutions, agencies, and bodies are not helpful in meeting these needs for consistency, linkage, and absence of competition among public institutions. This is especially the case when they design and finance specific programs or projects just with one particular public institution.

Among the other difficulties encountered, we can also mention the frequently insufficient capacities of State expertise and of its ties with research. As for possible synergies between adaptation and mitigation, these are often recognized but still rarely lead to real mixed approaches. Furthermore, while there are many climate strategy and policy documents (or ones that have a climate dimension), their effective implementation is sometimes lacking or limited.



## Required support for family farming and agro-ecology

In some cases, incorporating climate issues into agricultural policies helps to reinforce the approaches based on agro-ecology and on family and peasant farming. However, this can also be a pretext for recycling options tied to the Green Revolution model and to support forms of large-scale capitalistic and wage-based agriculture.

In the future, improvement of the capacities of family farms to adapt to climate change will involve:

- on the one hand, the strengthening of such family farming and of its overall resilience via policies furthering fair and secure access to land and to natural resources, as well as access to markets and to lucrative and stable prices, or to financing of their investments;
- and, on the other, support for the transition towards agro-ecological systems, which are not only the most apt to increase the productivity and overall resilience of family farming, but also generate various positive externalities for all societies: food security, income and job generation, fight against climate change, biodiversity, preservation of natural resources, ecological balances, and healthy environment.

## Recommendations

Various recommendations can moreover be made so that the public policies contribute effectively to adaptation of family farms to climate change:

1. Incorporate climate objectives into agricultural and food-security policies, rather than design specific policies against climate change. This will help to avoid the risks of duplication, competition, and inconsistencies between the agricultural and food-security policy on the one hand, and what would be a specific climate policy on the other. Including such objectives must make it possible to draw on the technical capacities and skills that exist in the country's institutions. It will also avoid the pitfall of focusing excessively on climate problems to the detriment of the other economic, social, and ecological issues of agriculture.

2. Develop, prior to the incorporation of climate objectives into existing policies, a national climate strategy and action plan. This will be the occasion to define a national vision, an overall roadmap, and the role that each institution and sectoral or cross-sectoral policy will play. The existence of a specific reference institution on climate issues is a key element in defining and following up on such a national climate strategy. This latter must in particular ensure that the sectoral institutions are fully involved, guarantee the effective linking of various sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, and make sure interventions funded by international development cooperation agencies are consistent with one another.

3. Incorporate national climate strategy into a more overall strategy that guarantees complementarity and synergies among the actions carried out on behalf of the three Rio

Conventions (on biodiversity, desertification, and climate change).

4. Evaluate the political measures in support of family farming, in terms of their degree of contribution to adaptation to climate change over the long term.

5. Guarantee complementarity and consistency among the various measures related to climate change on the one hand, and among these measures, other measures dealing with agricultural policies, and the various sectoral or cross-sectoral policies on the other.

6. Strengthen local authorities and devolved State services, so that they fully incorporate climate objectives, thereby guaranteeing complementarity and consistency among the interventions of the various actors involved in the areas concerned.

7. Involve local populations, local stakeholders, and producers organizations in defining and implementing climate change adaptation policies, as much at the local as national level. This is a precondition for the effectiveness and sustainability of adaptation strategies.

8. Take into account gender in adaptation policies. This will involve guaranteeing equal participation in the definition and implementation of adaptation options, reducing gender inequalities, and—because of the crucial role of activities carried out by women—contributing to better effectiveness of adaptation policies.

9. Prioritize support for certain adaptation options for local populations, based on an evaluation of these options that includes various criteria: technical feasibility of the adaptation options, impact on farm autonomy, effectiveness, removal of obstacles (ability to facilitate the implementation of other options), economic efficiency, flexibility, differentiated impacts according to gender, institutional compatibility and feasibility, acceptability and capacity for ownership at the individual level and social level, capacity for generating co-benefits independently of adaptation to climate change, and potential for replicability and dissemination.

10. Give more priority to adaptation of family farms than to their contribution to mitigation. However, it is important to pay special attention to adaptation options that also contribute to climate change mitigation objectives. Adaptation-mitigation mixed approaches are likely to enable real synergies between these two aspects and to further acknowledgment of the positive role of family farms on ecosystems.

11. Combine various public-policy tools:

- all the policies helping to reinforce family farming overall;
- policies seeking to reduce climatic risks, especially through specific investments and territorial development plans;
- policies aimed at improvement of the economic and social conditions for adaptation, for farms and people: investment grants, regulations and norms (whose

development must include people's participation and ensure the norms' acceptability and viability), benefits from positive externalities (environmental services), appropriate trade policies, policies for management of land and natural resources (especially to guarantee that farmers can really benefit from the effects of investments encouraging adaptation as well as from sustainable common management of shared resources), and institutional and financial support for the dynamics of collective organizations;

- policies seeking to improve access to information, knowledge, and know-how that can further adaptation: weather forecasts and early-warning systems, forecasts of trends in climate and water resources over the medium and long terms (by including a variety of scenarios at the national level which ensue from the uncertainties about future trends), initial and continued training measures, and support-counseling measures;
- collective solidarity policies, including compensations through security nets and paying for the reconstitution of capital destroyed and of food stocks. Coordination SUD has certain reservations concerning individual insurance systems.

12. Make the research world a full-fledged partner. This joint work must enable:

- improvement of forecasts of climate trends and related phenomena;
- analysis of agrarian situations and evaluation of the vulnerability of people and territories;
- evaluation of adaptation options and of policies seeking to improve adaptation capacities;
- identification or design of innovations to further adaptation. It is important that research be based on participative research-action measures that help better identify farmers' needs, recognize their capacities for innovation, and test these latter under real-life conditions.

13. Fund the implementation of public policies that fully incorporate the issue of adaptation to climate change within the framework of coherent national approaches. Contribution from the international community must be higher than current levels. Change in the interventions by development cooperation institutions and agencies is also necessary, so that they fall fully in line within such coherent national approaches.



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