



Climate Policies in Agriculture: are they coherent with the development of family and peasant farming in the South?

Climate policies in the sphere of agriculture should ideally satisfy a dual objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the agro-industrial sector and adapting agriculture to the effects of climate change. In the countries of the North, the public policies regarding climate give priority to mitigation measures, with a focus on carbon storage techniques. But when it comes to developing family farming that is resilient to climate shocks and that guarantees food security of local populations, the measures needed are slow in coming.



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Agriculture as victim and perpetrator of climate change

Family and peasant farming represents 98% of the world's farms and produces 70% of the world's food. A very large proportion of producer regions are already starting to be strongly impacted by climate change, with droughts, extreme climate phenomena, and flooding all threats to harvests. Public development policies concerning climate and agriculture must thus be conceived together and coherently, so that local subsistence farming can adapt to these global disturbances.

Furthermore, large-scale industrial agriculture is a strong emitter of extremely polluting greenhouse gas (methane and nitrous oxide). At the global level, agriculture, deforestation, and other land uses are responsible for approximately 25% of greenhouse gas emissions.¹ If the entire food system is included, it accounts for one third of global greenhouse emissions! Agriculture is the biggest contributor to climate change after energy. It is thus essential that strong mitigation measures be adopted in the agricultural sector, in coherence with people's food security.

1. Cirad, *Changement climatique dans l'agriculture*

Development country priorities: adapting agriculture to fight food insecurity

In the Southern countries, which are often the ones most affected by climate change, the priority is adaption of agriculture. The sector is included in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). The question of climate change is taken into account in national development strategies, in national strategies on food security,² and of course in the Nationally Determined Contributions drafted before the adoption of the Paris Agreement.

A study on the Nationally Determined Contributions carried out by FAO shows that 100% of the least developed countries and 93% of the developing countries have emphasized the importance of financial support to achieve their objectives with regard to climate change.³ However, while Southern countries are developing a strategy for adaptation of agriculture, the financing from international financial institutions, which come from the Northern countries, give priority to mitigating climate change by promoting carbon storage in the Southern countries.⁴ While this admittedly allows them to meet their greenhouse-gas reduction commitments made as part of the Paris Agreement, it should be recalled that greenhouse gases have been emitted chiefly by the developed countries. Ignoring the issue of adaption of agriculture and instead giving priority to mitigation leads to climate policies incompatible with development: land grabbing, destruction of traditional food systems, privatization of seeds, deforestation, and others.

Climate policy incoherence in the agricultural sphere and opportunities to make them coherent

The silo mentality characterizes the way in which public policies in development, climate, and agriculture have been dealt with, as well as the way in which the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 have been implemented. For this reason, these various policies lack coherence and sometimes even have contradictory purposes. The objectives of climate change mitigation, especially in the land sector, must not be in opposition to food security.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): the opportunity to make climate and agricultural policies coherent?

One of the main reasons for the creation of the UNFCCC in 1992 was the issue of food production, as it was seen to be threatened by climate change. In 2015, the Paris Agreement made it possible to go further, by integrating food security as

one of the principles of the text.

In preparation of the adoption of the Paris Agreement during the COP21 in 2015, States had been invited to publish Nationally Determined Contributions to present their commitments to mitigation and adaptation in the various sectors. A study carried out by FAO shows that nearly all developing countries are proposing adaptation actions in agriculture.⁵ However, these initial Nationally Determined Contributions often do not specify the agricultural model given priority for adaptation. They must be revised between 2018 and 2020 so as to hone in on the objective of maximum warming of +2°C by 2100.⁶

Mitigation measures must also occur in agriculture. Indeed, 85% of Nationally Determined Contributions of the developing countries refer to agriculture and/or the land sector.⁷ The Paris Agreement provides for working out long-term strategies that must enable each State to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 in all sectors. Carbon neutrality implies that total emissions be equal to their absorption, through the carbon sinks formed by natural forests, for example. However, for many decision-makers, the idea of capture or compensation is included in that of neutrality.

The actions specifically focused on mitigation—or capture—present risks for human rights, for farmers' means of subsistence in the South, and for access to land. Measures such as bioenergy with carbon storage in the soil are increasingly emerging in the UNFCCC body, even though their effectiveness is far from having been proved. These "negative emission" technologies propose to capture the carbon existing in the atmosphere. However, the surface area required for this type of project leads to significant competition in access to land, and the socio-environmental consequences could be disastrous. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that between 500 million and 3 billion hectares would be needed to grow the biomass necessary to maintain climate warming under 2°C.⁸ In contrast, the current cultivated surface area around the globe spreads over 1.5 billion hectares, all crops combined.⁹ These risks, which are still potential, are the same as those presented by agro-fuels: deforestation, land grabbing, and food insecurity.

Is Climate Smart Agriculture incoherent with development?

Faced with the slow start to negotiations within the UNFCCC, many initiatives are emerging concurrently with official discussions, sometimes without framework or safeguards. For example, "Climate Smart Agriculture" has been developed by FAO and the World Bank since 2009, with three official objectives: to increase productivity of agricultural crops, mitigate agriculture's impact on greenhouse gas emissions, and promote adaptation of agriculture to the effects of climate change.

2. Coordination SUD, *Which public policies to promote adaptation of family farming to climate changes?* 2017

3. FAO, *Intended Nationally Determined Contributions: global analysis, key findings*, 2017

4. Coordination SUD, *Which public policies to promote adaptation of family farming to climate changes?*, 2017

5. FAO, *Intended Nationally Determined Contributions : global analysis, key findings*, 2017

6. The current commitments by States (in the form of Nationally Determined Contributions) represent only one third of the commitments required to meet the reduction objectives of the Paris Agreement.

7. FAO, *The agricultural sectors in nationally determined contributions*, 2016

8. IPCC, *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Cambridge University Press, 2014

9. FAO, *The state of the world's land and water resources for food and agriculture (SOLAW) - Managing systems at risk*, 2011 and CLARA, *Climate Action in the Land Sector: Treading Carefully*, 2017

Climate Smart Agriculture is a fuzzy concept that currently lacks exclusion criteria making it possible to prevent violations of rights, such as the right to food. The absence of clear definition enables this concept to encompass virtuous agro-ecological practices based on local knowledge as well as the diversification of crops and food-growing practices on the one hand, and the spread of GMOs that threaten people's food sovereignty on the other. There is no framework making it possible to eliminate land-grabbing practices, negative impacts on peasants' means of subsistence, indebtedness, or privatization of seeds.

A certain number of Climate Smart Agriculture promoters united within the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA) are big agri-business groups (Syngenta, Yara, McDonalds, Monsanto, etc.). The model they promote involves intensive use of phytosanitary products and heavy greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁰ There is also the fear that pressure to adopt Climate Smart Agriculture will lead to developing countries being obliged to transform agricultural systems based on family farming—even though these have not contributed to the problem—and to promote agro-industrial models to satisfy the economic interests of multinationals. If these practices spread, there is the risk that the agro-ecological transition which is required may be sidelined. Nonetheless, in 2017 GACSA made it onto the Action Agenda,¹¹ despite the absence of safeguards.

Agro-fuels : a false solution to fight climate change

For more than 10 years, agro-fuels have been presented by the agri-food industry and political decision-makers, especially in Europe, as a solution to fight climate change. Yet, their environmental and human toll has been catastrophic if we take into account the entire production cycle and their indirect effects on land use. For example, biodiesel emits 80% more greenhouse gas on average than the diesel it replaces, whether it be produced by vegetable oils such as French rapeseed or imported oils such as palm oil from Southern countries. In order to make up for the replacement of food crops by agro-fuel production in Europe, it is necessary to increase cultivated surfaces elsewhere in the world: this often

leads to forest destruction or to the grabbing of so-called untapped land.

European agro-fuels also represent a threat to food security. They lead to population displacement and the destruction of people's means of subsistence. Policies to support agro-fuels artificially push up global demand for agricultural commodities, which in turn increases price volatility on food markets. The consequences are dramatic for households in the poorest Southern countries, which may devote up to 75% of their budget to food.

The European Union must take the right decisions within the framework of the 2030 energy-climate package currently under discussion in Parliament. This set of legislative acts must enable the Union to reach its objectives with regards to energy and the fight against climate change by 2030.

Coordination SUD proposals

Base climate policies in the agricultural sector on food security and the right to food.

The coherence between public climate policies concerning agriculture and the achievement of objectives in sustainable development, food security, and human rights must be guaranteed. These policies can be found in the updating of Nationally Determined Contributions, which will occur between 2018 and 2020, and likewise in their implementation in the Green Climate Fund¹² and Agence Française de Développement projects.

The decision made at the COP23 to start up joint work between the UNFCCC scientific and technical body and the UNFCCC body in charge of implementation¹³ must make it possible to deal with the differentiation of agricultural models from the angle of the four pillars of food security (access, availability, quality, regularity) and to start up the necessary agro-ecological transition.

Involvement by peasant organizations and civil society in the UNFCCC must be guaranteed, so that open and transparent negotiations can be held. At the national level, the process of drawing up the determined contributions, as well as their



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10. Yara, *Pushing climate smart agriculture*, 2015 and Monsanto, *Driving Innovation in Modern Agriculture to Combat Climate Change*, 2017

11. The Action Agenda is developing concurrently with the UNFCCC and seeks to encourage and develop the initiatives of various types of actors, in order to show the actions already underway in the climate area. This brings up the question of governance and the role of the UNFCCC on the one hand, as well as of the framing of these multi-stakeholder initiatives and of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

12. A UN financial mechanism under the UNFCCC that carries out transfer of funds from the most advanced countries towards the most vulnerable countries for the setting up of projects whose goal is to limit the effects of climate change.

13. UNFCCC, Issues relating to agriculture - Recommendation of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, 14 November 2017

implementation, must be subject to consultation with civil society. At the local level, the right to consultation and to free, prior, and informed consent must be respected in all the phases of the projects, from design to implementation. Strengthen synergies between the work of the Committee on World Food Security, which is increasingly incorporating climate change, and the work of the UNFCCC dealing with the agricultural sphere and food security.

Start up the agro-ecological transition that is required, as an adaptation and mitigation solution

There must be a guarantee that funding is focused as a priority on family farming and agro-ecology. Agro-ecology has many social and environmental co-benefits: increase in soil productivity, improvement of food and nutritional security, adaptation to climate change, mitigation of climate change (reduction of dependencies on fossil energy and pesticides, and increase of carbon sinks), reduction of rural poverty, improvement in farmers' food sovereignty, preservation and maintenance of local biodiversity, and empowerment of smallholder peasants by promoting their local knowledge and experiences.

In any climate-related project, make respect of the rights of populations and the application of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT), which were adopted in May 2012 by the Committee on World Food Security, an absolute condition. The memo by the French Interministerial Group on Food Security concerning climate change and food security advocates implementation of the VGGT in any agricultural project encouraging the practices of carbon storage in soils.¹⁴ Neutrality in greenhouse gas emission should as a priority be achieved through a drastic reduction of emissions and rounded out by greenhouse gas capture that respects the preamble of the Paris Agreement.

Concerning agro-fuels, the EU has the opportunity to vote and implement policies that can take up the challenge of development and climate change. It must support only energies that do not compete with food production and that respect a binding set of criteria in environmental and social sustainability. It must draw lessons from the past, by strictly supervising the promotion of so-called advanced agro-fuels. France, which has constantly blocked reforms at the European level in recent years, must make the right choice for the climate by:

- opposing all new binding objectives for renewable energies in transport that would favor the use of first-generation agro-fuels;
- supporting the total abandonment of agro-fuels produced from food byproducts and food crops from 2020;
- supporting truly "advanced" agro-fuels derived from waste and residue, the production of which is not in competition with that of food;
- supporting the adoption of a full and binding set of criteria in environmental and social sustainability for all bioenergies.

14. French Interministerial Group on Food Security, *Face au changement climatique, l'agriculture au profit de la sécurité alimentaire*, 2016

Coordination SUD
Solidarité Urgence Développement

This publication is produced by the Agriculture and food Commission (C2A) of Coordination SUD

As part of its mission to support the collective advocacy of its members, Coordination SUD has set up working committees. The Agriculture and food Commission (C2A) brings together international solidarity NGOs working to realize the right to food and increase support for smallholder farming in policies that impact world food security: ActionAid France, Action contre la Faim, AEFJN, aGter, Artisans du Monde, AVSF, CARI, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, CFSI, Commerce Équitable France, CRID, Gret, Inter Aide, Iram, ISF AgriSTA, MADERA, Oxfam France, Secours Catholique-Caritas France, SOL and UNMFREO.

The C2A is in charge of the representation of Coordination SUD to institutions dealing with agriculture and food, such as the Interministerial Group on Food Security (GISA) and the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) for the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

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C2A publications are produced with the support of the AFD. The viewpoints expressed in this document in no way represent the official point of view of the AFD.

