

International Federation of Agricultural Producers

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Policy Brief on

Climate change and agriculture: farmers' point of view

A worldwide concern ...

Global warming has gained scientific consensus and has become a top priority for governments and people worldwide.

The international community is unanimous.

... for farmers

Agriculture is at the heart of climate change issues. Agriculture is at the forefront of the impacts and solutions to climate change. It is both a sector which **experiences the effects** of climate change and also has a huge **potential in providing answers** to mitigating and adapting to its effects. The role of agriculture is important and must thus be recognized as such.

Farmers have a key role to play in combating climate change through mitigation and adaptation

Mitigation aims at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. According to the Stern Report, Agriculture is responsible for 14% of greenhouse gas emissions. Mitigation is critical as inaction would lead to a risk of a rise in global warming over 5 degrees. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is achieved through renewable sources of energy such as biofuels and biomass, non food production such as non food crops and carbon storage through adoption of sustainable agricultural practices which contribute to carbon sequestration such as tree planting, methane digesters, wetlands and sustainable management of forests.

Adaptation refers to actions undertaken to help populations and ecosystems face changing climatic conditions. Adaptation measures include: change in agricultural practices towards sustainable ones, activity planning, crop choices, promotion of sustainable irrigation, early warning systems, experience new cropping systems, awareness raising and dissemination of research results on climate change impacts.

The impact of climate change on agriculture and farmers:

A deteriorated resource base which leads to pressure on natural resources (soil erosion, waterlogging, salinisation, land degradation, desertification, increased competition for water use, diminished biodiversity). Therefore, farmers' livelihoods are in danger.

The shifting polewards will hinder crop growth necessitating changes in crops or harvesting patterns and management practices. The consequences of global warming will hit the poor hardest.

Land degradation and desertification will be exacerbated. This has a double consequence:

- rural exodus (migration) and
- increased competition for natural resources leading to conflicts.

What is lacking for farmers?

- **Lack of knowledge on impacts of climate change on agriculture and farmers.** Given lack of local knowledge generation and dissemination on climate change impacts, specific predictions and adaptation are difficult. There is a lack of guidance on climate change adaptation and a lack of capital to put necessary adaptations into place. In particular, there is a lack of pro-poor farming research.
- **Lack of incentives from governments and the international community** for farmers to keep abreast of climate friendly farming technologies.
- **The lack of risk management tools related to weather damage**, in particular in developing countries. Indeed traditional insurance markets and informal insurance arrangements between farmers and community members in developing countries are inadequate in preparing for climate change. The establishment of crop insurance guarantee fund schemes by national governments to help farmers recover from losses and stabilize their incomes in a situation of increasing "climate vulnerability" should be promoted.
- **Incomplete policy frameworks** to address climate change impacts and adaptation measures: Government policy frameworks and regulation objective are inconsistent with climate change adaptation and mitigation goals.

Government Policy reforms to address climate change should include:

- **Internalizing climate vulnerability into agricultural policies. Setting up a clear national strategy and budgeting** predicted financial losses incurred by climatic events that will impact food security are needed. Foresight into farmers' needs by consulting with them will facilitate implementation of remedial programs.
- **Introducing tax benefits and stewardship programs** to stimulate farmers' initiatives to adopt more sustainable farming practices. In particular, **carbon credits to be paid to farmers** should be established.

The contribution of the research and development communities should include:

- The development of new technologies to face climate change and anticipate climate variability, in particular related to early warning systems.
- The development of sophisticated models for regional studies to adapt to possible changes i.e. further research on potential impacts of climate change on agriculture.
- The development of focused farm specific climate change information.
- The collection and dissemination of technology transfer projects, indigenous knowledge and farmer training programs to identify and scale up good management practices.
- Addressing and planning areas for research and development through partnerships between farmers and scientists e.g. research projects addressing energy harnessing techniques on the farm.

The international mobilisation

- The system of emissions quotas market, which does not include agriculture, is not sufficient to meet international commitments. However, the project mechanism system represents an opportunity for agriculture to contribute to climate change mitigation.
- Climate change loss and adaptation measures need to be integrated into development agencies financial agendas and activities as well as in poverty reduction strategies and development projects.
- Despite the existence of diverse **financial mechanisms** to support action against climate change, **improvements are needed for:**
 - * The use of the Least developed Countries Fund as a finance mechanism for adaptation by farmers to climate change effects.
 - * Direct access to UNFCCC funds by National Farmers' organizations. These funds are currently limited to national governments, parties to the Convention.
 - * Existing funds for other Multilateral Environmental Agreements could serve to benefit climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. This should be done through integration of climate change goals into projects aimed at combating related environmental concerns.
- There is a need to develop **synergies** between the three **UN Multilateral Environmental Conventions** namely the UNFCCC, the UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) and the CBD (Convention on Biodiversity), in order to maximize efficiency of use of financial, physical and social resources. Synergies need a particular focus on capacity building, information exchange, technology transfer and carbon emission reporting.

What needs to be done right now?

Actions have to be taken right now by governments and the international community to reduce global warming and the pressure on the environment. The future of the planet depends on it and the future of agriculture in particular.

The first step to combat the impacts of climate change on agriculture is to recognize that **farmers** have a key role to play in **mitigation and adaptation**. They are part of the solutions.

Climate change has a real economic impact on agriculture and therefore on farmers and rural communities. They cannot face this situation without **support**.

The establishment of **risk management tools** to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change for farmers is essential.

Farmers should receive **carbon credits** for their contribution to climate mitigation through carbon sequestering activities. These carbon credits would provide farmers with an alternative source of income while promoting good agricultural practices.

It is important to **involve farmers' organisations** in decision making processes, the design and implementation of actions related to climate change strategies, and in developing farmer participatory frameworks.



This Policy Brief is drafted from the IFAP Policy Statement “Mitigation and adaptation to climate change effects: the role of farmers” available on the IFAP website at:

http://www.ifap.org/en/publications/documents/PolicyStatement_ClimateChange_Eng.pdf

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IFAP is the world farmers' organisation representing over 600 million farm families grouped in 115 national organisations in 80 countries. It is a global network in which farmers from industrialised and developing countries exchange concerns and set common priorities. IFAP advocates farmers' interests at the international level since 1946 and has General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. **www.ifap.org**