

POLICY

CLIMATE CHANGE AND AGRICULTURE



WFO's key recommendations to transform agricultural productivity and resilience for food security in the face of a changing climate

Understand agriculture is Unique.

Greatly increase financing and investment.

Develop strategies for resilience and risk management.

Recognise and reward multiple benefits.

Promote productivity and emissions intensity for mitigation.

Adopt a farmer-centric, gender-sensitive approach.

Pursue integrated, harmonised processes.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. Farmers and foresters are on the frontline of this change as the lives and livelihoods of those who feed, clothe and fuel the world are directly affected by a changing climate and weather extremes.

At the same time, agriculture is expected to meet the future needs of a more urban and affluent population of 9 billion by 2050. Consequently, agricultural production will need to increase significantly. Along with food, global demand for water, energy and land will also increase, putting additional pressure on the world's natural resources and threatening the very ecosystems we rely upon.

Whilst often described as part of the problem, the WFO believes that **agriculture holds the key to a number of solutions**. Annual GHG emissions from global agricultural production alone have been estimated at 13% of the world's total. Additional emissions are associated with land use and land-use change activities¹. However, the agricultural sector also holds significant mitigation potential, from both an enhancement of removals of greenhouse gases, mainly through active forest management, afforestation and reduced deforestation, and soil management, as well as a reduction of emissions through improved crop and livestock management. There are additional gains to be made by making agriculture more resilient to a changing climate.

The international Paris Agreement of 2015 responded to the scale of the challenge ahead². It recognised "the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and the particular vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impacts of climate change". It mandated an increase in "the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production."³

Agriculture's ability to sustainably increase food production in all countries to feed a growing world population is critical for the success of the Paris Agreement. Article 4 of the Agreement establishes the important principle that emission reductions should be undertaken on the basis of equity and cost efficiency, and in the context of sustainable development. The global transition towards a low-carbon economy constitutes a radical change and farmers on the frontline of climate change, are at its heart.

¹ including deforestation and urbanisation

² Other measures in the Paris Agreement include; to peak greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and achieve a balance between sources and sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century and to keep global temperature increase "well below" 2°C and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C

³ Article 2.1b

To enable the global community of farmers represented by the WFO to make its contribution to the successful implementation and achievement of the ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement, and of Sustainable Development Goal 2 for zero hunger by 2030⁴, we call for:

1 RECOGNITION THAT AGRICULTURE IS UNIQUE

Agriculture is fundamentally different from other sectors of the global economy. Greenhouse gases are emitted from inherently variable, biological processes linked to agricultural production. Consequently, mitigation potential is limited as the impacts of innovative technological gains are likely to be constrained by biology. Inter-annual variability and uncertainty give rise to a limited accounting framework which does not effectively capture the progress made by farmers. The diversity of farming systems differentially affected by climate change means there is 'no one size fits all' solution to meeting the climate challenge. Finally, there are no simple technological substitutes for agricultural production unlike the displacement of fossil fuels by renewables. This means that we need:

A new and different policy approach to the other economic sectors, which recognises agriculture's uniqueness and safeguards food security, to be advanced through international negotiations;

A robust evidence base to build confidence in a fair and balanced approach when considering interventions which involve agriculture.

2 A STEP-CHANGE IN THE SCALE OF FINANCING AND INVESTMENT, ESPECIALLY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Funding for agriculture has been neglected by national budgets for decades and investment in research and development, extension services, affordable credit and infrastructure has been eroded. The need to transform productivity and stimulate high quality production and resilience in particular in developing countries and for rural women farmers, requires a long-term financial commitment to a balanced portfolio of activities including:

Funding for research programmes e.g. on carbon storage in soils, animal and plant breeding, to promote greater understanding and practicalities of methane and nitrous oxide mitigation methods, to unlock the potential of rain-fed agriculture and a greater focus on pro-poor farming research;

Investing in future-proofed rural infrastructure, resilient to climatic extremes and technology-ready;

Recognising and maintaining agriculture as a high priority within global funding mechanisms e.g. Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund programmes;

Innovative financial mechanisms to develop and then facilitate innovation and the transfer of clean technology at a price and scale appropriate to national circumstances. The technology and capacity development efforts under the Convention should be strengthened.

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2>

The development of accessible and robust market-based mechanisms which are cost-effective for farmers;

A gender-responsive approach in financing initiatives which are effective and efficient in promoting the socio-economic empowerment of women farmers to address the historic neglect of the role of women

3 **AMBITIOUS STRATEGIES AND ACTION TO IMPROVE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE AND MOVE FROM CRISES TO RISK MANAGEMENT**

With increasing climatic vulnerability, there is a need to develop national risk management response strategies coupled with financial mechanisms to build capacity for action and to manage business risk in a changing climate. This includes measures to:

Improve preparedness e.g. weather prediction, early warning systems, awareness-raising campaigns, local knowledge of adaptive actions and mainstreaming adaptive decision-making;

Financial measures such as crop insurance and/or guaranteed fund schemes

Support recovery after crises when a rapid response will be critical for farmers trying to get their lives and businesses back on track;

Ensure that agriculture receives adequate water allocation alongside developing tools to manage water resources for multiple uses and building the resilience of agricultural land to flooding and drought.

4 **A FOCUS ON IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND EMISSIONS INTENSITY TO DELIVER MITIGATION**

Farmers are committed and willing partners in the fight against climate change by making a realistic contribution to the global effort to reduce emissions. However, the uniqueness of emissions from the agricultural sector means that adopting an emissions intensity approach⁵ through productivity improvements is required. Resource efficiency is the key to increasing productivity whilst lowering emissions.

As some countries develop a price on carbon, whether through a tax, emissions trading system or combination of the two, competitiveness for farmers may increasingly become an issue if costs for inputs and costs of doing business rise in some jurisdictions but not in others. Therefore, consistency and harmonization in the implementation of the Paris Agreement is needed across countries in order to ensure that some farmers are not placed at a competitive disadvantage through carbon pricing.

In recognition of the diversity of the world's farmers and farming systems, measures should be site-specific, and practical, delivering improvements in both productivity and resilience on all farms. This approach should not favour one farming system over another, rather that each farmer be the best that he/she can be.

⁵ And/or suitable proxy indicators

5

RECOGNITION AND REWARD FOR FARMERS FOR THE RANGE OF GHG (AND OTHER) BENEFITS PROVIDED BY AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

Agriculture holds significant additional mitigation potential as a result of its capacity to sequester carbon and to contribute to reduced emissions in other economic sectors. To incentivise farmers to deliver this potential we want to see:

The introduction of voluntary schemes, at scale, which reward farmers for implementing practices that foster the storage of carbon in soils;

Recognition of the contribution which all the land-based renewables make to decarbonising the global economy;

The carbon benefits of agroforestry and farm-scale woodlands recognised and adequate carbon accounting schemes are in place.

Support for sustainable bio-energy as it represents an additional market opportunity alongside diversifying risk for farmers, and its source recognised in GHG accounting rules;

Support for adoption of innovative technologies and management practices that improve productivity while reducing GHG emissions intensity.

6

A CREATIVE AND POSITIVE, FARMER-CENTRIC, GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH TO BUILD CAPACITY

To enable farmers to make a significant contribution to sustainable and rural development for lifting millions of rural people out of poverty, we want to see:

The establishment of effective and truly collaborative multi-stakeholder partnerships with farmers, foresters and farmers' organisations at the centre, involved in the development of policies and programmes and the subsequent implementation, monitoring and evaluation;

Recognising farmers' associations and cooperatives as key partners enabled to benefit from mechanisms to provide services to individual farmers;

Investing in farmers to build knowledge and capacity and by fostering and supporting extension services, including;

Tailor-made programmes should identify the needs of vulnerable people in both rural and urban communities, and adopt the options and priorities set by them;

Address gender inequalities as women farmers are key drivers in the development of sustainable agricultural practices that provide food and renewable materials for their families, communities and markets. It is important that adaptation and mitigation strategies, initiatives and policies take into account that climate change affects men and women differently, particularly rural women farmers and their children.

The harnessing of local expertise and capacities through wider stakeholder engagement;

Supporting and expanding partnerships between farmers and scientists on research and development;

Encourage young men and women to be the farmers of the future and support them to invest for the long-term by developing sustainable practices for their particular situations.

7

AN INTEGRATED, HARMONISED AND EQUITABLE PROCESS AT ALL SCALES

To deliver economic, environmental and socially sustainable farming systems and food security, there is a need to ensure that:

The integral role of fair and accountable trade rules are recognised as enablers of climate change mitigation and adaptation which promotes food security and sustainable development. Trade and climate agreements should reinforce each other, with trade offering the opportunity to lessen the negative impacts of a changing climate on global food security;

The principles of climate smart agriculture are supported, to sustainably increase agricultural productivity and incomes; adapt and build resilience to climate change; and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, where possible;

The multiple benefits of good agricultural practices for a range of ecosystem services are recognised and farmers rewarded;

The supply chain operates fairly and equitably, so that risk and reward are shared throughout the chain;

A supportive regulatory and policy environment exists at all levels;

The water-food-energy nexus, with agriculture at its centre, is better understood at all levels so that policies, institutions, markets and industries are better connected.

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