

## Background

A complex, two-way relationship exists between climate change and agriculture, because agriculture is regarded as both part of the problem of climate change, but also part of the solution. Climate change is modifying the productive capacity and intensity of agriculture, as well as the locations apt for production. Experts anticipate transformative impacts, outbreaks of new pests and diseases and other changes that will affect living conditions in rural territories and pose a challenge to food and nutrition security as well as livelihoods. At the same time, agriculture and human activities in rural areas can either increase or help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and thereby impact global warming.

Specialists affirm that climate change is intensifying climate variability, as reflected in more frequent or intense natural hazards such as

droughts, floods, and hurricanes. These natural threats constitute important risk factors that have the potential to cause major economic losses and damage, with the agriculture sector and rural areas oftentimes hard-hit.

For these reasons, agriculture has a critical role to play in climate change, and many measures taken in the sector can contribute to both adaptation and mitigation. This is often reflected in the prioritization of the sector in national climate change action plans. Nonetheless, many challenges have yet to be addressed to ensure that the sector can play a significant role in addressing climate change, such locating sufficient financing for the implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies, access to technologies, and the development of capacity in countries to enable them to carry out their plans.



1 For the purposes of this series, the term “agriculture” encompasses crop farming, livestock production, forestry, fishing, and aquaculture.

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This series of four technical notes seeks to support the work of the negotiators from the agricultural sector and other interested parties in relation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The notes explain how a more active and informed participation in the international climate negotiations could benefit the agriculture sector.

The first note provides general background on the UNFCCC and how it is linked to the agriculture sector; it also provides references of interest, acronyms, and advice from some current negotiators involved with the sector.

The second note describes the Convention's structure, including its subsidiary bodies, committees (Adaptation, Finance, and Loss and Damage), and the special working groups linked to the agriculture sector.

The third note describes the reporting processes that countries are undertaking to inform the Convention of the progress being made with regard to mitigation, adaptation, capacity building,

and financing, such as national communications, biennial update reports (BURs) and intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs).

The fourth note describes three of the different financial and technical assistance mechanisms available.

A key year for the negotiations, 2015 saw the adoption of a new climate agreement, with both developed and developing countries contributing to the global effort to reduce GHG emissions, taking into account common but differentiated responsibilities. In this context, it is vital for agriculture to be part of this process and for the decisions adopted to result in a positive impact on national societies and economies, especially in the case of developing countries. It is thus important for the people involved from the agricultural sector to gain a more in-depth understanding of the processes, and for decision-makers to be aware of the implications of the mitigation and adaptation measures that each country has designed, or intends to design in the future, as the actions implemented will very likely have a decisive impact on the development and practices of the agriculture sector.

## Other resources

**UNFCCC Handbook.** Developed by the Secretariat of the Convention, this handbook provides an overview of the evolution of the negotiations, the structure of the Convention, and the processes, main issues, and stakeholders involved in the negotiations. It also discusses the implementation of the Convention.

<https://goo.gl/r2Ybxa>

**Intended Nationally Determined Contributions in the Caribbean: Where does agriculture fit?** These analyses, elaborated by IICA, look at how the agricultural sector was included in the INDCs submitted by the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean through April of 2016. It provides insight for understanding regional priorities for both climate adaptation and mitigation in agriculture and underscores the relevance of the sustained and articulated efforts needed to address climate change in the agricultural sector from the global to the local levels.

Caribbean: <http://goo.gl/2Qqss8>

Latin America (in Spanish) <http://goo.gl/H5LbwZ>

**Options for Agriculture in the 2015 International Climate Change Agreement.** Produced by DFID and Kibo Consulting, this document guides negotiators through the technical considerations they need to take into account, and possible ways of addressing the inclusion of agriculture in the UNFCCC negotiations.

<http://goo.gl/lxGxn>

**Agriculture and Climate Change: post-Durban issues for negotiators.** This brief note, produced by the IISD, explains where reference is made to agriculture in the results of the Durban conference, and summarizes the positions on agriculture submitted to the 36th session of the SBSTA, as well as several other agricultural issues that are of key importance for negotiators.

<https://goo.gl/Ap8o2s>

**Submission and information brief on agriculture.** Prepared by the FAO, this succinct outline describes how agriculture was addressed in the negotiations until 2010. The brief summarizes the key points on agriculture addressed at the COP 20 in Lima, and the issues on the current agenda that are important for the sector.

<http://goo.gl/Oz3NIg>

<http://goo.gl/IraSlq>

**Lessons for agriculture from REDD+.** Published by CCAFS, this document summarizes the history of REDD+ and explains how the lessons learned from that process can be used to help develop an international mechanism for mitigation in the agriculture sector.

<https://goo.gl/BTTo2g>

**Toolkit for the UNFCCC negotiations on agriculture.** Developed by CCAFS, CTA and Farming First, these tools are designed to promote knowledge, information, and support during several stages of a campaign aimed at highlighting the importance of agriculture in the climate change negotiations.

<http://goo.gl/ZARBzD>

**Agriculture and climate change: participation of Latin America's agriculture sector in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other international forums.** This technical note is a synthesis of the technical inputs prepared for the Regional Meeting "Strengthening of the Inter-American Dialogue on Agriculture and Climate Change," which took place in June 2014.

[http://infoagro.net/archivos\\_Infoagro/Ambiente/biblioteca/EN\\_Pendiente\\_NotaAgricu.pdf](http://infoagro.net/archivos_Infoagro/Ambiente/biblioteca/EN_Pendiente_NotaAgricu.pdf)

**The position of the Americas on agriculture within the agenda of the international climate negotiations.** This IICA brief provides an overview of how the SBSTA has dealt with the issue of agriculture in the past, and the viewpoints that countries in the region submitted to the SBSTA in 2013 on "the current state of scientific knowledge on how to enhance the adaptation of agriculture to climate change impacts."

<http://goo.gl/ziQepd>

**Agriculture in the climate change negotiations.** This technical note was produced as an input for the delegations that participated in the COP 18 in Doha.

<http://goo.gl/i7iizY>

**Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and opportunities created by climate change.** This note, prepared by IICA, assesses the implications for the agriculture sector of the agreements adopted at the UNFCCC's COP 17 in Durban.

<http://goo.gl/xr64ze>

## Acronyms<sup>2</sup>

English	Stands for
ADP	Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action
AF	Adaptation Fund
AILAC	Independent Association of Latin America and the Caribbean
Annex I	Annex to the Convention containing a list of Parties that are industrialized countries and Parties that are countries in transition toward a market economy.
Annex II	Annex to the Convention containing a list comprised mainly of countries that before 1990 belonged to the OECD and had a market economy, with the additional commitment of assisting the developing countries with financing and technology transfer.
AWG-KP	Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol – Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)
AWG-LCA	Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention
BR	Biennial Report (developed countries)
BUR	Biennial Update Report (developing countries)
CBDR-RC	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
CC	Climate Change
CMP	Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties of the Kyoto Protocol
COP	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
CTCN	Climate Technology Centre and Network
EGTT	Expert Group on Technology Transfer
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KP	Kyoto Protocol
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
L&D	Loss and Damage
LULUCF	Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry
NAMA	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
Non-Annex I Parties	Parts not included in Annex I of the Convention (mostly developing countries)
NWP	Nairobi Work Programme
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
TAP	Technology Action Plan
TEC	Technology Executive Committee
TNA	Technology Needs Assessment
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

2 This table is adapted from the list of acronyms contained in the Manual del negociador de cambio climático iberoamericano: hacia la consolidación del régimen climático internacional, produced by Libélula in September 2014 under the aegis of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Spanish Cooperation. The full document can be found at: <http://goo.gl/xIUyPH>

## Suggestions for new negotiators

*“If you are new, it is highly advisable that you attend the informal preparatory meetings organized during the official meetings. Then you will not have to “learn as you go” in the negotiations.”*

Eduardo Durand, Negotiator of Peru  
(Manual del Negociador, p. 123)

*“It is important to be familiar with the meeting agenda and identify the area under which the issue you are interested in will be negotiated. Read the general and annotated agendas, as it is important to read the documents used as the basis for the negotiation and this information can be found in the annotated agenda.”*

Angel Parra, former REDD+ negotiator from Paraguay

*“Get to know the Convention well - its structure and operation, the work programs of each of its bodies and the various advocacy mechanisms that are essential for devising an advocacy strategy. Technical expertise is not sufficient to guarantee success unless it is combined with other negotiating and positioning skills. To boost the agriculture sector’s role in climate actions, you must first define the political objective clearly, adopt a well-defined follow-up strategy, and identify options for advancing specific agendas, which also calls for groups of appropriate partners. The support of the ministries of foreign affairs is essential for continued systematic action and for monitoring progress, including a good interpretation of the countries that are likely to support or oppose the positions you wish to defend, to seek points that could be explored to begin negotiating.”*

Ricardo Ulate, member of the Official Delegation of Costa Rica to the UNFCCC

*“Do not try to cover, much less understand, every issue. Begin with one or two you are passionate about, and spend time gaining a thorough understanding of them and how they are related to all the other issues (you will see that everything is inextricably linked). Follow those issues in the negotiations and ask colleagues from your negotiating team or from other countries to cover and summarize what is happening with the other issues. Form strategic partnerships with countries with similar interests and positions. Progress can only be made by working as a team.”*

Christiana Figueres, former negotiator of Costa Rica and current Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC (Manual del Negociador, p. 64)

*“It is important to understand the views of the different ministries (agriculture, environment, foreign affairs). Personal relationships are very important. Get to know other negotiators to find out about their views, training, experiences and attitudes. Unofficial conversations are very useful.”*

Mark Manis, Negotiator for Agriculture, United States of America

## United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted in May 1992. Since then, 195 states have signed it. The Convention is the legal framework within which the Kyoto Protocol was approved in 1997, which 192 countries have since ratified.



3 United Nations. 1992. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Pg 9.

## Objective

The objective of the Convention is to achieve “the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.”<sup>3</sup>.

## Principles of the UNFCCC

There are three principles on which the parties to the Convention should base their actions:

1. *Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities*, reflected in the fact that developed countries tend to mitigation efforts. Special consideration must be given to developing countries affected disproportionately by the impacts of climate change.
2. *The precautionary principle* which refers to the need to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change.
3. Countries promote *sustainable development* and integrate climate measures into national programs according to the context.

## The parties to the UNFCCC

The UNFCCC is currently made up of 195 countries or parties, divided into two groups known as “Annex 1” (the most developed countries listed in Annex 1 of the UNFCCC), and “Non-Annex 1” (all the other countries).



## Composition of the UNFCCC

### Secretariat

- Administrative body of the UNFCCC
- It is responsible for the logistics of meetings, compiles and distributes statistical information, and supports the Parties in their efforts to fulfil their commitments under the Convention

### Parties

- Signatory countries
- Nearly every country in the world (Iraq and Somalia are the exceptions): 196 Parties
- Decisions taken by consensus
- Countries belong to various negotiating blocs:
  - G77, LDCs, AOSIS, EU, Umbrella Group, Environmental Integrity Group (EIG), Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CfRN)

### Observers

- Groups that can attend and speak, but do not take part in decision-making
- International governmental organizations (IGOs) such as UNDP, UNEP, WMO, IICA and OPEC
- 600+ NGOs representing industry, business, environment, local government, religious groups, indigenous peoples
- Climate Action Network (CAN)

**Annex I = Developed countries + Countries with economies in transition**  
41 countries

**Annex II**  
OECD countries (e.g., the U.S., Australia, Japan, EU members and others)<sup>4</sup>

**Non-Annex I = Developing countries**  
150 countries

**LDC**  
49 countries  
(e.g., Madagascar, Haiti, Cambodia)

<sup>4</sup> Annex II countries also belong to the Annex I group, however they have greater responsibilities for providing support to developing countries.

## What is the Conference of the Parties (COP) and what role do its subsidiary bodies play?

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the main meeting of the member countries (the Parties). The COP's duties are to:

- Make decisions related to the implementation of the UNFCCC.
- Assess the state of climate change and the treaty's effectiveness, study the parties' activities, and consider new scientific evidence in order to take maximum advantage of efforts to combat climate change.

The sessions of the meeting of the Parties that serve the Kyoto Protocol are also held during the COPs. At the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (Meeting of the Parties or MOP), decisions related to the Kyoto Protocol are negotiated and taken. The first meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol was held in 2005.







## How do the countries participate in the COP?

In general, each Member State takes part in the topics for negotiation established beforehand at the COPs and the meetings of the subsidiary bodies. A COP lasts two weeks: the subsidiary bodies (SBSTA and SBI) prioritize the technical issues during the first week and a half and then, on the last three days, high-level negotiations take place involving the ministers of environment or foreign affairs (depending on the institutional arrangements of each country).

In the technical meetings that are held first, the delegations are comprised of experts in each thematic issue, such as experts specializing in the mitigation of the impact of agriculture, changes in land use and forestry, energy, transportation, etc., as well as other experts in the adaptation of agriculture, legal and financial specialists, etc.

Participating in the COP, which meets once every year between the months of November and December, and in the inter-sessional meetings of the subsidiary bodies between May and June is very expensive for developing countries, which are often unable to send their experts. For that

reason, the Convention provides financing so that at least one delegate from each developing country (Non-Annex 1 countries), and sometimes as many as three, can take part in the meeting. The countries have to prioritize the issues they intend to negotiate, however, as they cannot address them all. The most economically powerful countries, on the other hand, send numerous delegations and can address dozens of negotiating issues that are dealt with simultaneously during the two weeks of the COP.

*A number of countries in the region, including Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Uruguay, have sent agriculture sector representatives to take part in several of the COPs, especially in the COP 20, held in Lima in 2014.*

Countries adopt cooperation strategies, coordinating their work in blocs or groups of nations that agree to cooperate in order to address the most important issues that will affect them.

A case in point is the G-77 + China, whose member countries coordinate their efforts and support one another in order to monitor the issues under negotiation. This group and its subgroups coordinate their work twice a day during the COP and subsidiary body negotiations. There are many formal and informal blocs with different approaches, including the Independent Association of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC) in which some of the countries of the hemisphere are involved, the regional group known as the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), and subregional groups such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Countries may send delegates specializing in issues that are of special importance to them. For example, for the REDD+ negotiations, each Latin American country sent an expert negotiator to deal exclusively with that issue.

### Why is the UNFCCC important for agriculture?

Article 2 of the UNFCCC states that emissions should be stabilized quickly enough to ensure that they pose no threat to food production. Unfortunately, the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report, published in 2013-14, highlights the negative impacts on agricultural productivity that have already been detected. Agriculture and food and nutrition security have a key role to play in

responding to climate change, in terms of both adaptation (how human beings can increase the resilience of agricultural systems to climate change) and mitigation (how GHG emissions can be reduced). The agriculture sector also suffers loss and damage caused by climate change, and for that reason is now a focus of discussion.

Several of the guidelines and support platforms for the agriculture sector are the result of the lengthy decision-making processes of the COP, described in other notes in this series.

The issue was assigned to the Subgroup on Sectoral Mitigation Approaches of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action between 2009 and 2011. At the COP 17 in Durban in 2011, the issue was passed to the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and there was an exchange of views at the SBSTA in 2012.

Numerous decisions aimed at developing mechanisms in support of adaptation processes that include the agriculture sector, such as the national adaptation plans, the loss and damage mechanism, the Consultative Group of Experts for Non-Annex 1 countries, and the NAMAs have been taken. Other support mechanisms include identifying sources of financing for the construction of plans or programs designed to raise awareness of the impact of climate change on sectors such as agriculture, and providing strategies for





making agriculture more resilient and capable of mitigating GHG emissions.

Funds have been allocated to national communications, which generate core data for inventories, vulnerability analyses, etc., thanks to the decisions taken at the COPs, as well as the technology transfer mechanism, which has become a platform for the exchange of knowledge between experts and specialized research centers in sectors that include agriculture. Some of the UNFCCC's clearest and most tangible impacts in the countries, especially the developing nations, are free access to technological instruments which enable them to develop adaptation and mitigation plans, and sources of financing for the implementation of such plans.

## The future

Given the sector's great sensitivity to climate change, the fact that it accounts for roughly 24% of global GHG emissions, and the possible synergies that exist between mitigation and adaptation actions in the sector, some countries have expressed increased interest in addressing agriculture in the climate change negotia-

tions in greater depth, especially from the perspective of adaptation. However, disagreements and other problems have slowed the process, because agriculture is closely related to international trade, food security, economic development, and poverty reduction. In the case of mitigation, technically sound, cost-effective methodologies are still needed to measure and monitor emissions and GHG removals in the sector, especially for soil carbon.

Although agriculture has not been a core focus of the UNFCCC negotiations hitherto, its profile in the international negotiations is growing thanks to the increasing emphasis being placed on the balance between mitigation and adaptation approaches, and the inclusion of the issue of loss and damage. There is now greater recognition of the key role that agriculture plays in food security, the rural environment, and national economic development. International opportunities have also arisen for collective action by the sector in parallel efforts such as the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA), the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) and the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA), among others.

The need to address the issue of agriculture is clearer than ever with the renewed commitment that

countries assumed after COP 21 in Paris at the end of 2015. The Paris Agreement, which will replace the Kyoto Protocol and enter into force (if ratified) in 2020, has increased the level of ambition for GHG mitigation in many countries. These goals are described in the national determined contributions (NDCs) most nations have submitted. The Paris Agreement has also more clearly defined the priority of addressing climate change to ensure food security and reduce vulnerability of food production systems.

The level of attention that each country dedicates the issue of agriculture within their mitigation targets and adaptation to climate change to the UNFCCC will be defined by the ratification of the Paris Agreement<sup>5</sup> by each nation as well as by the sector's inclusion in their NDC. In these contributions, countries have, according to their national context and abilities, defined their goals and contributions to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The NDCs must be updated every five years, demonstrating increasing ambition. A global stocktake will be conducted in 2023 and then every five years after that to assess the collective efforts made towards achieving the objective of the Agreement. It will also report on the actions and achievements of individual countries. In the Intended National Determined Contributions (INDCs) countries sent prior to the COP21, almost every country in the Americas included adaptation actions for agriculture, as well as mitigation actions that directly or indirectly link to the sector.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this, agriculture is a very complex issue and it will take time to decide how it should be addressed under the Convention, which could limit what is achieved through the Paris Agreement in the short term.<sup>7</sup> The negotiators will have to consider a

### Opportunities for the agriculture sector to participate

- Participate in delegations twice a year.
- Advise and support the negotiators that participate in the COP, offering them technical information and proposals, and suggesting points for them to raise in the negotiations.
- Participate in national technical meetings and prepare proposals.
- Draft national adaptation plans (NAPs) and sectoral nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMA).
- Apply, jointly with the National Designated Authority, for the technical and financial support available through the Convention.
- Participate in or sponsor side events and other "external" civil society forums, e.g., the Global Landscapes Forum.

series of key issues as the discussions on agriculture and climate change progress, but it is essential that agriculture not be excluded from fuller integration in the future, and that the decisions taken during the COP 21 help to promote national adaptation and mitigation strategies in the sector. Strengthening and consolidating the mechanisms described above, and mobilizing technical and financial resources could facilitate the inclusion of agriculture in the UNFCCC's processes. ■

5 The Paris Agreement will enter into force when it is ratified by at least 55 countries representing at least 55% of global emissions.

6 For more information, refer to the analyses of how agriculture was included in the INDCs of the Americas at the links below. Caribbean: <http://goo.gl/2QQss8> Latin America: <http://goo.gl/sSmHnO>

7 Kibo Consulting; UK Met Office Options for agriculture in the 2015 international climate. Evidence on Demand, UK (2014) 32 pp. [DOI: <http://goo.gl/jP4pRu>]



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