Agriculture, Natural Resources and Climate Change Program

IICA

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

SYSTEMATIZATION OF
THE TECHNICAL FORUM

May 2013

Implications of the COP 18 for **Latin American and Caribbean agriculture**

On March 20, 2013, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) held a Technical Forum in San Jose, Costa Rica on the implications of the UNFCCC COP 18 for Latin American and Caribbean agriculture. The key points of the presentations made during the event are summarized here.

With regard to the international negotiations, the speakers were agreed that the countries had yet to achieve a political consensus and define a joint position setting out the points on which a work plan on the issue could be based.

Agriculture in the international climate change negotiations[1]

Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

- The biggest achievement to date is the consensus that agriculture needs to be included in the international climate change negotiations. The challenge now is to determine how the issue should be addressed going forward, and how a working group on agriculture and climate change could be formed to contribute to the process.

- The developing countries are not in a position to assume agricultural emission reduction obligations, but opportunities could be identified that reflect the common but differentiated responsibilities of the industrialized and developing countries.

- A great deal of potential exists in Latin America and the Caribbean to capitalize on the diversity of views and positions and develop a unified\ regional position that could serve as an example for promoting consensus and encouraging other regions to support the initiative, and thus facilitate the political endorsement of the issues in the next round of negotiations.

- Agriculture needs to be addressed in two ways in the negotiations: adaptation to the effects of climate change and the sector's great potential for implementing actions to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

- The private sector must to be involved as it has a key role to play in guaranteeing the support required to encourage investments and the development of knowledge and capacity.

Christiana Figueres

[1] Watch Christiana Figueres' complete presentation at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMfY43buYmQ&feature=youtu.be

Costa Rica's experience with agriculture and climate change[2]

Tania López, Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Costa Rica

- The political and institutional conditions in Costa Rica made it possible to coordinate the efforts of the public and private stakeholders to develop the National Climate Change Strategy, set the nation's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2021, and reach agreement on a State Policy for the Agricultural and Rural Development Sector for 2010-2021, which includes the issue of climate change.

- The private sector in various parts of the country played a very important role in the implementation of the initiatives that are presented in the case studies[3] that the Government of Costa Rica presented at the COP 18 to demonstrate the importance of including agriculture in the negotiations. The examples presented met ambitious goals and highlight the fact that, despite being a developing country, Costa Rica is committed to promoting actions that reduce emissions in the agricultural sector.

- The cases highlighted from the private sector focused on emission reductions in production systems as well as processing and transportation for the sugarcane, dairy, and banana subsectors. The mitigation measures also provided a series of economic and environmental co-benefits.

- The public sector case studies presented were: 1) carbon neutral certification of Los Diamantes Experimental Station (the site will become a model space for training and the transfer of emission reduction technologies; and, 2) the development of a NAMA for the coffee sector which will scale up emissions reduction initiatives proposed by the private sector to the national level.

- A case study was presented on the implementation of initiatives to foster production on small sustainable and integrated farms geared to emissions reduction, enhanced resilience of production systems, and financial incentives for producers who generate environmental services through the application of good agricultural practices.

Tania López

[2] The text of Tania López's presentation is available at: http://www.iica.int/esp/organizacion/ltgc/forostecnicos/Documents/Foro1-2013/TaniaPPT.pdf
[3] Full-text versions of the case studies are available at: http://www.mag.go.cr/cambio-climatico/cop18-indice.html

Uruguay and agriculture in the international climate change negotiations[4]

Magdalena Preve, Advisor to the Ministry of Housing, Land Management and Environment of Uruguay

- It has been very difficult to achieve political consensus on the incorporation of agriculture into the UNFCCC, although the text of the Convention already underscores the importance of working on the issue of agriculture from the standpoint of the efforts to reduce anthropogenic emissions, and the need to balance mitigation against the adaptation of agriculture to climate change to ensure that food security is not undermined.

- The question of agriculture was initially considered by the Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action, which focused especially on mitigation issues. It was suggested that a Work Program on Agriculture needed to be created under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

- At the COP 17, it was decided that the SBSTA should begin holding technical discussions on agriculture with to the goal of preparing an agreement for the next COP. However, no consensus has been reached in subsequent negotiations, especially since the countries are divided on the question of whether the focus should be on adaptation or mitigation.

- Uruguay's position on the issue is that the SBSTA should concentrate on analyzing the scientific and technical aspects of actions to tackle climate change that maintain or improve productivity and food production. Recognizing that agriculture, climate change, and food security are closely interrelated, the country gives the greatest importance to actions that increase the resilience of production systems while at the same time reducing the intensity of the sector's GHG emissions.

- Uruguay is carrying out specific initiatives aimed at reducing emissions and vulnerability, mainly in livestock systems, combined with support for the design of policies that underpin the country's action on these issues.

Magdalena Preve.

[4] The text of Magdalena Preve's presentation is available at: http://www.iica.int/esp/organizacion/ltgc/forostecnicos/Documents/Foro1-2013/MagdalenaPPT.pdf

Irrigated agriculture and climate change in Mexico: progress made and future challenges[5]

Waldo Ojeda, Researcher of the Mexican Water Technology Institute

- The enactment of climate change legislation in Mexico has laid the foundation for the implementation of effective actions in the country's different sectors. It is very important to conduct in-depth analyses in order to determine both current and future vulnerability faced by agricultural systems.

- Mexico has developed an atlas of water vulnerability to climate change[6] that has been used as the basis for studies on the vulnerability of the agricultural sector and identification of regions where agriculture will be most affected by climate change.

- Those studies were important tools to inform decision-making and the implement effective adaptation measures that were carefully selected and prioritized. The measures were prioritized by establishing complex indicators that reflect the importance, urgency, no regret, co-benefit, and mitigation effects of adaptation options.

- The indicators made it possible to identify 73 viable adaptation measures for agriculture that were classified in four groups: technological advances, government programs, crop management, and financial management. Technical documents were then produced on these adaptation measures to facilitate their dissemination and adoption.

Waldo Ojeda.

[5] The text of Waldo Ojeda's presentation is available at: http://www.iica.int/esp/organizacion/ltgc/forostecnicos/Documents/Foro1-2013/WaldoPPT.pdf

[6] Link to the atlas of water vulnerability: http://www.atl.org.mx/atlas-vulnerabilidad-hidrica-cc/

Launch of a knowledge platform on agriculture, natural resources, and climate change[7]

Daniela Medina, Knowledge Management Specialist, IICA

- As part of IICA's efforts to share and disseminate targeted information on agriculture, natural resources, and climate change for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Institute has created a virtual knowledge management platform that is administered as a reference center of up-to-date information, and is intended to promote the development of sustainable agriculture in the Americas.

- The platform allows users to register and share information in the different sections (news, events, links and digital library), as well as receive regular newsletters.

- The platform offers various information resources, including:

  - Tools, case studies, and reference documents on adaptation, mitigation of GHG emissions, and the sound management of natural resources in agriculture.
  - A mapping of the main frameworks for climate change in the region that includes policies, programs, and strategies for the national and local levels specific to the agricultural sector.
  - A system of geo-referencing of projects that allows the creation of files with information about each project.

- Users can sign up and access the information available on the platform free of charge at: http:/infoagro.net/programas/Ambiente/default.aspx

Daniela Medina

[7] The text of Daniela Medina's presentation on the virtual platform is available at: http://www.iica.int/esp/organizacion/ltgc/forostecnicos/Documents/Foro1-2013/DanielaPPT.pdf

Main conclusions of the Technical Forum:

- At the most recent COPs, progress has been made in positioning agriculture in the international climate change negotiations, but political consensus and defining a joint position that lays out concrete ideas on which to develop a work plan on the issue is needed. Latin America is regarded as an ideal candidate for spearheading such an initiative.

- Specific initiatives exist that the countries are carrying out on a range of fronts, such as the implementation of both policies and research, aimed at promoting a type of agriculture capable of adapting to climate change and mitigating GHG emissions.

- To guarantee real progress is made on the issue of agriculture and climate change, it is crucial that all stakeholders are engaged, including governments, the private sector, international cooperation agencies and NGOs.

- Knowledge management and the creation of spaces for dialogue and sharing of experiences play a key role in facilitating the processes involved and the articulation of a common position at the regional level.

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agricultre
Technical Cooperation Directorate
Agriculture, Natural Resources and Climate Change Program

P.O. Box 55-2200 San José,
Vázquez de Coronado,
San Isidro 11101 – Costa Rica
Telephone: (+506) 2216 0341
Fax: (+506) 2216 0233 /
E-mail: david.williams@iica.int
Web page: www.iica.int

Agriculture, Natural Resources and Climate Change Program

IICA