



EcoFair Trade Conference

## **EcoFair rules!**

The new role of agricultural trade within the conflict area of the climate, food, and economic crises

Tuesday, 12 January 2010, 9:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
Heinrich Böll Foundation, Schumannstrasse 8, 10117 Berlin

A cooperation of Heinrich Böll Foundation and Misereor

### **Conference Background Paper**

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## **Beyond Copenhagen: towards international action on food security and climate change**

After two years of intensive negotiations started in Bali 2007 the Copenhagen Climate summit (7 – 18 December 2009) ended with the UN gathering merely taking note of a swiftly drafted “Accord”<sup>i</sup>. The three-page document was put together by 20 Heads of State gathered in a backroom of the official “Bella Center” on Friday, December 18.

The Accord falls far short of the global climate challenge. It ignores the substantive discussions that took place at the technical level on monitoring, reporting and verification methods, or on funding mechanisms. It completely overlooks the impacts of climate change on food security around the world.

This paper gives a brief overview of the agriculture, food security and climate nexus, reviews the progress of the discussions on agriculture and food security in the climate negotiations at Copenhagen, and provides recommendations for international action post-Copenhagen.

### **1. Food systems are failing the hungry... and the climate**

The agriculture sector is a significant contributor to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, both directly (methane emissions from livestock, carbon emissions from tilling, etc.) and indirectly (as a driver of deforestation, or through the energy use it generates, for instance). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), agriculture’s direct contribution represents roughly 14 percent of total GHG emissions (IPCC 2007). If GHG emissions from land-use change and deforestation, (accounting for 17% of total GHG emissions) are included in the calculations, agriculture contributes for around one third of total GHG emissions worldwide (FAO 2008).

Three other important characteristics of agriculture are relevant to the climate discussion:

- Agriculture not only emits greenhouse gases: it also has the capacity to contribute to the removal of GHGs from the atmosphere through soil carbon sequestration.
- Proposals to reduce emissions from agriculture must also weigh its unique role as the source of the food all humans need to live and active and healthy life, as well as its importance for rural livelihoods.
- Climate change also affects agriculture by shifting growing seasons, erratic rain patterns, droughts etc. and creating new challenges to food production, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia.

One billion people are suffering from hunger in 2009. The climate challenge will compound the already daunting global food challenge. Their interface needs to be addressed at the policy level, nationally and internationally.

## **2. Food security in Copenhagen : a side issue that did not make it into the « Accord »**

The need to stabilize GHG concentrations in the atmosphere “to ensure that food production is not threatened” is an overarching objective of the founding 1992 UN Convention on Climate Change (Article 2). Furthermore, the UNFCCC mandates action to reduce or avoid emissions from “all relevant sectors, including the (...) agriculture” sector (Article 4 c.).

In accordance with these provisions, the need to put agriculture more deliberately on the agenda of the global climate negotiations became more widely accepted over the course of 2009, in the run-up to the Copenhagen conference (IATP 2009). Significantly, an official “farmers” constituency was recognized by the UNFCCC, added to the 6 historical groups<sup>ii</sup> through which non-governmental stakeholders had previously been represented.

Many other agriculture-related events or initiatives emerged on the sidelines of the conference.

The FAO held packed side-events. Various intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations convened a high-level Agriculture and Rural Development day on 12 December<sup>iii</sup>. Participants were actually turned away from that event, as interest exceeded the room’s capacity.

On 16 December 2009, a group of 20 countries – led by New Zealand and the United States – launched a new “Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases”.<sup>iv</sup> Under the slogan „No Agriculture, No Deal“ FAO, IFAP and various other agricultural related organisations demanded strongly that agriculture must be part of a climate change agreement. While La Via Campesina has expressed concerns about carbon offsets, REDD and other proposals currently under discussion in the talks, it urges members to monitor the negotiations to ensure outcomes that support sustainable agriculture.

In the official negotiations, agriculture and food security concerns were present, but their explicit mentions in negotiating texts tended to evaporate as the fortnight progressed and the need to “streamline” the text became more pressing. There were initially mentions of agriculture or food in the draft texts on “shared vision”, on “adaptation”, on the reform of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), on REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) and on “Cooperative sectoral approaches and sector-specific actions.” Negotiations on Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) also included cropland management, but most of the discussions focused on forestry.

By the end of the Copenhagen conference, only the final draft text on adaptation retained a mere mention of the need for countries to prioritize food security in their adaptation strategies. Agriculture or food security disappeared from shared vision, REDD and the CDM texts.

In the end, the main discussion around agriculture in Copenhagen consisted in defining a work program for the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to clarify options for reducing emissions or enhancing sinks from agriculture. The corresponding SBSTA mandate includes the need to consider small and marginal farmers and indigenous peoples' needs, and to take into account agriculture's role in ensuring food security and adaptation to climate change. However, the pressure for a last-minute, swiftly drafted "Copenhagen Accord" prevented the adoption of this decision which, otherwise, appeared relatively consensual.<sup>v</sup>

The final "Accord" is very light, and ignores much of the substantive discussions that happened over the past two years at the technical level. Specific provisions relating to agriculture or food security were dropped out (although there is a mention of Article 2 of the UNFCCC as overarching goal). It extends the mandate of the negotiations working groups, but without clear goals, i.e. without clearly aiming at a legally-binding agreement in the foreseeable future.

### **3. Putting food security on the global climate change agenda: key recommendations**

The Copenhagen summit just barely avoided total collapse. However, the band-aid agreement reached is weak and does not clarify the way forward to a much-needed multilateral, legally-binding agreement.

The agriculture, food security and climate change nexus needs to be part of the negotiations. But exactly what its place is and the relative contributions of the UNFCCC and of other relevant international organizations (such as the FAO, IFAD, UNEP, etc.) need to be thought through more carefully. Governments and other stakeholders need to discuss what the best organizational set up is to confront the global food and climate challenges simultaneously and in a mutually supportive way. The existing structure of the climate regime (largely relying on ineffective "flexibility" mechanisms that allow rich countries to meet their commitments by buying credits for emission reductions in poor countries) is ill-suited for the agriculture sector, and particularly for the outcome to be beneficial to the most vulnerable groups, including small-scale food producers and women farmers. One idea that was extensively discussed over the past year was that of making soil carbon sequestration projects eligible under the Clean Development Mechanism. However, the risks involved with attracting more large-scale investors to land acquisitions – primarily displacing family farms or Indigenous peoples, thus worsening food insecurity – are not properly acknowledged in the conversations. There is an urgent need for a more critical assessment of the impact carbon markets, and offsets in particular, will have on the agriculture sector.

It is fair for the agriculture sector to claim a share of the "climate money" to be able to adapt to new constraints and to possibly help mitigate climate change – but exactly where this money comes from and how it is distributed needs careful consideration. These are questions for a much more ambitious work program than what is contemplated under SBSTA!

The fundamental need to revisit the way food systems are organized is missing from the official climate conversations. Discussions have tended to focus on technological fixes that increase carbon sinks (like "biochar") or enhance the productivity of agriculture (like genetic manipulations). Instead of this obsession with technological fixes, governments need to urgently integrate UNEP's recommendation that "changing the ways in which food is produced, handled and disposed of across the globe – from farm to store, from fridge to landfill – can both feed the world's rising population and help the environmental services that are at the foundation of agricultural productivity in the first place" (UNEP 2009). 50 percent of the food produced globally is currently lost, wasted or discarded. Tackling this issue, through infrastructure investment, composting initiatives, etc., would go a long way towards addressing agriculture's climate "foodprint" and the global food challenge. Supporting a shift towards resilient, low external input agriculture and sustainable food systems must be the aim of the climate framework in relation to agriculture (IFOAM 2009).

In addition to this fundamental consideration, below are a few key principles that negotiators should bear in mind as they resume their work in 2010:

- Set up a transparent and inclusive process

Negotiations on agriculture in Copenhagen were held behind closed doors, preventing direct civil society engagement. Decades of experience in developing agricultural and food policies have proven the fundamental importance of transparency, inclusiveness and ownership to guarantee successful outcomes. All stakeholders must be allowed an equal voice, and the perspectives of smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples are crucial to ensure productive results.

Furthermore, when negotiations on sectoral approaches in agriculture resume, governments must ensure that they invite accredited observers to submit their views to the SBSTA work program – building on what happened when SBSTA was given a mandate to work on deforestation, in 2005.

- Assess all prospective climate solutions against a broad set of metrics for impacts on food security, water, biological diversity and rural livelihoods

It is essential that the contribution of agriculture to global warming, and its potential for helping mitigate climate change, be addressed in the negotiations. But negotiators must not, in their eagerness to lower emissions from farming, lose sight of agriculture's central place in global human welfare and in the relationship between humanity and nature.

A range of technologies – including biofuels, genetically engineered plant and animal species, geo-engineering and variations of industrial farming – have been put forward as agriculture climate solutions. There is a real danger that large-scale adoption of these technologies could bring unanticipated impacts on human communities and ecosystems that would outweigh any possible mitigation benefits. Sustainable agricultural practices that enhance local control, reduce the use of chemical inputs, and improve the soil's structure and capacity to conserve water should be prioritized instead. Assessment of prospective agriculture-based climate change mitigation and adaptation technologies must include not just carbon balance accounting but also a wider set of social and environmental impacts. Governments could build on the experience with human-rights assessments to develop adequate methodologies (Caesens and Padilla Rodríguez 2009).

- Refrain from using climate negotiations as a forum to advance trade interests

New Zealand has on various occasions presented the design of an “optimal global production pattern” for agriculture as a way to meet the climate challenge. Such a proposal is biased to suit the economic interests of agricultural exporters: the idea, in broad strokes, is to identify which countries have the most GHG-efficient agriculture and allow them to feed the world. But the over-reliance on international trade mechanisms to allocate food in recent years has weakened, not strengthened, the global food system. As UNEP stresses, “food security is not simply a function of production or supply, but of availability, stability of supply, affordability and the quality and safety of food (UNEP 2009).” The climate footprint of agriculture cannot be considered in isolation from other economic and social imperatives – notably respect for the right to food.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Negotiations aiming at concluding a global, legally-binding climate agreement need to pick up as soon as possible in 2010. Governments' ability to enhance the coherence of their initiatives in relation to the global food and global climate challenges will be crucial to ensure a positive outcome.

Between now and when a new climate agreement comes into play, actions at local, national and regional levels to address the climate and food nexus will be critically important. Mainstreaming climate change in agricultural policies and food security strategies is urgently needed.

## 5. References

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<sup>i</sup> The text of the Copenhagen Accord can be found on [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop\\_15/application/pdf/cop15\\_cph\\_auv.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/application/pdf/cop15_cph_auv.pdf) (accessed 23 December 2009)

<sup>ii</sup> Those six groups include Business and Industrial NGOs (BINGOs), Environmental NGOs (ENGOs), Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs), etc.

<sup>iii</sup> More information, including the outcome statement, can be found on <http://www.agricultureday.org/> (accessed 23 December 2009).

<sup>iv</sup> For more on the Alliance, see <http://www.voxy.co.nz/politics/45-million-global-research-alliance/5/33541> (Accessed 23 December 2009).

<sup>v</sup> The status of the agriculture decision at the close of the Conference of Parties can be viewed at <http://www.iatp.org/climate/index.php?q=document/draft-agriculture-text-at-cop-15-at-close-of-session>



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