

Declaration on Agricultural Diversification, Paris, 7 December 2015

Preamble

The Signature Parties,

Sharing the concern expressed in the Preamble to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992, that human activities have been substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, that these increases enhance the natural greenhouse effect, and that this will result on average in an additional warming of the Earth's surface and atmosphere and may adversely affect natural ecosystems and humankind,

Recalling that Article 2 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change establishes that the ultimate objective of that Convention *inter alia* is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system, and ensure that food production is not threatened,

Recognizing in that regard that there are now serious challenges to achieving this ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

Aware that failure to achieve the ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change may threaten global food production,

Sharing concern expressed in the Preamble of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992, that biological diversity is being significantly reduced by certain human activities,

Noting in this regard that agriculture is a principal human activity that has significant impact on biological diversity,

Determined to conserve, enhance and sustainably use biological diversity for the benefit of present and future generations,

Noting the obligation of State Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Article 4.1(d) to promote sustainable management, and promote and cooperate in the conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of sinks and reservoirs of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol, including biomass, forests and oceans as well as other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems,

Noting also the obligation in Article 4.1(e) of that Convention for States to cooperate in preparing for adaptation to the impacts of climate change; develop and elaborate appropriate and integrated plans for coastal management, water resources and agriculture, and for the protection and rehabilitation of areas, particularly in Africa, affected by drought and desertification, as well as floods,

Recognizing that Annex I, supported by Article 7, of the Convention on Biological Diversity includes agricultural value in its indicative list of categories that Contracting Parties shall have regard to when identifying those components of biological diversity that are important for conservation and sustainable use,

Mindful of the obligation established in Article 8(i) of the Convention on Biological Diversity for Contracting Parties to endeavour to provide the conditions needed for compatibility between present uses and the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components,

Mindful also of the obligation established in Article 10(b) of the Convention on Biological Diversity for Contracting Parties, as far as possible and as appropriate, to adopt measures relating to the use of biological resources to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on biological diversity,

Noting the definition of desertification in paragraph 12.2 of Agenda 21 adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development as 'land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climate variations and human activities',

Noting awareness in the Preamble to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly Africa, 1994, that arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas together account for a significant proportion of the Earth's land area and are the habitat and source of livelihood of a large segment of its population,

Noting also recognition in the Preamble to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly Africa that desertification and drought affect sustainable development through their interrelationships with important social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, and those arising from migration, displacement of persons and demographic dynamics,

Aware that agriculture diversification is a means of 'combating desertification', reducing 'land degradation' and 'mitigating the effects of drought' as defined in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly Africa,

Recognizing the obligation of State Parties in Article 5(a) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly Africa to give due priority to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, and allocate adequate resources in accordance with their circumstances and capabilities,

Recognizing also the obligation of State Parties in Article 17(a) of that Convention to contribute to increased knowledge of the processes leading to desertification and drought and the impact of, and distinction between, causal factors, both natural and human, with a view to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, and achieving productivity as well as sustainable use and management of resources,

Mindful that national action programmes for agricultural diversification should include research to identify the factors contributing to desertification and practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought,

Asserting the need to complement the measures listed in Article 10.3 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly Africa with the additional measure of agricultural diversification to prepare for and mitigate the effects of drought and adapt to climate change,

Aware that much of the Earth's land area is used primarily for agriculture,

Concerned in that regard that existing international treaties and soft-law instruments do not directly address the importance of agricultural diversification in adaptation to climate change,

Asserting that special provision is required to meet the needs of developing countries for agricultural diversification, including the provision of new and additional financial resources, and appropriate access to relevant technologies and knowledge,

Noting in this regard the special conditions of the least developed countries and small-island States,

Recognizing the vital role that women, youth and families play in agriculture,

Asserting the need for the Objectives at Article 1 of the Convention on Biological Diversity to be complemented with provision for agricultural diversification and appropriate transfer of knowledge,

Endorsing the 'Use of Terms' at Article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity,

Defining that 'agricultural diversification' means actions that increase diversity within species, between species and of agricultural ecosystems, of actual or potential use or value for humanity,

Recalling pertinent provisions of the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted at Stockholm on 16 June 1972, and the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, adopted at Rio de Janeiro on 14 June 1992, and the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 'The Future We Want' adopted at Rio de Janeiro on 22 June 2012,

Recalling the provisions of General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 on Transforming Our World: Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012 on The Future We Want, resolution 55/2 on The United Nations Millennium Declaration, resolution 44/228 of 22 December 1989 on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and resolutions 43/53 of 6 December 1988, 44/207 of 22 December 1989, 45/212 of 21 December 1990 and 46/169 of 19 December 1991 on protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind,

Noting the vision in General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 on Transforming Our World: Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 of a world where *inter alia* "food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious",

Noting also the Sustainable Development Goals in that General Assembly resolution, particularly Goal 2.3 "By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment" and Goal 2.4 "By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.",

The critical need for diversification of agriculture

And aware of the following:

Climate change

A principal aim of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP21) in Paris in December 2015 is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit increases in global temperature to within 2°C above preindustrial levels. However, the emission reduction commitments that have already been submitted by countries to the UN in advance of the Paris conference may well result in a concentration of global atmospheric carbon that will cause warming in excess of that target. Not only is mean temperature likely to exceed 2°C, there will also be greater extremes in temperature and factors such as rainfall. Crops have limited tolerance for high temperatures. As the climate warms, these limits are likely to be exceeded more often with associated risks to global food security.

In a hotter world, diversified agricultural systems can help humanity meet its needs for food and nutritional security. Diversification also provides new opportunities for more environmentally sustainable agricultural systems, livelihood options for farmers and integration of community knowledge with scientific evidence and novel technologies.

Future agriculture will need to cope with increasingly hostile and volatile environments. “Business as usual” is not an option. We need an agreed action plan for agricultural diversification in a hotter world.

New agricultural options

Global models for agricultural development in more benign climates have promoted the profitability of major crops grown as high-input monocultures. This made sense when there was access to high yielding varieties, good soils and cheap mechanisation. However, by themselves, such models may not provide agricultural solutions for the volatile climates and vulnerable soils of the future.

Rather than seeking higher yields of only the major crops, we need strategies that provide ‘resilient diversity’ from a wider range of crops and cropping systems. Resilient diversity offers the prospect of agricultural systems in which sustainable crop yields are achieved across time, space and species.

Resilient diversity requires new agricultural options beyond only the major crops grown as monocultures. These options should include crops that are currently underutilised but which may reduce the risk of catastrophic failure and provide novel opportunities for smallholders and the poor.

Food security

Simultaneous extreme weather events in two or more regions will represent a “serious production shock” for global agriculture. Just four crops (maize, wheat, rice and soybean) provide most of the world’s food. Global agriculture relies on the productivity of these crops mainly grown as monocultures in a few exporting countries. This reliance is not just for our direct food needs but increasingly as raw materials for livestock and aquaculture feeds and bioenergy systems.

Diversification can provide crops that: are more resilient to climate shocks, yield on soils that are marginal for major commodity crops and provide new food products.

We need to expand the world's food basket by increasing the productivity and use of a wider range of agricultural species than those major crops on which humanity increasingly depends.

Nutrition

Malnutrition already imposes high economic and social costs at all income levels.

Many underutilised crops that already grow in marginal environments are rich in micronutrients. Diversification can help ensure sufficient and sustainable food supplies and enhance the nutritional quality of human diets.

Agricultural policies and research must support the production of more nutrient-rich foods. We need a multi-sectoral approach in which the need for improved nutrition underpins food and agricultural systems.

Environmental sustainability

Agriculture is making increasing demands on the major crops and the world's natural resources to meet humanity's food, animal feed *and* energy needs.

More diverse agricultural landscapes can help optimise the use of natural resources and minimise the need for costly inputs. Diversification provides opportunities to use non-food crops that grow in marginal environments as material for renewable energy and as sources for animal feeds and biomaterials.

We need options through which agricultural landscapes and crop diversity can help meet humanity's food, animal feed and energy needs whilst decreasing the use of pesticides, herbicides, irrigation and fertilisers.

Poverty Alleviation

Income poverty can lead to household food and nutritional insecurity through an over dependence on products from a narrow range of major staple crops supplied through increasingly vulnerable supply chains.

Agricultural diversification can help family farming contribute to global food security, protect the natural environment and reduce poverty, undernourishment and malnutrition.

We need livelihood opportunities, especially for the rural poor. These include policies that can help family farms to innovate within a system that recognizes their diversity and the complexity of the challenges that they face.

Knowledge

Community knowledge of diverse agricultural systems and underutilised crop species is often ignored, devalued or lost as scientific discourse is consigned to a few languages and to publications.

Community knowledge can contribute to agricultural policies and scientific research that support the selection and diversification of agricultural systems for climates of the future.

We must integrate indigenous and novel knowledge. For both the present and future generations, we need to curate and combine community knowledge and integrate this with high quality scientific evidence of how, where and when to diversify agricultural systems that include underutilised crops.

Global Action Plan for Agricultural Diversification (GAPAD)

Launched on 25 September, 2015, the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda sets out a global plan of action for sustainable development that is anchored on 'people, planet and prosperity'.

The Sustainable Development Agenda is the new global framework to respond to global challenges and achieve sustainable development. It identifies 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and 169 targets. These ambitious SDG's will shape the next 15 years of investment priorities and actions. Importantly, the Sustainable Development Agenda recognises that development and the application of technology must be climate-sensitive, respect biodiversity and be resilient. It also establishes an underlying priority to end hunger, achieve food security and end all forms of malnutrition.

Agricultural diversification will make a critical contribution to the success of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda by providing greater food and nutritional security, minimising environmental harm, alleviating poverty, supporting the wise use of land and helping to combat desertification. However, as yet, there is no integrated action plan for exactly how agricultural diversification can help meet specific SDG targets.

We need coordinated actions that help us to make the right decisions quickly. Our plan for agriculture in a changing climate must be ambitious, global, inclusive and evidence-based. It also requires bold leadership that supports a common vision and agreed activities, timelines and deliverables drawn from a wide range of views and inputs.

The above requirements cannot be met comprehensively by countries acting unilaterally or in regional groupings alone; such efforts would be strengthened by the guidance and directed support arising from a 'Global Action Plan for Agricultural Diversification' (GAPAD).

Call to Action

Call upon States, intergovernmental organisations, and the non-government sector as appropriate to take the following actions:

1. *Develop* a Global Action Plan for Agricultural Diversification (GAPAD).
2. *Convene* an International Conference on Agricultural Diversification at the earliest opportunity under the auspices of UNFAO.
3. *Agree* at COP13 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Mexico 2016) on a process in accord with Article 28 of that Convention to formulate a 'Protocol on Agricultural Diversification' to the *Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992*.

Signatures:

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THE DECLARATION ON AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION

PARIS | 07 DECEMBER 2015