

Switzerland

“Koronivia joint work on agriculture”

In response to the invitation of the COP in its decision 4/CP.23 (see FCCC/CP/2017/11/Add.1)

March 31, 2018

Switzerland is pleased to submit its views on elements to be included in the Koronivia joint work of SBSTA and SBI on agriculture, for consideration at the forty-eight session of the subsidiary bodies (April-May 2018), in response to the invitation of the COP in its decision 4/CP.23 (see FCCC/CP/2017/11/Add.1).

1. Background

Agriculture is a key sector for food security, for the livelihoods of millions of people, and for the functioning of vital eco-systems. The agricultural sector is severely affected by climate change, and at the same time, it is responsible for a significant share of greenhouse gas emissions. However, agriculture has also a considerable ability for adaptation, and an important potential for mitigation, while safeguarding food security.

The discussions on issues relating to agriculture of the subsidiary bodies to the COP/CMP are important because the agricultural sector is distinct from other sectors in many ways: (i) emission and sequestration of greenhouse gases are to a very large part the result of complex biological processes, and require respective measures and provisions; (ii) agricultural production interacts closely with the surrounding ecosystems, and climate change and the human response to it affect the services delivered by ecosystems; (iii) agricultural production is closely related to livelihoods in rural and urban areas, and it has a significant impact on food security and nutrition; (iv) agriculture is one of the few sectors that not only emits greenhouse gases, but also has the potential to serve as a sink for carbon dioxide; and (v) adaptation actions may affect mitigation efforts and vice versa, which shows the importance to look for synergistic effects. These biological, ecological and socio-economic interlinkages strongly suggest to work in a holistic food systems perspective, and to integrate the potential role policies can play. The Koronivia joint work on agriculture provides a place to address these features in a comprehensive way.

In the light of the Paris Agreement, Switzerland sees the role of future work on issues relating to agriculture as follows: The Koronivia joint SBSTA/SBI work is to advance Parties' understanding of reporting agriculture and food systems emissions, of including respective reduction goals in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), and of implementing measures to reduce the emissions from the sector. By doing so, the requirement to adapt the sector to climate change and to strengthen food security must be included in the considerations. SBSTA has the mandate to provide the scientific and technological basis on which Parties can build, and SBI is in the best position to bring together all relevant actors to enhance the knowledge base.

Against this background, Switzerland suggests the following elements to be included in the joint SBSTA/SBI work on agriculture:

- Food systems policies
- Measures in agricultural production
- Monitoring, Reporting, Verification
- Enhancement of knowledge base

2. Elements for consideration

Switzerland suggests that a series of questions, for each of the four elements for consideration mentioned above, be discussed under the Koronivia joint work on agriculture:

Food systems policies

As Switzerland understands it, the term “food systems policies” includes political instruments that aim at affecting one or several elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and/or activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes, and at establishing food systems that ensure food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition of future generations are not compromised.¹ The questions suggested for discussion are as follows:

- What are the needs of the Parties, in order to fully include food systems emission reduction in their NDCs, and to implement measures to reduce the emissions from the food sector?
- Which policies would be suitable to advance food systems towards sustainable consumption and production, lower emissions, better adaptation and increased food security?
- What are the characteristics of logical frameworks that are suitable to assess progress in climate action, as well as positive and negative impacts along the value chains, in a systemic perspective (also see paragraph on Monitoring, Reporting, Verification)?
- Which approaches can make mitigation and adaptation efforts in food systems economically, socially and ecologically sustainable?

Way forward: We suggest that the UNFCCC secretariat compiles a respective technical paper based on key scientific publications, National Communications, and presentations held at the five workshops in the framework of the SBSTA agenda item “issues related to agriculture” between 2013 and 2016.

Measures in agricultural production

When it comes to measures in agricultural production in order to lower emissions, improve adaptation and increase food security, Switzerland would like to emphasize a) the need to focus on climate-smart solutions, i.e. to combine adaptation and mitigation progress; and b) the importance of site-adapted management that takes into account the vulnerabilities of the different agricultural systems and livelihoods.

In Switzerland’s view, all subject matters mentioned in the COP Decision 4/CP.23 (see FCCC/CP/2017/11/Add.1) under paragraph 2 are relevant to progress in dealing with challenges of climate change in the agricultural sector, and thus deserve further discussion. Switzerland would like to point out that biodiversity including genetic resources for food and agriculture are equally relevant subject matters to consider when thinking of solutions.

We would like to propose the following questions for discussion:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of adaptation and mitigation measures presently known? Which measures can be denominated as “no regret measures”?
- What are barriers for the implementation of effective adaptation and mitigation measures and how can these barriers be overcome?
- Which measures can be recommended for upscaling in implementation? Which measures need further research?

¹ HLPE, 2014. Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome 2014. 29-31.

- How can information of international bodies such as FAO, CGIAR-CCAFS, UNEP, Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture, etc. on promising adaptation and mitigation actions be used to boost further activities and promote further action on the ground?
- How could the UNFCCC review process (review of national GHG-Inventories, national communications, biennial update report) and other activities by UNFCCC bodies (e.g. CDM executive Board), be used to gather, compile and disseminate information on successful mitigation and adaptation actions already implemented by individual Parties?

Way forward: We propose that the UNFCCC secretariat compiles a respective technical paper based on key scientific publications, National Communications, and presentations held at the five workshops in the framework of the SBSTA agenda item “issues related to agriculture” between 2013 and 2016.

Monitoring, Reporting, Verification

In view of the many complex processes leading to greenhouse gas emissions in the agricultural sector, a sound data basis is vital in order to evaluate the various mitigation actions in different agricultural contexts.

We advocate the following questions to be discussed with regard to methods and approaches to measure progress in climate action:

- Which methods and approaches exist, for which context? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Which methods or approaches can be recommended?
- How do Parties assess data availability in the various subject matters mentioned in the COP decision 4/CP.23? What can UNFCCC do to improve the situation?
- How do Parties perceive comparability of agricultural monitoring data? Is there a need to further develop standardized approaches and indicators to allow for better comparability?
- How do Parties see data accessibility? What can UNFCCC do to improve the situation?

Way forward: We suggest that Parties submit their appraisal of the data situation in the various subject matters mentioned in the COP decision 4/CP.23, paragraph 2, to SBSTA/SBI, and that the UNFCCC secretariat then compiles the appraisals in a technical paper. The technical paper shall be amended with published scientific key assessments, and by an input of the UNFCCC Secretariat (e.g. the Mitigation, Data & Analysis programme, possibly with support from the annual meetings of the greenhouse gas inventory lead reviewers). Furthermore, the IPCC Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories could be invited to provide additional inputs.

Enhancement of knowledge base

Different stakeholders, including various UNFCCC bodies, share common and/or interlinked interests in the agricultural sector and related value chains. Their interdependence calls for further collaboration and concerted action, beyond sectorial barriers and amongst different kinds of entities (such as governments, UN agencies, private sector, civil society, etc.). Knowledge about and recognition of existing efforts to enhance mitigation and adaptation in agriculture and food systems, and communication between actors involved in normative/global work and in field-level operations, is essential for upscaling and bigger impact. Against this background, it may be valuable to explore new and more direct ways of collaboration between UNFCCC and global initiatives and stakeholders in the field of agriculture and food systems.

We suggest that Parties reflect on the following questions:

- How do Parties assess efficiency and effectiveness of communication, coordination and collaboration among UNFCCC bodies when it comes to agricultural and food systems issues?

- How do Parties consider efficiency and effectiveness of communication, coordination and collaboration of global programmes, initiatives and multi-stakeholder partnerships in agricultural and foods systems research and implementation in relation to UNFCCC and vice-versa?
- What can UNFCCC do to improve the situation? Which new ways of cooperation seem promising and thus worthwhile to be explored?

Way forward: We suggest that Parties submit the result of their reflections to SBSTA/SBI, and that the UNFCCC secretariat then compiles the reflections in a technical paper. The technical paper shall be amended by published key studies.

3. Closing remarks

Agriculture is in the fortunate position of having an excellent network of international institutions, including research and implementation, that work on the specificities of farmers' needs. As mentioned for the ways forward above, we suggest that the Koronivia joint work on agriculture makes use of the vast body of existing knowledge, and compiles it, with the help of the UNFCCC secretariat, in an appropriate form. To use resources efficiently, calls for Party submissions, workshops and expert meetings should only be considered if the knowledge in question is not available elsewhere.

With the Koronivia joint work ahead, we have the opportunity to prove that a dialogue and work focusing on food systems and agriculture promotes implementation of the Paris Agreement.