

Switzerland on behalf of the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)

“Issues related to Agriculture”

In response to the invitation of the COP in its decision -/CP.17
(outcome of the work of the AWG-LCA), paragraph 76

March 07, 2012

On behalf of the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG, composed by Liechtenstein, Mexico, Monaco, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland), Switzerland is pleased to submit our views on the issues related to agriculture, in response to the invitation of the COP (paragraph 76 of decision -/CP.17, outcome of the work of the AWG-LCA) and in the perspective of a decision on this matter by the COP at its eighteenth session.

A Work Programme on Agriculture under the SBSTA

Agriculture is a key sector for food security, for the livelihoods of millions of people in the world, and for the functioning of vital eco-systems. The agricultural sector is severely affected by climate change, and at the same time it is also responsible for a considerable share of greenhouse gas emissions. However, agriculture has also a considerable ability for adaptation, and an important potential for mitigation, and is thus part of the solution to cope with climate change. Due to its particular role, this sector needs a forum under the Convention, where respective challenges and potential for action can be addressed adequately.

The EIG proposes to establish a work programme on issues related to agriculture under the SBSTA. The work programme should aim at:

- i) Increasing the capacity of the agricultural sector to cope with the impacts of climate change;
- ii) Minimizing greenhouse gas emissions from this sector;
- iii) Improving food security, reduce poverty and increase agro-ecosystems services.

The work programme under the SBSTA would serve as a discussion space for the exchange of views and expertise that are of interest to the agricultural sector. It would help the various stakeholders to evaluate the work done – or planned to be done – inside and outside UNFCCC in view of their undertakings to address climate change. It would also be useful in identifying and filling knowledge gaps and improving processes.

Potential areas for action

The work programme may explore, amongst others, the following areas for action:

1. Identify the linkages between agriculture and existing mechanisms and tools under UNFCCC and outside

Shared and improved knowledge on processes, mechanisms, instruments and tools under UNFCCC that support adaptation and mitigation efforts of the agricultural sector is essential to make full use of the provisions of the Convention. The work programme should provide governments and other interested stakeholders with relevant information on potentials and implications of actions and

mechanisms for/on adaptation and mitigation when they draw up policies and strategies. More specifically and amongst others, the EIG would like to recommend that entry points for agriculture-related issues and for farmers' organizations in existing mechanisms (such as the GEF, the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and Committee, REDD+, market and non-market based mechanisms, etc.) be examined, also taking into account funding opportunities outside UNFCCC, for example from the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and bilateral development cooperation funds.

A technical compilation and guide to these entry points could be prepared by the Secretariat with editing support from competent multilateral institutions, such as the FAO. This compilation could empower the relevant stakeholders in their action in the field of agriculture.

2. Identify gaps in scientific knowledge and areas requiring more research

A sound scientific basis is key for a concerted and efficient action. In order to improve the knowledge base for action, the EIG recommends to compile an overview of the state of the art, most important knowledge gaps and research need priorities. Considerable work in this regard has already been done by inter alia FAO, the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA) and the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Based on such an overview, the work programme on agriculture under the SBSTA could recommend to the COP actions aimed at closing any knowledge and research gaps.

3. Identify potential for mitigation and adaptation at a regional and farming systems level

The technical adaptation needs and mitigation potentials in agriculture are generally considered to be high. However, there is a large variation between regions and farming systems, even more if the technical potential is amended by socio-economic aspects. Efficient action by stakeholders requires knowledge at regional and farming system-specific potentials and best practices.

The organization of regional workshops, in collaboration with FAO and/or other appropriate organisations, and the synthesis of regional reports on these issues, may be a promising way forward to this end.

4. Improve measuring and reporting of GHG emissions from and adaptation efforts in agriculture

As many of the adaptation and mitigation potentials in agriculture involve biophysical and biochemical processes and numerous interactions between them, measuring and reporting of impacts of respective efforts can be complex. In addition, agricultural structures and practices are highly diverse, and often on a small scale, particularly in developing countries. These socio-economic structures pose an additional challenge for measuring and reporting adaptation and mitigation efforts in agriculture.

The proposed work programme under the SBSTA could identify promising technologies for improved measurement of emissions from and adaptation efforts in agriculture. It could mandate the IPCC, through a COP decision, to develop further the methodologies for reporting. It could encourage the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) amongst others, with their first-rate knowledge of agricultural systems, structures and institutional capabilities, to evaluate, in the form of a joint report, the latest developments in view of their usefulness to improve agricultural measuring and reporting.

Scope and priorities

Under the proposed work programme, issues related to agricultural systems (including livestock and agroforestry), and issues along the whole food value chain may be addressed, based on a multi-sectoral approach, and taking into account the multiple functions of agriculture. Such an approach would allow integrated solutions and prevent the swapping of challenges to other areas. Priority should be given to those areas where synergies between adaptation and mitigation can be expected.

Ways of working

We see the proposed work programme as an agenda item under SBSTA that would enable all the Parties to discuss agriculture in all its dimensions, in one single dedicated space. It may work as follows:

- Adopt each year priority areas of action, including objectives, expected results, deliverables and form of action (eg. workshops). The first work programme priorities would be agreed on at the SBSTA 38, based on submissions by Parties;
- Report to the COP, at its annual sessions;
- Strengthen synergies with work being done relating to adaptation, mitigation, REDD+, flexible mechanisms, and LULUCF, inside and outside UNFCCC, i.e. seek for mutually-supportive objectives, and share information on planned activities;
- Open participation, as appropriate, to accredited observer organizations (e.g. FAO, CGIAR, GRA, farmers' organisations).
- Draw from existing competent international bodies and experts, and existing reports (including from other Rio conventions)
- Survey existing research and knowledge outside the UNFCCC while ensuring that its own inputs build upon and are complementary to these efforts.

Justification

A work programme on agriculture under the SBSTA as outlined above would allow to better understand the manifold dimensions of agriculture, how they are affected by climate change, and what can be done to meet the respective challenges in an appropriate way. It would enable all stakeholders involved in agriculture-related activities (governments, farmers and their constituencies, business, research institutions, etc.) to make best use of the mechanisms under the Convention and thereby contribute significantly to combating climate change while improving food security, reducing poverty and sustaining agro-ecosystems services.