

Chapter 1. Principles

The members of the Coalition on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases propose the following guiding principles for designing policies to enable the agricultural sector to participate effectively in the effort to mitigate climate change.

Science-based. The design of agricultural climate policy must be informed by the best available science and should be adaptable over time to integrate improved science.

Quantifiable, Verifiable, and Results-Based. Only quantifiable and verifiable programs and activities that deliver net reductions of atmospheric GHG concentrations should be rewarded.

Larger rewards should be provided to participants who deliver greater results in order to encourage the private sector to reduce atmospheric GHG concentrations at scale and as quickly as possible.

Trade-offs between precision and accuracy of quantification and cost will be necessary but should diminish over time as innovation delivers better technology and lowers costs.

Programs and activities should focus on the result desired (net reductions or removal of GHGs) rather than the means of achieving the result (what practice was implemented). Although systems based on direct measurements are preferred, certain practices have proved to deliver results (i.e., net reductions in atmospheric GHG concentrations) with a high degree of precision and accuracy, and certain models have proved accurate in estimating reductions for particular practices when calibrated using appropriate data.

Leakage of emissions outside of the program or activity boundary that occurs as a result of the program or activity should be accounted for where possible.

Verification of results should occur on a regular basis and be performed by an independent third party.

Innovation. Accelerating innovation is critical to delivering substantial net reductions in atmospheric GHG concentrations.

Many innovators are early actors, and the results delivered by their actions should be recognized.

Additionality. Only net reductions of atmospheric GHG concentrations beyond business as usual should be rewarded.

Permanence. Programs and activities should provide for continued storage of sequestered carbon over timeframes that are meaningful in the context of mitigating climate change.

One way to address the issue of permanence is “risk-based” analysis of the likelihood that a reversal of sequestered carbon could occur. Different project activities have different factors that increase or decrease the risk of reversals.

Policy should distinguish between intentional and unintentional reversals.

Comprehensive GHG Accounting. A comprehensive accounting should be made of all significant GHGs affected by a program or activity.

Co-benefits. Programs and activities should identify social and non-GHG environmental impacts and take steps to mitigate those impacts where possible.

Contributions to social and community well-being, conservation of biodiversity, and improvements to soil, air, and water quality should be encouraged. Activities that increase global food insecurity should be discouraged.

Bundling Environmental Benefits. Activities that generate multiple environmental benefits that can be clearly identified should potentially qualify for multiple credits or incentives.

Where multiple benefits are positive and additional, efforts to separately quantify, verify and value them should be encouraged.

Where there are trade-offs between achieving multiple benefits, the programs and activities should seek to optimize the environmental outcome.

Multiple benefits should be tracked in a standardized accounting system that provides integrity to the programs and facilitates coordination of multiple funding sources for different environmental benefits.

Stakeholder Engagement. Stakeholders should be engaged in a transparent, accountable consultation process with program administrators.

The consultation process should take account of comments and suggestions from stakeholders in the design of technical standards.