



Post-Cancun/COP16 Perspectives on Agricultural Issues within the UNFCCC

Background

The Coalition on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (C-AGG) hosted a webinar at the conclusion of the UNFCCC COP16 negotiations in December, 2010 in Cancun, Mexico, to discuss progress on agricultural issues within the context of the UNCCC. While optimism for progress on the overall negotiations was tempered, there was a great deal of anticipation regarding progress on the fate of agricultural activities within the context of the negotiations. Language supporting the potential inclusion for agricultural mitigation and adaptation activities to be accounted for and credited in some way towards participating nations' greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions commitments, including within nationally appropriate mitigation activities (NAMAs), had been widely anticipated. The potential for agricultural activities to be added to the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD or REDD+) language was also seen as a possible outcome of the negotiations.

Separate day-long events on the role of agriculture and forestry within the UNFCCC were held in parallel to the Cancun negotiations. The second annual Agricultural and Rural Development Day¹ was held on Saturday, December 4, 2010; and the fourth annual Forest Day² was held on Sunday, December 5, 2010.

C-AGG hosted and moderated a webinar on 15 December 2010 to allow experts who attended the negotiations to present their perspectives on progress on agricultural and related activities, and to discuss prospects for the future of agriculture within the UNFCCC. This paper is a summary of that Webinar and discussion. We would like to thank the following experts for contributing their insights and perspectives that are summarized in this paper:

- Michael Coren, Climate Focus
- Steven de Gryze, TerraGlobal Capital
- Leslie Durschinger, TerraGlobal Capital

¹ <http://www.agricultureday.org/>

² <http://www.forestclimatechange.org/ForestDay-4.html>

- Robert Janzen, Climate CHECK
- Don McCabe, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and Soil Conservation Council of Canada
- Seth Shames, EcoAgriculture Partners
- Charlotte Streck, Climate Focus

Executive Summary

Agricultural mitigation and adaptation within the context of climate change and the UNFCCC process has only recently been seriously considered as a separate issue or activity. Significant progress expected on agriculture during the COP16 Cancun negotiations did not materialize, due largely to unrelated text being conflated with the widely-supported agricultural text that had been negotiated, but trade issues between developed and developing countries also contributed to the demise of the language. Agricultural mitigation and adaptation activities could benefit from being combined with forestry activities under the REDD+ approach, which has seen significant progress in a few short years. However, data availability for the agricultural sector lags behind that of forestry, and until comparable data is available, the incorporation of agricultural activities within REDD+ could likely delay the flow of finance for both sectors. While proponents argue that landscape-based approaches that combine agriculture and forestry could optimize terrestrial mitigation and adaptation, progress remains to achieve that outcome. For instance, measurement, reporting and verification systems and incentive systems would have to be developed and agreed for agricultural activities. Attempts to bridge separate approaches by the agricultural and forestry sectors, and to bridge developed and developing country contexts, could help to integrate land use activities in a meaningful way in the UNFCCC – one that could optimize climate mitigation and adaptation while enhancing food security.

History of Agriculture in UNFCCC Process

Though references to agriculture can be seen throughout the UNFCCC process and in the UNFCCC framework, there has been no dedicated track for agriculture, and no sectoral considerations for adaptation (arguably a more critical role for agriculture than mitigation). Agriculture has also been excluded from REDD+. The first UNFCCC workshop on Agriculture was held in Bonn, Germany in April 2009, and agricultural mitigation received a separate LCA chapter in June, 2009 during the lead-up to Copenhagen. During COP15 in Copenhagen, Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) text and a work program on agriculture were negotiated, and mitigation and adaptation activities were solicited from Parties as part of NAMAs and National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs). During COP16 in Cancun, agriculture was considered under sectoral approaches within the AWG-LCA text, but was excluded in the final hours of deliberations.

Expectations for Cancun

Overall, expectations for Cancun were fairly low, based on the near-collapse of talks in Copenhagen the year prior, and deliberate attempts by lead negotiators to achieve incremental progress on a few issues where there was broad agreement rather than seeking to forge

consensus on framework issues that had proved to be contentious in the past. Progress was expected on Reversing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), measurement, reporting and verification (MRV), technology transfer, and increasing access to climate finance.

Regarding the inclusion of agriculture within the process, however, anticipation was high that progress would be made in several areas:

- recognition of agriculture within REDD+ language;
- Inclusion of agricultural sectoral mitigation within AWG-LCA text; and
- Progress overall on the role of agriculture as a mitigation and adaptation activity within the negotiations, to be discussed and further probed during Agriculture and Rural Development Day (ARDD).

Outcomes from Cancun: Progress Achieved, Barriers Encountered

The success of the Cancun negotiations has been widely hailed as having restored faith in the process and trust among the many parties – a not insignificant outcome given the highly visible failure of the process in Copenhagen just a year prior. Virtually every country involved – with the exception of Bolivia – supported the outcomes and the adopted LCA and Kyoto Protocol (KP) text. It was observed that the objections of Bolivia, which increased over the course of the two-week meeting, seemed to galvanize the other 193 countries to come together and support the leadership of the Mexican host delegation. Negotiators from many countries have credited the skillful work of the Mexican Presidency and of UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres with guiding and driving this successful outcome, based on significant efforts in the run-up to Cancun and through a transparent, inclusive process. However, many contentious issues that were parked or sidestepped in Cancun remain to be revisited and resolved in Durban, South Africa during the COP17 negotiations next year, and beyond. Unresolved issues include:

- overall level of ambition;
- future of the KP;
- details of NAMAs;
- MRV rules; and
- the legal form of the agreement.

The Cancun Agreements helped to legitimize and build on the Copenhagen Accord for a future binding agreement under the KP before it expires in 2012. The main elements of the Cancun Agreements were:

- **Global GHG Targets:** 1.5°-2°C limit for global average increased temperatures, with a global 'peak' to be established in Durban;
- **Mitigation Commitments:** formalizes Annex I *and* developing country actions;
- **Financing:** continuation of the KP mechanisms, as well as new financing for adaptation, a Green Climate Fund, and potentially, the establishment of new market instruments;
- **MRV:** enhanced reporting and International Consultation and Analysis (ICA), with rules to be agreed for all Parties; and

- **REDD+**: REDD+ mechanisms were established, based on a phased approach, with strong safeguards.

Decisions in Cancun were taken under both the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the UNFCCC Ad Hoc Working Groups (AWG-KP and AWG-LCA). Perhaps most significantly, these separate legal agreements are for the first time ‘communicating’ via a procedural agreement, which in effect has put the UNFCCC process back on track. MRV rules, which were the top priority of the US delegation (which sought international verification of China’s mitigation action), proved to be a stumbling block, and remain to be resolved.

With regards to agricultural sector participation in climate mitigation and adaptation activities, there has been no dedicated negotiation track for agriculture in the past – but neither is there a negotiation track for other economic sectors. REDD+ and bunker fuels may be exceptions, although the focus of these has been more on emissions (forest emissions and bunker fuel emissions) than forestry or bunker fuels as economic sectors.

In Cancun there was no coordinated or systematic approach for the inclusion of agriculture. There is broad consensus that agriculture is part of the climate problem, but definitely also part of the solution, and with proper policy incentives, the agricultural sector can contribute significantly to climate mitigation and adaptation. The sentiment that there can be no climate security without food security was also widely repeated in Cancun. Adaptation does not consider separate sectors under the negotiations, however, and related issues that are particularly critical to agriculture – such as water resources -- are not included.

AWG-LCA. Despite broad-based support for the inclusion of agricultural sectoral mitigation language within the AWG-LCA decisions taken in Cancun – and a widely held perception that the agricultural sector language was “well advanced” -- the inclusion of sectoral program language was blocked in the final hours after the Chairs combined contentious bunker fuels language with non-contentious (or less-contentious) sectoral programs language.

The agricultural text that had been negotiated, but which was dropped, included the following:

- Need to sustainably improve “efficiency and productivity”, and protect stallholders;
- Sectoral agricultural approaches and actions should ensure food security;
- should not cause “arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination....or restriction on trade”;
- promoted R&D, technology transfer to “control, reduce, or prevent anthropogenic GHG emissions”;
- requests SBSTA to establish a work program (June 2011); and
- Invites Parties’ submissions by 22 March 2011.

During deliberations on the text, controversy over developed and developing country trade rules was evident and likely also contributed to the demise of the language.

Frustration from the agricultural sector over this development is evident, and some believe that progress on this issue in the intervening year will be important to capture a stronger agricultural sector presence at COP17 in Durban, South Africa in 2011. It is expected that the agricultural work plan, which was anticipated to have been sent to SBSTA, will be discussed again in the spring of 2011, and may see progress at that point.

REDD+(+). A REDD+ decision adopted in the AWG-LCA text does not include agriculture. REDD+ was not officially adopted as a compliance mechanism for Parties, but there is wide agreement that official recognition of REDD represents significant progress within the negotiations, and paves the way for land use activities as a viable mitigation opportunity. The explicit inclusion of terms such as “results-based” and “verified” in the REDD language is seen as positive, since it is necessary for market-based opportunities.

The adopted REDD language:

- lays out what REDD host countries need to do to participate;
- has a lack of clarity regarding how states and provinces can participate (participation at this level may ultimately be captured within NAMAs);
- urges developed countries to support host-country programs that are results-based (though the language could be stronger);
- Is complex, but provides continued momentum to developing carbon markets, and some positive signals to potential investors.

Many observers agree that agriculture needs its own voice within the negotiations, but many also point out that the best path to inclusion is within REDD – whether implicitly in the design of projects, or within landscape-based REDD approaches that include improved forest management and conservation agriculture. It will also be important to integrate and connect small-scale farmers with some of the benefits and opportunities of REDD and REDD++. This will require a greater focus on agricultural activities that don’t naturally occur alongside REDD.

Despite the obvious conceptual and political linkages of agriculture and forestry within the land-use context, some participants raised questions regarding the relevance of agriculture within REDD+, and expressed anxiety that the less-developed agricultural agenda would slow progress on REDD within the negotiations – and slow finance to forestry projects -- if explicitly linked to forestry or added to REDD+.

Progress and evolution within agricultural sector activities was still evident, particularly as compared to COP15 in Copenhagen. A striking increase in presentations on practicing projects within REDD++, including agricultural projects, was described in side events and at Agriculture and Forest Days, as was a focus on bottoms-up and voluntary projects. Also, whereas there were no agricultural project frameworks or methodologies presented in Copenhagen, there were side events featuring GHG registries with validated methodologies, e.g. a Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) methodology for agriculture, and presentations on actual projects

within REDD++, including agricultural activities. Progress on project implementation is also anticipated over the course of the next year.

Despite this, a continued disconnect is observed in the negotiations relative to agriculture and land use change. Also, the agricultural sector appears to be at least two years behind the forestry sector in terms of engagement in the UNFCCC – but inspired by Forest Day, agricultural sector engagement has a positive outlook.

NAMAs. Language on Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs), which describe activities that may be taken domestically by countries to mitigate or reduce their GHG emissions, was included in the text. A general lack of clarity or definitions in the text will require that the language be further developed in the future. However, broad support for the inclusion of agricultural activities within NAMAs is evidenced by 18 of 43 non-Annex 1 country's submissions prior to COP16 including agriculture.

Agriculture and Rural Development Day (ARDD). ARDD was held on Saturday, December 4, 2010. This was the second annual Agriculture Day held in conjunction with the UNFCCC talks.

There was greater representation of the private sector and of private finance entities, although it was noted that ARDD had a decidedly developing country and small-holder agricultural focus, and that additional participation and representation of developed country and industrial agriculture is necessary in the future. This will be particularly important in order to achieve significant mitigation and adaptation outcomes on global agricultural lands, but also necessary to intensify agricultural production on all lands if future food security objectives are to be met without concurrent agricultural expansion onto new lands, particularly ecologically sensitive or forested lands.

A wide range of agricultural projects was presented at ARDD. There was a focus on landscape-scale approaches, and those present seemed to embrace this approach, as well as agricultural incorporation into REDD++.

Forest Day. Forest Day was held on Sunday, December 5, 2010. In the theme of positive developments for the agricultural agenda, a session on nested REDD was held, to account for and give credit to spatially explicit projects with jurisdictional accounting.

Loss of IFAP leadership on agriculture. The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), which previously provided leadership and a focal point for agricultural interests within the UNFCCC process, disbanded just prior to Cancun due to insolvency, leaving a relative leadership vacuum for agricultural sector participants at Cancun.

Relationship between forestry and agricultural agendas among proponents. Significant interest in linking the agriculture and forestry agendas is evident, and the proposal for a Landscape Weekend being held at COP17 in Durban was raised. There was also a proliferation

of publications and policy briefs on REDD and agriculture, including from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), EcoAgriculture Partners and Resource Renewal Institute (RRI), Institute for Development and Durable Relations International (IDDRI), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and The Climate Group (TCG).

Sustainable agricultural intensification. Multiple discussions occurred around ‘sustainable agricultural intensification’ as a means to produce more food per unit of land and to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives. Sustainable intensification must balance food production and economic development and environmental quality to achieve increased yield at lower costs; while greatly reducing or eliminating environmental degradation; by harmonizing with biogeochemical processes of the Earth. The issue is a challenge shared by agricultural producers in developing and developed countries, and is an important metric to assess progress and to minimize GHG emissions associated with per-unit food production.

Sustainable intensification that promotes climate mitigation and food security is a knowledge-based, rather than an input-intensive, approach. The provision of knowledge and necessary resources to agricultural producers can lead to sustainable intensification that reduces negative impacts and promotes adoption of better practices globally. Resources can be used to build farmer capacity to manage cropland and livestock for higher productivity, but with greater use efficiency of inputs such as water and nutrients. Knowledge of biology and genetics can enable improved crop varieties and better farming practices, and enhanced livestock management. Appropriate decision-support is a key element of knowledge intensive sustainable agricultural systems, and requires planning with professional advisors or trained peer-counselors. Better standards and results that can be tested and verified are necessary; and implementation must follow rigorous standards and documentation, with sufficient testing.

The World Business Council on Sustainable Development’s (WBCSD) Vision 2050 describes a path to a sustainable global society by 2050, and expresses a need to make humanity and agriculture more symbiotic with our planet, rather than more exploitative.

Some of the discussions at COP16 about agricultural intensification degraded into a debate about the Borlaug Hypothesis -- that agricultural intensification on existing agricultural lands can reduce or prevent deforestation for agricultural land development. Proponents and opponents of the Hypothesis were present, and it was both hailed and contested by participants and observers in Cancun, with some evidence of support and counterfactuals presented.

Prospects for the Future: Beyond Cancun

Within the UNFCCC. The future of the work program on agriculture has high prospects for success, given the broad support of the concept. Discussions about the need to address land use activities, including agriculture and forestry, at the landscape scale, led to a call for a Landscape Day to be hosted in Durban concurrent with COP17 negotiations. C-AGG leadership
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and some webinar participants have agreed to pursue this prospect in concert with the organizers of ARDD and Forest Day.

World Bank President Robert Zoellick, at a side event held in Cancun, announced a multi-million dollar fund to help emerging market countries set up their own carbon markets, and he made a strong statement for the inclusion of agricultural mitigation activities, including soil carbon sequestration, within these markets. At its launch in Cancun, the Fund included support and participation of China, Chile, Indonesia and Mexico. Pledges for the fund were received from Australia (USD \$20M), the European Commission (USD \$6.6M), the US (USD \$5M) and Norway (USD \$5M), with Britain, Germany, and Japan agreeing also to contribute.

Beyond the UNFCCC. There is wide support for continuing to develop the nexus of agricultural productivity, food security, ecosystem services, and climate change mitigation and adaptation within and outside the UNFCCC process. The Roadmap for Action on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change, begun in The Hague in October, 2010, will continue in parallel with the UNFCCC process, as will the research-based Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases³, and CGIAR's CCAFS. CCAFS is a new 10-year research initiative launched at ARDD in Cancun by CGIAR and the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP).

Numerous national and sub-national climate change initiatives around the globe will continue to offer opportunities for agricultural activities to be incorporated, as well as potentially creating incentives for climate friendly agriculture in voluntary markets and private sector initiatives. Finally, many national and sub-national agricultural ministries and departments are redesigning infrastructure, program support, and research initiatives focused on agricultural mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Continued progress linking agricultural and forestry activities within the land use context are also widely anticipated and evident in these many arenas.

C-AGG's Role. It was suggested that science-based and knowledge-intensive agriculture is under-represented in Cancun and in the discussions surrounding the UNFCCC and related global processes, and that C-AGG can both build bridges between these discussions and representatives of global agribusiness; and bring science-based perspectives to the global discussions and processes. CGIAR and CCRAF are beginning to build this research and indigenous knowledge interface; and the World Bank's Robert Zoellick made a strong statement in Cancun about the role of agriculture and agricultural soils, in particular, in the UNFCCC.

C-AGG leadership will seek support for a Landscape Day at COP17 in Durban, as a bridge to incentivizing both agricultural and forestry mitigation approaches, with EcoAgriculture Partners and others. One major goal of landscape day would be to probe and highlight successful approaches to this concept, and incentive systems for agricultural producers.

³ <http://globalresearchalliance.org/>
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