



C-AGG Guiding Principles

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The members of C-AGG propose the following guiding principles for designing policies to enable the agricultural sector to participate effectively in the effort to mitigate climate change. Policies should include:

1. **Science-based Principles.** *The design of agricultural climate change policies and programs must be informed by the best available science and should be adaptable over time to integrate improved science.*
2. **Quantifiable, Verifiable, and Results-based Approaches.** *Only quantifiable and verifiable programs and activities that deliver net reductions of atmospheric GHG concentrations should be rewarded.*
 1. *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.*
 2. *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.*
 3. *Programs and activities should focus on the result desired (net reductions or removals of GHGs) rather than the means of achieving the result (what practice was implemented). Although systems based on direct measurements may offer greater precision, they are often costly, particularly at scale. C-AGG has been working to promote the development of cost-effective emissions reductions tools and technologies for the agricultural sector that are scalable. Certain practices have been proven to deliver results (i.e., net reductions in atmospheric GHG concentrations) with a high degree of precision and accuracy, and certain models have been proven accurate in estimating reductions for particular practices when calibrated using appropriate data.*
 4. *Leakage of emissions outside of the program or activity boundary that occurs due to the program or activity should be accounted for where possible.*
 5. *Verification of results should occur on a regular basis and be performed by an independent third party.*
 6. *Verification data, including new direct measurement technologies, models, and remote sensing data can make verification more cost-effective and scalable.*
3. **Mechanisms to Embrace Innovation.** *Accelerating innovation is critical to delivering substantial net reductions in atmospheric GHG concentrations.*
 1. *Many innovators are early actors, and the results delivered by their actions should be recognized.*
 2. *Pathways to adopt innovative practices are needed.*

4. Recognition of Additionality. Only net reductions of atmospheric GHG concentrations beyond business as usual should be rewarded in carbon offset markets. For other incentive-based programs and policies it is important to not penalize early actors and to incentivize and support or reward good behaviors.
5. Approaches to Distinguish Permanence. Programs and activities should provide for continued storage of sequestered carbon over timeframes that are meaningful in the context of mitigating climate change. For land use and agricultural activities, it is important to distinguish between permanence of the carbon molecule versus permanence of activities, and to take into account temporal limitations associated with land use and agriculture. Effective short-term solutions should be supported and achieved even as long-term solutions are pursued.
 1. 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.
 2. Policy should distinguish between intentional and unintentional reversals. For the latter, a focus on continual rather than continuous improvement is warranted.
6. Comprehensive GHG and Ecosystem Service Accounting. A comprehensive accounting should be made of all significant GHGs and other ecosystem service impacts affected by a program or activity.
7. Identification of Co-Benefits. Programs and activities should identify social and non-GHG environmental impacts and take steps to mitigate those impacts where possible.
 1. Contributions to social and community well-being, conservation of biodiversity, and improvements to soil, air, and water quality should be encouraged.
 2. Activities that increase global food insecurity should be discouraged.
8. Recognition of Multiple Environmental Benefits. Activities that generate multiple environmental benefits that can be clearly identified should potentially qualify for multiple credits or incentives.
 1. Where multiple benefits are positive and additional, efforts to separately quantify, verify and value them should be encouraged.
 2. Where there are trade-offs between achieving multiple benefits, the programs and activities should seek to optimize the environmental outcome.
 3. 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.
9. Stakeholder Engagement Approaches. 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.