



The climate challenge for ACP agriculture

4th Brussels Development Briefing

13th February 2008

On 13th February 2008 CTA and other partners convened the fourth 'Brussels Development Briefing' - part of a series of bimonthly Development Briefings on ACP-EU rural development issues. More than 110 participants gathered in Brussels to discuss the impacts of Climate Change on agricultural production and technologies; the implications on agricultural trade and markets and the role of capacity development.

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An effective strategy against Climate Change

Welcoming participants to the 4th Brussels Development Briefing, Mr Olusola Ojo of the ACP Secretariat -, Prof. Lluís Riera - director of DG Development at the European Commission (EC) and Mrs Isolina Boto (CTA) underlined that climate change and climate variability represent a major threat for developing countries since they are the most concerned, while having the lowest capacity to react. Among them, countries whose livelihoods depend on agriculture and natural resources are the most directly affected and most vulnerable.

Therefore, addressing the climate change issue is essential in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

Against this background, Mr. Riera recalled the Climate Change Alliance launched by Commissioner Louis Michel that is expected to be a major tool of political dialogue in the fight against climate change. Both speakers paid tribute to the importance of the briefing as a way to get multiple stakeholders around the same discussion table and to help identify common strategies and approaches.



Adaptation and pro-poor mitigation policies?

Mark Rosegrant, from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), explored how far climate

change policies of adaptation and mitigation can foster development. According to the optimistic view he supported, under certain preconditions, pro-poor climate change strategies can generate income and investment flows for rural communities.

The current climate injustice is very serious: although developed countries emit far more greenhouse gases (GHG), developing countries are more vulnerable to climate change, because of their lower capacity to adapt, due to several factors such as their locations, a greater dependence on agriculture and natural resource base, an higher variation in weather and temperature conditions, and a reduced availability of critical resources like water, land, production inputs, capital and public services. For instance, agricultural production growth is expected to decrease from 25 to 50 % over the next decades, especially in Africa, as a consequence of climate change. How can we deal with this?

As a matter of principle, there is an immediate need for appropriate climate change policies geared towards pro-poor investment in developing countries to support strong adaptation and mitigation measures. Adaptation is a key strategy to tackle climate change. Even if comprehensive estimates of adaptation costs and benefits are currently lacking, Mr. Rosegrant emphasized that much adaptation is the extension of good development policy, notably in the agricultural and rural development domain. However, he warned, climate change adaptation must also go beyond it to explicitly target the impacts of climate change, particularly on the poor. Climate change adaptation must therefore be proactive, not merely reactive to changing environment.

Since adaptation becomes costlier and less effective as the magnitude of climate changes increases, mitigation of climate change is essential. The greater the level of mitigation that can be achieved at affordable cost, the smaller the burdens placed on adaptation.

Effective reform of carbon trading and carbon offsets to better include farmers and foresters in developing countries would have significant benefits in mitigation in addition to encouraging environmentally sustainable practices and improving rural incomes to enhance adaptive capacity.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Rosegrant was upbeat: "Investing in climate change for the poor", he said, "can create new value-added for pro-poor investment."

Trade as a tool to support climate adaptation

Mr. Melendez Ortiz from ICTSD examined the role trade can play in the fight against climate change from an ACP countries agriculture perspective, stressing that complex linkages exist between climate change, trade and agricultural sustainable development. As a matter of facts, he recalled Bali's recognition that the mitigation and adaptation efforts needed to cope with climate change are 'development challenges' since, he emphasized, climate change affects development policy and the way we deal with development issues.



As far as agriculture and forestry are concerned, he recalled the different agriculture-related trade rules affecting Kyoto Protocol recommended policy interventions and examined to which extent trade related climate policies fall under the international trade framework. Trade regulatory frameworks, as they relate to rules on market access, subsidies, standards and other measures affecting agricultural production and trade are regulated by a number of multilateral trade agreements. Therefore the range of policy and regulatory tools that would be needed to address mitigation and adaptation needs in the agricultural sector need to be implemented in the multilateral trade context.

The ongoing Doha round of trade negotiations in the areas of agriculture, trade liberalization in environmental goods and services, as well as discussions on mechanisms for aid for trade and adjustment to trade liberalization, are among the tool boxes that could be explored in an effort towards climate change mitigation and adaptation in the agricultural sector. Turning to the potential of using agricultural-trade policies to achieve climate change objectives in developing countries, he underlined that agriculture has a significant potential for mitigation and that the greatest need for adaptation in these countries is for adaptation, while warning that opportunities and constraints exist in linking mitigation and adaptation strategies with trade policy and negotiations. He expressly stressed the potential of biofuels production and exports for several ACP countries and recalled that, despite the great debate that surrounds the biofuels issue, great expectations of investments are raising, given their contribution both in

terms of climate change benefits and economic development.

Mr. Melendez Ortiz therefore concluded that trade policies can meaningfully contribute to the fight against climate change, provided that multilateral solutions are prioritised. At the meanwhile, trade policy tools should take into account equity and fairness concerns and be accompanied by other policy interventions such as technology transfers and technical assistance, mainly in terms of financial investments for adaptation. "Trade liberalization alone – he concluded - may not be enough to drive the diffusion and adoption of climate-friendly technologies".

Capacity building for climate adaptation

Dr. Isabelle Niang from the Energy, Environment and Development Team (ENDA TM) in Senegal presented very practical examples of how capacity building and information interventions in ACP countries can support the adaptation to climate change, stressing that "capacity building can't be *ad hoc*, what we need is continuity".

Without going into any greater depth on the impact of climate change in Africa (and suggesting the reading of chapter 9 of the 4th IPCC Assessment Report to people interested in deepening the argument), she pointed out that communities and institutions in developing countries have very limited capacities to adapt to climate change, but they will have no choice than to adapt.

Facing the scarcity of information and of human, technical and financial resources, ENDA is trying to strengthen capacities at different levels of the society and within the organization itself such as: development of tools that enable countries to access their vulnerability and adaptation levels; training for trainers; production of short videos and information sheets on climate change; fellowship programme, initiated in 2007 and funded through C3D EU funding; "writeshop" on the question of adapting to climate change in terms of the management of water resources; and strengthening the capacities of African negotiators at the UNFCCC Conference.



Food miles or poverty eradication?

Benito Müller from the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies briefed participants on the issue of 'food miles', the ecological impacts of food transport, particularly long-haul aviation. While other speakers highlighted the potential benefits of climate change policies for developing countries, Müller stressed that environment policies can damage development and strongly criticized the 'food miles' issue as an example where environmental concerns can harm development efforts. Individuals and organizations are increasingly encouraged to consume local products instead of buying environmentally unfriendly, air-fright products. As an

example, strawberries imported from countries like Kenya have become a typical 'high carbon footprint product' that a sustainable consumer should avoid. Some British supermarkets have started to label air-freighted produce so that locally-grown produce is more popular. This of course provoked very strong concerns for the economic damage such behavior can cause the exporting countries.

Dr. Müller condemned this practice. First, the concept of 'food miles' is an over-simplified indicator of the harm to global climate. Geographic distances are not the only factor influencing the climate change impact of food. When one looks at the full life-cycle of a product, flowers grown in Kenya have a lower carbon footprint than flowers grown in heated and lighted greenhouses in The Netherlands, even if transport emissions are included. "Food miles", Dr. Müller concludes, "are woefully inadequate as a measure of climate change impacts of agricultural produce. What is required instead is a full life-cycle carbon footprint analysis". Moreover, the harm to poor countries caused by boycotting their produce is significant. According to some researches, one million livelihoods in Kenya are partly supported by the fresh produce trade with the UK alone that generates at least 100 million pounds each year for Kenya. Third, Dr. Müller labeled 'food miles' as a somehow hypocritical concept, since it is only applied to basic food products, but not to for example to computers or cars. Finally, he warned that many exporters are among the poorest - and therefore less emitting - countries: punishing developing countries is unfair in nature since "they underuse what we have overused", he argued.



Possible solutions to the 'food miles' dilemma include: Public finance could offset the international transport emissions generated for fresh fruit and vegetables imported from the most vulnerable countries.

Projects under the Clean Development Mechanism in those countries would be an appropriate measure. Proper and fair labeling would help the consumer to take both the carbon offset and the development benefits into account. The 'Grown under the sun' label proposed by the Kenyan High Commission could be a way to emphasize the poverty eradication effects. Finally, consuming countries should support a shift towards less carbon intensive transport, for example by improving maritime technology to make the shipping of products possible.

"Therefore, eating Kenyan strawberries at Christmas – Dr Muller concluded - is not a guilty pleasure, but a moral obligation!"

Can carbon bring development?

Mr Leo Peskett, from ODI, gave an interesting and quite innovative presentation about the potential benefits that developing countries and particularly small rural producers could derive from REDD (Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). Currently high on

the agenda of the UN climate process and discussions about the post Kyoto regime, REDD is a new proposal for an international financial mechanism potentially linked to the carbon market, to incentivise reduced rates of deforestation and degradation in developing countries.

He pointed out that REDD is quite a hot politically charged debate at the moment, for several reasons, among which he listed: (i) the big debate about baselines, and whether financial flows will be directed towards countries which are performing quite badly in the forestation sector, whereas countries such as India, which implemented quite significant reforestation in the last few years would not receive payment; (ii) a kind of ethical question, about whether this is not an excuse for developed countries not to reduce at home; (iii) an issue of permanence, since forestry has limitation and trees can be cut down in the future, which make it quite different from other fossil fuels emission reduction.

As he underlined, there is still a great uncertainty about the form of REDD at national and sub national level, and how the financial management will be implemented remains a key question. Will it be centrally run by governments or is it possible to establish a direct linking mechanism between the private sector in developed countries and the small producers engaged in activities that reduce deforestation in the developing ones?

Turning to the issue of the potential opportunities for local producers, Mr Peskett argued that forest depending communities or small producers in forest areas could benefit from both direct and indirect advantages. Direct benefits could be monetary (such as direct payment to individuals, managed for example through microcredit schemes), or no-monetary (e.g. clarification of land rights). Indirect benefits could consist in the implementation of local development projects, especially in the field of education and health. REDD is finally expected to contribute to growth in the forest and agricultural sector.

Besides the benefits, Peskett warned about the potential risks of REDD namely that there is a low availability of capital, which can hamper market participation, and that the asymmetry of information, due to the fact that carbon market is a highly technical field, implies a strong capacity building efforts. Another key issue "is REDD about environment, development or both?" has not been resolved yet.

He concluded his presentation stressing the main difference between REDD and previous initiatives, namely that these latter are mainly referred to larger scale, national systems, which could provide opportunities to shift towards improved sustainability in the forest sector, although not necessarily pro small producers. Anyway, he pointed out, REDD could offer very significant financial flows to developing countries and small producers but only in selected cases, so it is unlikely to be considered as a panacea for climate change, poverty reduction or biodiversity; we need to concentrate on other existing mechanism as well.

Technologies for adaptation to climate change in the context of rural development

Rachel Berger, from Practical Action, focused her presentation on the need to develop technologies to adapt to climate change. The starting point of her



reflection is the experience gained by Practical Action, thanks to their work with marginalized communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mrs Berger stressed the need for technologies to cope with climate change in the agricultural sector, as rural poorest people are the worst impacted, being

directly dependent on the health of the ecosystem. If we think about technology as a combination of tools, skills and knowledge, we must also bear in mind the local context in which it will be applied. In this way we can develop effective, community-managed and low cost systems to face the challenges posed by climate change. She definitely gave her preference to this kind of approach, rather than to the government run programmes, which have proven to be expensive and episodic, since linked to the availability of funds.

To support her arguments, she gave three examples of the activities that Practical Action run in Africa: (i) in Zimbabwe, a country where rainfall is only 200-300 mm per year, falling in maybe 10 days, they helped the communities to build underground tanks to trap the water for longer; (ii) in Kenya, they encouraged seed saving and exchange, through annual show and community seed banks. As droughts have become more frequent and longer it is in fact vital to increase the availability of locally adapted seeds of maize and more drought resistant crops like millet and sorghum; (iii) they developed alternative systems to control the spreading of tsetse fly, which causes the trypanosomiasis, a disease almost endemic in semi-arid Africa, simply by helping communities to make traps using locally available cloth and net, acetone and cow urine.

She concluded her presentation drawing attention to one of the technology contradictions: according to her data, while low-cost local solutions need to be developed, currently most resources go to large-scale, high cost technologies that will not work for 70% of poor people and their agricultural system.

Sharing information and communication is key

Ishmael Sunga (SACAU), Chris Addison (Euforic) and Oumy Ndiaye (CTA) shared their conclusions on the Briefing, touching on the lack of participation of local farmers, the importance of information, knowledge and communication strategies and the need for adaptation at the local level.

The main message from Mrs Ndiaye was that adaptation is possible, at low cost, and it is the result of good policy decisions. Adaptation must be reached at the local level, which is why awareness has to be raised among local policy makers and why governance and ownership issues have to be addressed. To reach these goals,

information and communication are critical, but lacking. To sensitize local decision makers, the information has to be brief and relevant. Regarding the way of getting in touch at communities level, we need to have the appropriate communication tools, such as video or radio at the local level are needed to get the message across.

Mr Addison presented the key role information and communication played in addressing climate adaptation. From the side meeting at the European Development Days and this meeting it is clear that good data management of meteorological information, support for local community information and dissemination of research outputs were particularly crucial.

Mr Sunga defined the issue of climate change “very complex, scientific and technical”, almost intimidating and for sure challenging to most of the national farmers’ unions SACAU represents, even at regional level. According to him, high level academic researchers are predominant in this debate, while ordinary farmers don’t have the capacity to engage, given the kind of discussions. Mr Sunga called for a “re-packaging” of information to allow a full involvement of farmers. “How to break down the abstract discussion into something easy to digest?”, he asked. As a result of the lack of understanding, knowledge and appreciation on the current developments, farmers do not have the chance to properly participate in the discussions and decisions. Biofuels and climate change are two examples of crucial decision-making processes where the farmers arrived too late to the discussions.



Next briefing

The next Briefing will take place the 16th April 2008 and will be on **Fair Trade**.

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