

Agriculture & Climate Justice

PARIS CLIMATE JUSTICE BRIEFS

DEC 2015 #3

Why provisions on food security and loss and damage are essential in the Paris agreement

“Climate change is undermining the right to food, with disproportionate impacts on those who have contributed least to global warming and are most vulnerable to its harmful effects.”

– Hilal Elver, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food¹

The future under climate change is a future of loss and damage – where limits to adaptation are breached and systems that support our communities and our lives are threatened. Indeed even now we are seeing the evidence of this future – as heat waves, sea level rise, and droughts damage crop production from California to Bangladesh to Syria – damage which cannot be prevented through adaptation and which is a direct result of increasing temperatures linked to increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), through the new Paris agreement, must place onto its agenda the protection of food security in the face of climate change. The COP should do this by including **“ensuring food security”** in the purpose of the

¹ Elver, H. 2015. Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. UN General Assembly A/70/287.

agreement and by **establishing a permanent mechanism on loss and damage.**

CLIMATE IMPACTS ON FOOD PRODUCTION AND LIVELIHOODS

Changing climates will make it harder for farmers to grow food, for pastoralists to find adequate pasture for animals, and for fisherfolk in tropical regions to continue to harvest fish. As temperatures rise, soils hold less moisture shortening seasons in rainfed areas and increasing risks of bad harvests. Warmer ocean temperatures in the tropics make conditions uncomfortable for fish living there, with significant migration of fish expected to cooler waters.

Many impacts of increasing global temperatures will reverberate throughout food production systems, with threats to the lives and livelihoods of those dependent on agriculture and, downstream, all of us who eat. For example:

In Bangladesh, many inhabitants live and farm in coastal areas, on islands that appear and

ASIAN PEOPLES' MOVEMENT ON
DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH - ENGLAND
WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRD WORLD NETWORK
EARTH IN BRACKETS
PHILIPPINES MOVEMENT FOR
CLIMATE JUSTICE

LDC WATCH
TIPPING POINT COLLECTIVE
BOLIVIAN PLATFORM ON CLIMATE
CHANGE

disappear with the seasons. Their existence is already precarious, as with most subsistence agriculturalists whose livelihoods depend on the vagaries of the weather and the coming of the rains. With sea level rise, access to seasonal lands is being lost. Aquifers that provided fresh water are now becoming saline, due to saltwater intrusion linked to rising sea levels. The lands are no longer providing livelihoods and hundreds of thousands of people are already on the move.

Climate models predict significant drying in Central America, which coupled with temperature rise is predicted to significantly reduce yields of main staple crops – beans and maize – central to both diet and culture, where people consider themselves “hombres del maiz.” In Honduras, it is projected that bean production may be reduced by 15% by 2020, and maize production by 22-30%. Rice and wheat yields are predicted to decline by up to 10% by 2030.

Across the tropics, radical declines in fish populations are anticipated, as fish move towards cooler waters. Globally 40-50 million people are directly involved in small-scale fishing; including family members, hundreds of millions of rural people depend on fisheries for their livelihoods. In many of the developing countries that will be affected, fish accounts for more than 50 percent of total animal protein intake. In Southeast Asia, where impacts will be severe, possibly a billion people rely predominantly on fish for protein.

These are all impacts that will manifest at 2°C of warming or below – before 2050. Most of these impacts on food production take away livelihoods, creating conditions that lead to short-term and long-term migration.

HOW CAN THESE LONG-TERM THREATS TO LIVELIHOODS, FOOD SECURITY, AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY BE ADDRESSED IN THE AGREEMENT?

There are two important ways for the Paris agreement to ensure these impacts are addressed in this new phase of the climate regime, by:

- including a provision recognizing the protection of food security as an overarching principle and
- creating a permanent mechanism under the agreement for addressing loss and damage.

FOOD SECURITY

Article 2 of the draft text contains language on the purpose of the agreement, which in general terms is to enhance implementation of the Convention, including the objective of the Convention, while based on its principles and provisions.

The objective of the Convention makes an important reference to food production, emphasising the need to stabilize emissions at a level and “*within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.*” Fundamental Convention principles include equity, common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities.

Clearly climate change will have serious impacts on the food security and food sovereignty of our countries and communities. A new agreement should recognize these impacts by going further than the Convention – enhancing its implementation – and placing the need to protect food security as one of the overarching principles guiding action.

Such language under Article 2 might read:

The Agreement shall be implemented on the basis of equity and science, in full accordance with the principles and provisions of the Convention, while ensuring food security.

LOSS AND DAMAGE

How will millions of food producers experience loss and damage in the coming years and decades? Through progressive drying and loss of cultivated lands. Increasing temperatures pushing tolerable climates for their perennial crops up mountains, away from their land. Ocean warming leading to complete loss of fisheries. Disappearance of pastoral grazing lands. In all these stories, impacts from slow-onset events² result in some type of loss and damage: loss of productive assets; loss of livelihoods; loss of homes; environmentally-forced migration.

² Including sea level rise, increasing temperatures, ocean acidification, glacial retreat and related impacts, salinization, land and forest degradation, loss of biodiversity, and desertification

A permanent loss and damage mechanism is needed that contributes to addressing these profound losses and damages for food producers and food production and the corresponding impacts on people's lives and livelihoods. First and foremost, a loss and damage mechanism has to take care of people – it has to be able to deliver meaningful improvements in the lives of those affected by climate change. At a minimum such a mechanism should:

1. UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS IMPACTS OF SLOW-ONSET EVENTS ON FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY.

A loss and damage mechanism under the UNFCCC should ensure the institutional structures and financing necessary to:

- understand impacts of slow-onset events on food production, food security, and food sovereignty, and enable anticipatory action across the international community in reacting to slowly or quickly developing crises,
- design and finance approaches to prevent the erosion of productive assets and livelihoods from slow onset events, such as social safety nets and other types of social protection measures, and
- take care of people affected by slow onset events, ensuring their food security and their food sovereignty.

2. ADDRESS MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

As slow-onset catastrophes develop, people will move. Many people already use the term “climate refugees” to talk about displaced persons, although they currently have no legal recognition or status as refugees under international law. The loss and damage mechanism must address migration and displacement – forced and planned, internal and across national borders. It should facilitate coordination, technical support, and finance to assist countries with internal and cross-border displacement, including through a climate change displacement coordination facility. The mechanism should provide support for planned relocation, ahead of crisis situations, and ensure in all circumstances migration with rights and dignity.

3. ADDRESS PERMANENT AND NON-ECONOMIC LOSS AND DAMAGE.

As a result of climate change, people will lose their homes, their land, their ties to ancestral homelands and grazing lands. The loss and damage mechanism must have the mandate to address permanent loss and non-economic loss.

LOSS AND DAMAGE IN THE PARIS AGREEMENT

In 2013, Parties established the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM). The future of loss and damage requires that a permanent mechanism on loss and damage be anchored in the Paris agreement, with an expanded mandate from the current WIM. That expanded mandate would include the establishment of two new facilities: on loss and damage finance and a climate change displacement coordination facility.

As temperatures rise due to lack of mitigation action, countries and communities now face insurmountable limits to adaptation and resulting loss and damage. Loss and damage has become the new normal, the climate reality for vulnerable developing countries. To adequately address this new normal, the UNFCCC requires a permanent mechanism on loss and damage, one that has the capacity to mobilize means of implementation: finance, technology and capacity. Above all, the mechanism should have the institutional capacity necessary to mobilize resources and action to take care of people affected by climate change, including slow-onset events with impacts on crops, livestock, and fisheries that will threaten billions of lives and livelihoods.

To ensure that food is at the center of our efforts to address the impacts of climate change – just as it is at the center of all our lives and the livelihoods of billions – the new agreement must reflect a global commitment to ensuring food security in the face of climate change. It should do that by recognizing the protection of food security in the purpose of the agreement as an overarching principle of our collective action on climate change.