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Climate Smart Agriculture and carbon markets will be a disaster for Africa: Groups warn against Zuma's agriculture prize at COP17

Gaia Foundation, African Biodiversity Network (ABN), Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) & EcoNexus

South African president Jacob Zuma has declared his intention to have a decision on Agriculture at the UN COP17 climate negotiations in Durban; while the World Bank is promoting so-called "Climate Smart Agriculture" and carbon offsets as the future of African agriculture and climate solutions.

But civil society groups in Durban are concerned that this vision for African agriculture will lead to land grabs, farmer poverty and food insecurity, and only worsen global climate change.

Teresa Anderson of the Gaia Foundation says "An agreement on Agriculture at COP17 would supposedly be a consolation prize to Africa for failure on legally binding targets - but the consolation prize is a poisoned chalice. It will lead to land grabs and deliver African farmers into the hands of fickle carbon markets."

"This is a diversion, and a betrayal of the real need to reduce emissions. It will only worsen climate change and food insecurity." Adds Helena Paul of EcoNexus.

Simon Mwamba of the East African Small Scale Farmers' Federation explains: "Climate Smart Agriculture is being presented as sustainable agriculture – but the term is so broad that we fear it is a front for promoting industrial, 'green revolution' agriculture too, which traps farmers into cycles of debt and poverty."

Anne Maina of the African Biodiversity Network adds "Climate Smart Agriculture comes packaged with carbon offsets. Soil carbon markets could open the door to offsets for GM crops and large-scale biochar land grabs, which would be a disaster for Africa. Africa is already suffering from a land grab epidemic – the race to control soils for carbon trading could only make this worse."

The current collapse of carbon markets will mean that offsets will fail to provide money for African agriculture and farmers.

"There is no money for agriculture in Africa from carbon offsets. The financial structure of Climate Smart Agriculture is built on evaporating carbon markets. Carbon markets are in collapse, and projects will have unreliable and inadequate finance." Adds Steve Suppan of IATP.

More than 100 African and international civil society groups have written to African ministers imploring them to reject agriculture carbon markets. (View the letter at <http://nosoilcarbonmarkets.wordpress.com>)

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Climate Justice Now Intervention by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation Opening Plenary

28 November 2011

Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates:

I am speaking on behalf of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, a member of Climate Justice Now! We thank you for the opportunity to briefly address this body on the work programme on loss and damage.

One element of the convention's overarching objective – to ensure that food production is not threatened – warrants closer attention from this body as it considers the components of the work programme. This year we are witnessing one of the most serious impacts to date from global warming-induced climate change, as a multi-year drought ravages the Horn of Africa and threatens the lives of millions.

The work programme on loss and damage is an important start to efforts under the Convention to understand the magnitude, consequences and costs of loss and damage in the agriculture sector that will result from slow onset events, including from slow onset temperature rise. As temperatures slowly rise, crop yields will slowly fall, and farmers in drier and warmer regions will slowly lose the ability to feed their families.

The impacts on agriculture from slow onset temperature rise are not dramatic, such as the floods that decimated wheat crops in Pakistan last year and rice crops in Thailand this year. Slow onset temperature rise will usually not appear as catastrophic drought, such as the one that has threatened millions in the Horn of Africa this year. But slowly declining yields will put livelihoods at risk and ultimately may displace millions, many here on the African continent.

The consequences of slow onset temperature rise for food production, food security and livelihoods will be significant, and for this reason, agriculture must be clearly and explicitly integrated into the work programme on loss and damage.

Thank you.