



INSTITUTE FOR AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY

PRESS RELEASE

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About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Geneva.

Weak climate deal leaves hard choices for next year

Agriculture work program put on hold

COPENHAGEN – A watered down political agreement reached this morning in Copenhagen lacks the firm commitments needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address global climate change, said the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). Progress on agriculture within the climate talks was delayed as countries did not get a chance to approve an agreed text that had emerged from an agriculture working group.

“The frustration and exhaustion of developing countries and civil society organizations is palpable here in Copenhagen,” said Harkness. “The meeting lacked transparency and democratic participation, both inside and outside the negotiating convention, and ended with a toothless and illegitimate deal that puts off the hard decisions until next year.”

Earlier in the week, negotiators within an agriculture working group had reached agreement on a draft document for a 2010 work plan to be completed by a Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) under the UNFCCC. The SBSTA would develop recommendations for how countries could both reduce emissions from agriculture and adapt farming systems to the major impacts that climate change will bring. However, because of the controversy over the political declaration, the agriculture text was not submitted for approval. It is unclear when the agriculture text will be revisited, but it could come as early as this spring. The draft text had cited the need to safeguard food security and livelihoods in climate adaptation and mitigation, also making specific reference to the interests of small farmers, the rights of indigenous peoples and the importance of traditional knowledge.

“The inclusion of this language in the agriculture document was important and opens the door for a more comprehensive look at agriculture,” said Harkness. “The breakdown of the global food system that has led to over 1 billion hungry requires systemic change that involves much more than a new climate treaty. One issue the UNFCCC should take up is a formal role for accredited UN observers in the agricultural adaptation and mitigation discussions.”

In contrast to the timid and convoluted approach of the official negotiations, civil society groups engaged in a series of vigorous discussions outside the official forum. On December 16, IATP participated in the founding meeting of the Round Table of Organic Agriculture and Climate Change, which established a new international consortium of the world's leading organic research institutions to provide strong scientific evidence to the SBSTA process and coordinate research efforts on organic agriculture's solutions to climate change.

For more on agriculture and climate issues, go to IATP's web page: www.iatp.org/climate.

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