



**INSTITUTE FOR AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY**

Attn: Dr. Rob Betram,  
Chief Scientist,  
Bureau for Food Security (BFS)  
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)  
To be submitted electronically at [FTFCSA@USAID.gov](mailto:FTFCSA@USAID.gov)

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Dear Dr. Betram,

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Draft paper on '[Climate Smart Agriculture in Feed the Future Programs](#)' developed with feedback from across USAID and other U.S. government agencies.

IATP is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) nongovernmental organization, headquartered in Minneapolis, Minn., with an office in Washington, D.C. Our mission states, "The 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."

To carry out this mission regarding "fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems" in this era of climate related challenges, IATP engages in research and advocacy activities specifically with respect to climate resilient agriculture related policies and practices.

IATP understands that Feed the Future (FTF) is USAID's flagship program on food security with the primary goal to help address poverty and food security of millions in vulnerable countries. According to President Barack Obama's [Executive Order #13677](#) cited in the draft paper, the agencies are required "to integrate climate resilience considerations into all United States international development work." The draft paper further recognizes that dedicated U.S. climate-change adaptation funds are critical to managing the risks posed by climate-change impacts in vulnerable countries. We draw your attention to the fact that in the context of this executive order '(d) "**Resilience**" has the meaning provided in section 8(c) of [Executive Order #13653](#): **the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disruptions.**

IATP notes that the current initiative by the Bureau of Food Security to integrate 'climate resilience and adaptation considerations' into the Feed the Future Program offers us many opportunities to further our own work on climate resilient agriculture related policies and practices.

IATP's own work has found that climate resilient agriculture must be driven by the adaptation needs of the communities concerned. Time and again we come across communities who build secure livelihood systems, by adopting ecologically sensitive and scientifically proven practices when they are locally appropriate, on the firm foundations of their traditional knowledge, their goal being food and nutrition security, where mitigation happens to be a co-benefit. In the international context, our partnership with Tamil Nadu Women's Collective gave us valuable learnings, as can be seen in a paper we brought out in 2011: [Women at the center of climate friendly approaches to Agriculture & water](#). A recent [paper](#) that we contributed to, on Green Climate Fund, points to the types of projects that we believe can build climate resilience – focused on adaptation. (Further, scholarly evidence to this effect can be found in Chappell et al. 2013, Holt-Giménez 2002, Lin et al. 2012, Pimentel et al. 2005.)

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In addressing the five questions outlined in your call for public comments, we have organized our response in two sections.

In the first section, we point out what needs to be retained in the final iteration of this paper: such as the need for developing the capacity of farmers so that they are climate resilient; the recognition that Climate adaptation strategies that underpin resilience often confer mitigation benefits, although that outcome is not a driver in planning. We note with concern that there is little recognition of the key role communities play in developing climate resilient practices, nor of the rich knowledge base they have. In this section we also point out important aspects that have been overlooked, such as extensive research on climate resilience done in the scientific field of agroecology.

In the second section we point to some concerns IATP has about the current framing of integrating climate resilience in the context of agriculture. We stress that that the focus of FTF must remain on food security, even as the programs and projects integrate and incorporate climate concerns. Thus we call for a reframing where climate adaptation is a necessary condition for future food security, and mitigation is seen as a resultant co-benefit of ecologically sensitive adaptation practices. We further suggest an alternative framing to help ensure that the primary objective of the FTF program is kept in sight, while keeping with the requirement (integrating climate resilience) as outlined by the executive order #13677, and help inform that FTF programming decisions at the level of concepts and strategies.

**1. Comments on Draft paper on '[Climate Smart Agriculture in Feed the Future Programs](#) – what IATP would like to see retained and emphasized.**

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IATP welcomes the reference in the draft paper to the [Executive Order - Climate-Resilient International Development](#) (#13677, September 2014) that *requires the integration of climate resilience – that is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disruptions– and adaptation considerations*

*into decision making regarding all United States' international development programming.*  
(para. 9)

We note that while linking the overarching goals of “Feed the Future”--*reducing poverty and child stunting*--with climate resilience, it is recognized that in practice this [...achieving the twin goals...] ‘*means improving the efficiency and productivity of agricultural systems, and protecting livelihoods by **developing the capacity of farmers so they are more resilient to shocks, especially those posed by weather variability and market and climate risks.***’ (para2) The draft paper further notes that ‘*adaptation and mitigation frequently go together*’ – in fact, they almost always go together when adaptation practices are ecologically sound and sensitive. (para. 5)

IATP is concerned that adoption of best practices such as [multi-story systems](#) is not considered as an option in contexts—such as densely populated, agriculturally productive lands where sedentary agriculture systems predominate—which FTF programs target generally. (para. 7, P.2). This is unfortunate, as in many traditional sedentary agricultural systems, multi-story systems have been found to be extremely beneficial (especially in water scarce contexts), to help maximize the effective and efficient use of available water moisture (Lin 2007; Lin et al. 2008; Landsberg et al. 2014). This has been found true even in agriculturally productive lands where sedentary agriculture systems predominate. Also according to [United States Natural Resource Conservation Services](#), Multi-Story Cropping practice is applicable in all lands where trees, shrubs, woody or non-woody crops can be grown in combination, but does not apply on lands that are grazed. We urge you to re-consider the current exclusive focus on sustainable intensification. **Instead we urge you to revise sentence (in para. 7, p.2),** to read “In those settings, adoption of best practices<sup>1</sup> including those that help increase resource use efficiencies, which is at the heart of FTF research strategy, is increasingly being promoted.”

Often agriculture development programs tend to equate increasing production with increasing food security. This document departs from this norm, and emphasizes climate resilience [for food security] not only in the context of production—which must focus on adaptation—but in operations beyond (para 8), which is a welcome change (Smith and Haddad 2015; Haddad 2014; Snapp et al. 2010; Jones et al. 2014). Integrating climate resilience into all FTF programs requires reducing the carbon foot print of the post-harvest handling, storage, as well as that of the larger agri-food system (e.g.: input & output value chains, food processing etc.). Taken in the broader context, it must also include reducing food loss and waste, and food miles. The draft paper correctly recognizes that ‘*the decisions beyond the farm affect climate resilience of the food system*’ (para 26). **IATP looks forward to seeing this further elaborated along the lines of strategies adopted in the United States** for building a thriving localized food system – with

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include traditional systems such as multi-story system and also approaches developed in recent past such as system of root intensification (SRI)

roads, climate services, rural infrastructure (local storage and processing facilities). All of this will help ensure food security and increase local incomes. Such an approach will also have the co-benefit of reduced emissions and reduced post-harvest losses in vulnerable countries that FTF programs target.

IATP appreciates the observation made in the context of agricultural investments in general: *‘current agricultural investments aimed at increasing food security through productivity, income and nutritional gains for smallholders often result in increased emissions in absolute terms’*. This is because most agriculture related programs provide subsidies to promote fossil fuel based agriculture. (para. 17). We urge you to add a similar statement regarding agricultural investments that are large scale in nature, while discussing emissions associated with land conversions for agricultural use. **In para 6, p. 2 we urge you to add a sentence to read,** *“current agricultural investments aimed at increasing food security through large scale investments often result in increased emissions from as a result of large scale land conversion for agricultural use (a cause for land use based emissions) and can often go hand in hand with increased displacement of communities thus a possible cause for their short and long term their food insecurity’.*” (Weis 2007; Moseley et al. 2015; Moseley et al. 2010)

In a level playing field, where fossil fuels are not subsidized, the *‘bending of the curve as far away from emission as possible’* (para 17) while increasing nutrition security and incomes need not be aspirational. In fact this will be a necessary co-benefit of mindful climate adaptation strategies (e.g.: include use of locally available and appropriate bio based manure, bio-pest control methods, multi-functional, diversified cropping systems etc.). The draft paper **does recognizes** this in saying *“Climate adaptation strategies that underpin resilience often confer mitigation benefits, although that outcome is not a driver in planning.”* (para. 22). **IATP looks forward to further elaboration it: by recognizing mitigation as a co-benefit** of climate resilient agriculture, rather than a goal in itself.

IATP urges FTF to recognize the importance of communities being in the driving seat of developing locally appropriate climate resilient practices, based both on their historically evolved knowledge of local resources/ environment, as well as knowledge gained in interactions with experts in social and physical sciences (Gliessman 2015; Scarborough et al. 2014). We note with concern that **this lack of recognition is one of the biggest lacunae** in this draft. Instead the focus is on ‘developing and deploying’: ‘climate smart technologies and innovations’, where the focus is neither on local communities, nor on local knowledge systems/ local technology.

Since there is a clear statement on the essential role of private companies for the commercialization and scaling of new technologies, it is possible that some of these technologies are external to the region. In such situations, **we hope that all technological options suggested as part of climate resilient agricultural practices would adhere to pre-cautionary**

**principles.** Also, we note that without adequate details on these technologies, IATP is unable to comment whether these technologies are such that they meet the twin goals of reducing under-nutrition and poverty while building climate resilience of the community;

Similarly we hope risk-mitigating incentives such as index-insurance will not be tied to adoption of an external technology, **but rather be made available to all farmers using agroecologically appropriate practices** developed within the community, and they can be partners for FTF programs.

Even as FTF is integrating CSA technologies into their current programs, **surprisingly there is hardly any acknowledgement of the extensive empirical research on agroecology, which focuses on resilience of the food systems.** AE is a scientific field of study that combines social sciences with physical sciences (as FTF aspires to do in future). Its practice has a people-centered approach to increasing incomes and nutrition security through climate resilient agriculture. Often assessments are conducted by academics working with movements (on reducing poverty, addressing nutrition security, increasing resilience). IATP **suggests that the draft paper pay attention to, and incorporate learnings from agroecology,** a rich field of research and practice. (e.g. Gliessman 2015; Vandermeer 2010; Chappell and LaValle 2011; see also the “[Scientist and Expert Statement of Support For Public Investment in Agroecological Research](#),” which has been signed by over 300 qualified scientists and researchers).

## **2. Alternative framing of climate resilience in the context of agriculture, to help inform FTF programming decisions at the level of concepts and strategies**

The Draft Paper lists three stated goals or pillars of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) – 1. Sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes; 2. Adapting and building resilience to climate change; and 3. Reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions where appropriate. (Para 19).

A distinctive characteristic of CSA as outlined in 2010 at the Hague conference on ‘Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change’, where climate smart growth was proposed in the context of agriculture, was its focus on mitigation. Termed Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA), IATP notes that with CSA, there is an unprecedented focus on the mitigation potential of agriculture, as expressed by donor interest. (See note below<sup>2</sup>), and FTF seems to be taking a similar approach towards climate resilience.

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<sup>2</sup> The Hague conference on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change recognized that “The multiple challenges the world is facing in terms of climate change, degradation of ecosystems, food insecurity require an integrated approach.” ([Chairs Summary, 2010](#)). A list of tools and technologies identified for implementing the Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) available in Annex of the [Chairs Summary, 2010](#) from this meeting clarifies the distinctive characteristic of CSA as its **focus on the mitigation potential of agriculture.**

The aspirational principles, listed in the context of CSA—holistic, intentional, synergetic, context specific and long term oriented—in the draft paper, each of which, is excellent. (para. 20) But the problem is precisely that they are listed simply as aspirational principles.

While aspirational principles might produce positive developments this potential is not a given, nor can a project be assessed for them. IATP suggests that instead these principles be further developed to provide performative indicators. [In practice, in the case of agroecology as practiced by farming communities, these principles are not simply aspirational – these can be assessed using multi variable (social, ecological, economic and cultural) performative indicators that can help assess the resilience of the agri-food system. (See IATP paper on [indicators](#))]

While mitigation is extremely important, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions should be integrated in every action where ever possible, IATP wishes to draw attention to the goals of FTF that are very much people-centered: to reduce the prevalence of poverty and under-nutrition.

We further suggest that it is possible to keep these goals front and center even as USAID tries to integrate climate resilience into its Feed the Future (FTF) programs. IATP suggests reframing the goals/ strategies accordingly.

- a. The new goal of FTF (where building climate resilience is a necessary condition to achieve food security) should be redefined as ***‘sustainably reducing the prevalence of poverty and under-nutrition’***. In other words FTF programs must continue to have their first and foremost goal as *‘increasing food and nutrition security as well as incomes’* (instead of what is now in the draft paper: increasing productivity and income. *(This is because increasing production is a necessary but not sufficient condition food security. See above, 2e; See also, Headey 2012.)*)
- b. To reiterate, what is currently listed as the second goal, *building resilience and adapting to climate change* is not a stand-alone goal that communities pursue. For them it is a strategy that they pursue -- to create a conducive environment (by building climate resilience of the land/water/seed/community) for achieving the first goal. Thus the second goal must be seen as in support of the first, rather than a stand-alone goal that is to be or can be independently pursued.
- c. Thirdly, climate mitigation should be seen as a byproduct of successful practices – ecologically and socially appropriate climate adaptation strategies—rather than a goal in itself. In fact reduction and/or removal of greenhouse gas emissions can be used as a measure of the environmental sustainability of climate adaptation strategies, and thus a co-benefit, rather than a goal in itself.
- d. IATP assumes that FTF wishes to pursue a people-centered approach with communities in the driver’s seat: This calls for

- retaining its primary goal but ensuring that climate resilient strategies are used for achieving that goal—i.e. to sustainably reduce the prevalence of poverty and under-nutrition
- having strategies for climate resilience and adaptation as a secondary goal in support of the first goal,
- reconsidering mitigation as a co-benefit that flows from ecologically sound climate adaptation practices, which is put in place as a means to achieve food security, rather than being considered an independent goal.

IATP stresses the importance of supporting, “*Climate adaptation strategies that underpin resilience*“, since these are key to ensure food security of communities in a sustainable manner;

In sum, to achieve the twin goals of reducing poverty and malnutrition sustainably, FTF-Projects must focus on climate adaptation strategies that underpin resilience, and that will always have mitigation as a co-benefit. This is different from what this paper currently seems to suggest – pursuing three separate goals, not necessarily simultaneously. For example, the focus on promoting efficiencies to enhance carbon sinks (para 23), in itself need not be sustainable or ecologically appropriate; nor is it necessary that emission reduction is achieved whenever resource use efficiency is pursued.

IATP believes that in all this the most important question is:

- Can FTF help poor communities build culturally, ecologically and nutritionally appropriate and socially and economically viable local food system to ensure their food and income security?

Finally, IATP wishes to thank USAID BFS for this opportunity to comment on the draft paper. We look forward to opportunities to discuss this further. Please contact us with any questions on further references you may have on this submission.

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#### **Resources:**

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