

Agriculture in the UNFCCC: Focusing on Smallholder Farmers and Food Producers

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Organized by CECOEDECON, PAIRVI, BJVJ, BEYOND COPENHEGAN and SADED

Seventy five percent of the world's poor live in the rural areas in developing countries, and the livelihoods of 2 billion people are dependent on 500 million small-scale farms. Climate Change is already causing serious harm to small holder farmers and food producers and to food security in developing countries. But the current debate in UNFCCC is focused on mitigation in agriculture and fails to draw a distinction between high input industrial agriculture and other types of agriculture including low input and already climate friendly smallholder integrated farming. For smallholder farmers and food producers, adaptation must be the first and foremost priority for addressing climate change and agriculture. The negotiations should identify ways and means of providing financial support mainly through public sources. The Side event was organized to raise a collective voice for addressing concerns of smallholder farmers in the climate change negotiations.

The side event was chaired by Justice (Retd.) Vinod Shankar Dave. The speakers included Ritu Tiwari (Cecoedecon), Ms. Anika Shroeder (MISEREOR), Mr. Paul Quintos (IBON International), Mr. Chief Adam Tampuri (Fair Trade International) and Mr. Michael Kuhen (Welt Hunger Hlife). Mr. Kailash Vijayvergiya, Hon'ble Minister Industries, IT and S&T, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh was special guest of the side event.

Special guest of the side event, Mr. Kailash Vijayvergiya said that the COP 18 is extremely important as it has to decide how we share the responsibilities as Kyoto Protocol expires this year. It is important to have an agreement that considers equity



and common but differentiated responsibility, and requires developed countries to reduce their emission, and supports developing and least developed countries in their struggle to move towards green economy and adapt to improved resilience, he added. While talking about his state's action plan on climate change he said that it has accorded maximum priority to the agriculture and food security, livestock and animal husbandry with

half of the proposed budget for the Plan going to agriculture and allied sectors. He concluded by saying that South Asia countries can provide leadership to climate change stabilization efforts in the region.

Ms. Ritu Tiwari, while setting the context of the side event said that Agriculture and food security are highly sensitive to climate variability and weather extremes, such as droughts, floods and severe storms and climate variability may alter the balance between food demand and supply. While highlighting the perspectives of smallholder farmers and food producers, she spoke on how small and marginal farmers in India are being affected due to a variety of reasons, which is induced by Climate change. She stated that reduced precipitation, erratic rainfall pattern, increased duration of summer, salinization of water and land, encroachment of sea etc. have not only affected farmers but also other small food producers and women. She emphasized that adaptation to current climate crisis is urgent. Ms. Ritu also highlighted major issues associated with proposed Work Program on Agriculture. She said that proposed work program on agriculture is being pushed by developed countries which have huge on farm and off farm emissions and they are seeing mitigation in agriculture (primarily through soil



carbon sequestration) as an opportunity to reduce their own emissions as well as earn carbon credits in the developing countries. If the present focus of work program on agriculture on mitigation in agriculture is finalized, it will pave the way for introducing soil carbon in the carbon market and will have disastrous impact on food security and livelihood of smallholder farmers and food

producers. She pointed out that the needs, interests and rights of small farm holders and food producers must be placed at the center of agriculture and climate change policies and practices and demanded that SBSTA should engage with farmers groups to advise the COP 18 on what should be the issues for consideration in negotiations on agriculture and climate change.

Ms. Anika Shroeder talked about the false solutions being proposed in agriculture in the name of 'Climate Smart Agriculture'. Climate Smart Agriculture may sound like a definition for sustainable agriculture or agro ecology. However, it includes high input agriculture and the use of genetically modified plants. She said that soil carbon sequestration is a methodology mired in inadequate scientific knowledge, inappropriate data and lack of countries capacity to measure soil carbon as it varies largely in different agro climatic zones and conditions. Many pilot projects being undertaken by World Bank etc. have even not been able to set the baseline, she reasoned. She also talked about how bio-char and no till agriculture being pushed as solutions to reduce emission in agriculture does not have much scientific basis or proven experience of reducing emission, and ultimately end up promoting increased fertilizer and pesticide use, which will benefit agribusiness companies and further increase the input cost in agriculture.

She also added that farming communities in developing countries are being made to believe that they would financially benefit from these mitigation projects in agriculture; however, as a matter of fact these projects are so difficult and technical to commission that it is very unlikely that farmers would be able to do it. Few pilot projects have also revealed that the financial benefit going to farmer, if at all has been extremely insignificant, she added. She emphasized that sources for agriculture, existing investments and subsidies, including funds for science and education, should be diverted, from the present focus on agro-industrial practices towards real sustainable agriculture solutions to enhance the adaptive capacity of food producers.

Mr. Paul Quintos spoke on food & climate crisis and shared a study as an alternative for smallholder farmers. He said that the issue of access to natural resources is becoming even more urgent with worsening of environmental degradation and climate change. Climate change is adversely affecting agriculture, reducing crop yields, distribution, prices, and so on. The climate crisis has the greatest impact in the agricultural sector of East Asia-Pacific countries – Philippines, Indonesia etc. The Philippines, for example, is in the list of top countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. He said that cautionary tale of modernization and commercialization is perhaps best illustrated by the story of the Green Revolution. Green revolution did boost crop yields but also raised costs of production and promoted a chemical-intensive monocrop-based farming which of course greatly benefited agrochemical TNCs who supplied these modern inputs and seeds. Years of chemical-intensive farming also led to long-term environmental degradation. While presenting the MASIPAG study in Philippines, he shared that this study was conducted in the Philippines comparing the organic rice farming households with conventional farmers. In this study the production costs, yields and incomes of organic farmers and conventional farmers using green revolution technology were compared among 840 small rice farming households. The results showed that farm inputs - chemical pesticides, fertilisers and seeds – are the single most important production cost for conventional farmers. Over two-thirds of the farming households using conventional farming also reported either deteriorating or stagnant incomes over the last decade but organic farmers reported significantly higher livelihood incomes compared to conventional farmers. This study demonstrated the great potential for enhancing food security by combining locally-adapted traditional and scientific knowledge, empowering small producers in terms of training, access to land, seeds, and other productive assets. A crucial aspect of empowerment of course is community organization. He also emphasized that this also dispels the claims of corporations that indigenous methods have actually been unsustainable and have caused too much production of world's greenhouse gas emissions. This also underscores the fact that the only way to counter corporate propaganda is through peoples' knowledge, experiences and action.

Mr. Chief Adam Tampuri said that Farmers are the ones most affected by the adverse effects of climate change. For vulnerable farmers, climate change is a daily reality that threatens their source of livelihood: agriculture. At the same time, lower yields of staple crops are driving up food prices, threatening their ability to feed their families. Small-scale farmers in developing countries contribute least to climate change, yet are being affected the most, threatening their livelihoods. He cited impacts of climate change on production of different crops in African countries and said that two consecutive frost spells have hit tea farmers in Kenya hard. About 25,000 small-scale farmers are affected by the low temperatures which causes withering of tea leaves. The frost has destroyed tea plantations in the west of the country and caused tea farmers to lose millions of Kenyan shillings. At Satemwa Tea Estate in Malawi, the rains do not arrive when expected, and there have been more droughts, forcing the tea farmers to use an expensive irrigation system. The extended drought periods also brought an influx of pests and disease, reducing the amount of usable green leaf they can harvest. While sharing the farmer's perspective, he said that farmers are devising various mechanisms and using traditional knowledge in adapting to the current effects of climate change but farmers need fair and effective climate finance options to take this work forward. Action is needed, and fast. Yet the voice of vulnerable farmers is too often overlooked in the climate change debate. Finance to adapt has been promised, but it is failing to reach those who need it most. He also called upon world leaders to ensure the most vulnerable get the support and finance needed to adapt to the growing impact of climate change on their farms and communities.

Mr. Michael Kuhen said that the phenomenon of the climate crisis has arisen because of a skewed process of fossil fuel based industrialization which has made the globe unsustainable for living. This model of development has not only been environmentally unsound but also has exacerbated inequity. It is alleged that agriculture contributes to around 12% of total GHG emissions and it could be as high as 30% including land use changes and deforestation. It is alleged that more than 75% of these emissions originate in developing countries and can be easily mitigated through soil carbon sequestration. That by implication means that developing countries, which are already under huge impacts of climate change brought about by the developed world will also have to take the burden of mitigation and adaptation also. However, as a matter of fact developed countries use three times more energy in producing one unit of food as compared to developing countries. In developed countries, agriculture is highly mechanized and is a purely economic activity engaging insignificant proportion of population and makes insignificant contribution to the GDP. In absolute terms agricultural emissions in developed countries far outstrip the emissions in developing countries. It is the need of the hour that that developed countries must adhere to their legally binding reduction commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and reduce their emission at source as per the demands of the science, acknowledge their historical role and undertake common but differentiated responsibility in mitigating climate change. It is needed that agricultural



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