



SAI Platform

Position Paper on Climate Smart Agriculture

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Introducing Climate Smart Agriculture

Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) is an approach to help guide actions to transform and re-orient agricultural systems to support development and food security under a changing climate. “Agriculture” is taken to cover crop and livestock production, and fisheries and forest management. The concept was first launched by FAO in 2010 in a background paper prepared for the Hague Conference on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change, to tackle three main objectives:

- Sustainably increasing food security by increasing agricultural productivity and incomes;
- Building resilience and adapting to climate change;
- Developing opportunities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions compared to expected trends.

The concept of Climate Smart Agriculture has gained an increasingly high profile in recently. This is notably due to the launch of a new UN Platform at the Climate Summit in New York in September 2014, which aims to exchange experience & advance the agenda of climate smart agriculture (CSA). See <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/09/AGRICULTURE-Action-Plan.pdf>

Potential cause for concern

There seems to be confusion around the meaning and scope of CSA: the term CSA tends to be confused with “sustainable agriculture” by a wide range of organizations and individuals. SAI Platform defines “sustainable agriculture” as “*the efficient production of safe, high quality agricultural products, in a way that protects and improves the natural environment, the social and economic conditions of farmers, their employees and local communities, and safeguards the health and welfare of all farmed species*” and has developed a detailed list of related principles and practices (P&Ps) to support implementation of sustainable agriculture practices.

For ‘Climate Smart Agriculture’, no such meaningful criteria have been defined for what CSA is – and is not. Therefore in theory, practices that are unsustainable when looking at them through social, economic or even *other* (than climate) environmental lenses, could potentially be covered by the term.

SAI Platform Recommendations

1. Clarifying the meaning and content of CSA:

- In order to prevent any further confusion, and possible reputation risks to the agricultural sector, Inter-Governmental Organizations and others should **define CSA’s scope**, i.e. clarify practices that are effectively covered, and those that are not covered (e.g. social pillar); and how CSA supports the overall sustainable agriculture picture (see also below).



- In addition, it should be made clear if CSA focuses on **adaptation** or **mitigation**, or **both**.
- It should also be clarified that CSA practices should not be conflated or confused with practices that are primarily designed to deliver enhanced (overall) sustainable performance.

Whilst we believe that CSA must be a part of a more holistic sustainable agriculture context, the concept of CSA **would benefit from an explicit focus on practices that delivering on climate resilience**. We believe that this is particularly the case for small farmers.

2. Clarifying how CSA relates to sustainable agriculture :

- CSA is an important sub-set of sustainable agriculture - which covers all the three pillars of sustainability comprehensively (see SAI P&Ps for Sustainable Agriculture on <http://saiplatform.org/>). As such, it is important to promote CSA practices **as well as other relevant** practices - which together make up sustainable agriculture.
- On our part, SAI Platform and its members will assess **new practices that can build farmer resilience** and that **deliver material climate mitigation** and that may not as yet be reflected in the requirements of our Guidelines and Standard (P&Ps and Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA)). **We will promote these among SAI Platform members and key stakeholders and networks.** (see Annex: Preliminary scope of agricultural practices delivering material climate resilience and Preliminary scope of agricultural practices delivering material climate mitigation)

3. Working together

- SAI Platform will be **pleased to work with FAO and members of the Coalition on Climate Smart Agriculture to further define practices and interventions** that SAI Platform members and others can promote, carry out, and develop.

For more information, please contact:

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The global food and drink industry initiative for sustainable agriculture



ANNEX

Preliminary scope of agricultural practices to deliver material climate resilience

1- Soil Management, especially to facilitate the retention of soil moisture:

To cope with climate change, specific **soil management** practices need to be adapted taking into account the types of crop, grazing and forest systems, the diversity and current status of soils, terrain and climatic conditions. A non-exhaustive list includes:

- Retaining vegetation cover to avoid erosion, rapid water run-off, and retain soil moisture
- Improve water percolation and avoid flash floods. E.g., Indonesian technique of “biopores”
- Increasing soil organic carbon to facilitate water retention
- Consideration of agroforestry systems which can play important roles in increasing the resilience to climate change impacts for small scale farmers and in larger landscape approaches

2- Water Management

- Irrigation
- Soil Moisture (as above)

3- Variety selection

Development and usage of plants with lower evapotranspiration, that are adapted to drought (e.g. deeper rooting) or which reach maturity with fewer growing days.

Preliminary scope of agricultural practices to deliver material climate mitigation

- 1- Primary forests:** No conversion of forests (including the concept of high carbon stock forests)
- 2- Tree planting:** Restoration of habitats including forests, and use of agro-forestry etc.
- 3- Peatlands:** Securing undrained peatlands to prevent emissions; rewetting drained peatlands to reduce emissions; and adapting management of peatlands that cannot be rewetted
- 4- Energy:** Reducing emissions from livestock and incorrect/excess fertilizer usage; increasing the use of renewable energy / reducing the use of non-renewable energy.