



SMALLHOLDER FARMERS DEMAND CLIMATE JUSTICE

At the UN Climate Change Conference

With 80% of farmers globally being smallholder farmers, providing 30% of the world's food production, a healthy, safe and sustainable environment is crucial to continue to live off their lands and secure the right to food. Unfortunately, the impacts of climate change are becoming more and more evident for smallholder farmers, who bear the brunt of the crisis while having done very little to contribute to its causes. Having limited access to natural resources such as water and fertile land may further push smallholder farmers into poverty. This is climate injustice.

As a sector, agriculture needs to be considered in actions to tackle the causes of climate change as agriculture, forestry and other land uses contribute to 22% of net global emissions. Most of these emissions come from large-scale and conventional farming practices and deforestation. According to the IPCC's sixth assessment report (2022), farming system approaches like agroecology can be significant contributors to mitigation pathways. These types of methods have the potential to sequester significant amounts of soil carbon and reduce emissions from on-field practices, such as fertilizer and manure management. The report also identified, with a high level of confidence, that agroecology is a feasible climate adaptation option for the future. Agroecology and other sustainable agriculture and land management practices not only support farmers in adapting

to the effects of climate change and support climate change mitigation, but also restore ecosystems, contribute to biodiversity and strengthen resilience.

Smallholder farmers using sustainable farming methods therefore offer durable solutions to the climate crisis. Yet only 1.7% of the total climate finance tracked annually has been channelled to bring benefits to smallholder farmers in developing countries. Overall, adaptation funding is far from sufficient; it is estimated that international adaptation financial flows to developing countries are currently 5–10 times below the needed level and that this gap continues to widen, especially as adaptation needs are estimated to increase with time. This must rapidly change, and smallholder farmers' policy asks need to be addressed.

Integrate the right to food in the Global Goal on Adaptation

Climate-induced disasters increasingly affect crop yields and patterns as well as the availability of pasture, with negative effects on smallholder farmers' income, food, and water security, and subsequently safety, especially for women. Climate change adaptation has, in policy setting, received significantly less attention than mitigation.

The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) presents an opportunity to address this and ensure that marginalised people in developing countries receive the assistance required to adapt to a changing climate. In order to ensure the right support for those most in need, their intersectional perspectives need to be included in the formulation of the GGA. How adaptation is defined, measured and reported needs to be flexible enough to allow for different lived experiences and for the limitations to adaptation of those most marginalised.

The food system has great potential to become more resilient and contribute significantly to climate change adaptation if given the appropriate means. As such, the GGA needs to take on a complete farm-to-fork approach by including sectors across the food value chain: agriculture, value addition, transportation, markets and consumption.

Ecosystem-based solutions have the potential to reduce the intensity of climate hazards by 26%. Yet the health and resilience of ecosystems are increasingly at stake, exacerbated by climate change and extractive industries. Adaptation approaches that work in harmony with local communities and the environment should be given emphasis, such as supporting indigenous peoples and local communities' restoration and conservation efforts of important natural resources for ecosystem-based solutions. Methods such as agroecology, agroforestry and sustainable land management practices therefore provide opportunities both to increase ecosystem resilience and reduce the pace of adaptation needs for smallholder farmers.

In the GGA, UN Member States should:

- > Ensure ambitious principles for locally led adaptation, ensuring that these are established based on the needs and diversified gendered voices of local communities.
- > Recognise the importance of agriculture, smallholder farmers and food security to achieve the targets in the Paris Agreement, and ensure a fair transition for farmers to a sustainable agriculture and food system.
- > Have a holistic approach and integrate synergy solutions to multiple climate-induced environmental problems, e.g. biodiversity loss, by using agroecological approaches.

Moses Luka Samaito. Foto: George Kamau



Close the climate funding gap

Estimates show that subsidies for fossil fuel consumption around the world rocketed to over 1 trillion USD in 2022. At the same time, funding for both climate change mitigation and adaption is lacking. According to the Glasgow Climate Pact, adopted in 2021, climate finance should double from 2019 to 2025. But in 2020 alone, climate finance promised to developing countries fell at least 17 billion USD short of the 100 billion USD pledged by developed countries. Matters are made worse by the fact that the unmet pledges are far from sufficient to meet the needs. It is estimated that international adaptation financial flows to developing countries are currently 5–10 times below these needs and that this gap continues to widen.

According to the IPCC there is sufficient global capital to close the funding gap, but in order to close it and achieve the climate goals of the Paris Agreement, financial flows must stop supporting extractive industries that contribute to a worsening of the climate crisis. It is unacceptable that these industries are allowed to continue putting high pressure on natural resources, threatening indigenous peoples and local communities' rights, such as their right to land, polluting and contributing to climate change without legal and financial remedies.

Most of the international climate finance today is in the form of loans, with only just over 25% provided in the form of grants or subsidies. When finance is provided in the form of a loan, the recipient becomes further indebted, while the lender can profit

from the interest rates. It is therefore unacceptable that developing countries which are already facing severe debt distress are forced to take on even more debt to cope with the climate crisis.

UN Member States should:

- > Honour the Glasgow Climate Pact, which for developed countries includes doubling their collective adaptation funding from 2019 levels by 2025 on a par with mitigation funding, and ensure that it becomes accessible to those most affected, such as women smallholder farmers.
- > End subsidies to extractive industries and for fossil fuel consumption and instead implement mechanisms which ensure that polluters pay, e.g. by increasing carbon taxes. Funds raised should be channelled to adaptation and climate action.
- > Increase the proportion of climate grants and subsidies compared to loans.

Objectives of the climate finance provided and mobilised (USD billion)



Funding for adaptation is increasing but still far from a 50–50 balance with mitigation.

Source: Concord Sweden, OECD (2022)

Encourage states to raise ambitions on Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans

Each country has a responsibility to contribute to climate action. The progress of the world’s collective action to implement the Paris Agreement is being assessed in the Global Stocktake. The first round will conclude at COP28. However, we already know that the current set of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are not on track to achieve the goals, in fact they will lead to a temperature increase of at least 2.8°C by the end of the century. According to the IPCC, there is an implementation gap between the projected emissions under current policies and the projected emissions resulting from implementation of the unconditional and conditional elements of the NDCs. While all parties have submitted at least their first NDC, a lack of adequate finance and political commitment is contributing to the varying level of ambition and quality. Further, at COP27 it was noted

that only 40 countries have a National Adaptation Plan (NAP), where lack of finance and support from the Green Climate Fund was cited by several countries as an underlying reason. Strong commitments from all countries, along with action to back up those commitments, are now needed.

UN Member States should:

- > Fulfil commitments to update their NDCs. The process should be inclusive and conducted in consultation with rural organisations and smallholder farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities, and women’s rights organisations.
- > Address agriculture and the right to food in NDCs and NAPs. Give prominence to sustainable agriculture and land management practices, such as agroecology. Support the development of NAPs and include local communities and CSOs in the development process.
- > Take appropriate action based on the findings in the Global Stocktake to accelerate national climate action and updated climate commitments on mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, finance and cross-cutting issues, like gender equality.

Support synergy solutions to achieve food security and climate justice

The degradation of ecosystems and the decline of biodiversity not only exacerbate climate change and threaten the natural processes which provide clean air, water and food. In parallel with the climate crisis, the vulnerability of the global food system has lately become evident with increasing costs and a lack of available inputs, resulting in soaring inflation and high costs of production. With this, addressing the interconnectedness between social, environmental and economic factors becomes important. One way to do this is through agroecology and ecosystem management, as these approaches extend beyond environmentally sustainable agricultural practices to focus on empowering farmers to achieve food sovereignty. They lessen the dependence on costly mineral fertilisers and pesticides, while increasing food diversification. Diversifying food production improves resilience and sustainable rural livelihoods, while at the same time supporting biodiversity. This increases independence and diversifies income sources for smallholder farmers.

Smallholder farmers should be supported in taking realistic steps towards ensuring sustainability, productivity and profitability, based on knowledge about the changing climate and weather patterns. This includes practices that allow communities to take ownership of their production and consumption of food.

UN Member States should:

- > Recognise the interconnectedness of the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity for their combined effects on the right to food. Awareness and capacity need to be raised around these linkages.
- > Support climate policies and finance that jointly address synergy solutions for multiple environmental problems, such as agroecological approaches. Climate actions, resilient crops and biodiversity need to be integrated goals.
- > Ensure that climate policies and finance do not create trade-offs between goals on biodiversity and human development and thus worsen the environmental crisis or human rights. One action must not make another problem worse.

Increase the focus on resilience in finance and policy

The frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters are increasing year on year. Approximately half of the world’s population currently lives in so-called climate hotspots – areas highly vulnerable to climate change. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience measures are therefore vital for vulnerable communities, such as smallholder farmers and indigenous

peoples. However, funding mechanisms for DRR and resilience are currently insufficient, often not reaching those most in need. Resilience funding has to take the entire disaster cycle – enhanced anticipation, prevention, risk reduction and recovery – into consideration. It should be transformative, meaning that it must move away from being merely reactive, looking only at present and near-time risk. We know that the risk landscape is changing, and we need to consider this in funding decisions and implementation.

UN Member States should:

- > Prioritise the implementation of the Sendai Framework, including the priority to invest in DRR for resilience, and ensure that efforts under UNFCCC and UNDRR are not carried out in silos, but rather reinforce each other.
- > Increase funding for resilience and DRR and ensure it reaches those most affected, such as women smallholder farmers.
- > Increase the focus on resilience in climate negotiations, and allow space and voice to those impacted the most.



Ammasi Theivani. Foto: Amila Gamage

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We Effect works for a just, sustainable world free of poverty and wants to enable women and men living in poverty to improve their lives.

This position paper has been written by We Effect.

