

Food Fights for Justice

PARIS CLIMATE JUSTICE BRIEFS

DEC 2015 #4

What is at stake in Paris? Five key fights at the UNFCCC

The build-up to the December Paris climate summit is focusing world attention on the issue of climate change. In the process, there is significant opportunity to raise and highlight justice issues that lie at the intersection of climate change and food – for example, the fact that climate change will threaten the right to food, with the gravest impacts on the poorest and most vulnerable, through devastating impacts on food production. A second critical issue to highlight is the central role played by industrial systems of agricultural production in causing climate change, in particular through massive emissions from industrial meat production, production and use of synthetic chemical fertilizers, and large-scale monocultures of commodities shipped around the world.

How do these issues land within the current battles in the UNFCCC? What are the most important fights on the road to Paris where food campaigners can engage and bring a vision for food justice and a different way of producing food? Here are five key fights:

1. For a temperature goal that protects the rights to food and water – with actions towards that goal based on equity.

For food sovereignty, 2°C warming is *too much*. Already crop yields are decreasing, and with further increases in temperatures we expect significant impacts on the right to food, lives, and livelihoods, particularly of the poor and most vulnerable. To minimize these impacts we need a target to keep temperature rise as far below 1.5°C as possible; with ambitious, equitable, and fair sharing of emissions cuts; and accompanied by the means of implementation (climate finance, technology, capacity building) necessary to meet this target.

Equity in determining who does what is critical – it means not placing the burden of emissions reductions on poor countries. Developed countries must assume their *fair share*¹ of both emissions reductions and the finance needed to help other countries decarbonize their energy

¹ <http://www.climatefairshares.org>

ASIAN PEOPLES' MOVEMENT ON
DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH - ENGLAND
WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRD WORLD NETWORK
EARTH IN BRACKETS
PHILIPPINES MOVEMENT FOR
CLIMATE JUSTICE

LDC WATCH
TIPPING POINT COLLECTIVE
BOLIVIAN PLATFORM ON CLIMATE
CHANGE

sectors and adapt. The sharing of the emissions burden must be based on historical responsibility, capacity, and repayment of climate debt. A temperature goal without these additional provisions is likely to put undue burden on developing countries.

While language recognizing the right to food and water is not likely to be included in the text itself, we must judge the Paris outcome based on whether those rights can be realized – which for much of the world will be very difficult or impossible at 2°C.

2. For principles and reference to rights to ensure that mitigation efforts do not compromise access to food – that is, fighting against carbon markets and land-grabbing UNFCCC-style.

Carbon markets in trees and soils were only the beginning. The idea that we can use land and trees to sequester emissions is seductive and viewed by some key actors as an alternative to emission reductions, or as a way to buy time as we transform the fossil fuel economy. Markets in soil and trees have not turned out to be the finance panacea thought by many, but soil and trees are still seen as the solution to long-term temperature rise – through geoengineering. This is the new face of the old threat: that new land-based mitigation techniques – such as biochar, bioenergy carbon capture and storage (BECCS) and other types of carbon dioxide removal (CDR) geoengineering approaches, as well as old “solutions” like biofuels – will compete with the use of land to feed people.

The agreement will likely contain minimal language referring to carbon markets or land use. Instead, the relevant text is likely to be simple enabling language which opens the door for markets and the development of new or revised rules for land-use accounting. Fighting against this type of language in the UNFCCC is difficult as conversations are obscured in technical decision language to enable rules to be developed in work programmes that will start in 2016. That said, these are still live fights.

Campaigners inside the talks are trying to secure language in the core agreement that can constrain those rules:

Parties shall, when pursuing actions in the land sector in addition to actions in other sectors and consistent with all relevant international obligations, prioritise the protection, maintenance and restoration of natural ecosystems; undertake emissions reductions and removals in an equitable manner; and the governing body shall develop principles and guidelines for ensuring social protections, food security, ecological integrity, transparency and comparability in relation to such actions.

To be clear, this is compromise language. There are a number of NGOs inside the talks very happy to develop rules for carbon markets. More critical voices are needed to strengthen this language and to ensure that it can make it into the final agreement.

3. For a mechanism on loss and damage.

The slow-onset processes of temperature rise, sea level rise, salinization, ocean acidification, and desertification all pose substantial and ever increasing threats to future food production and the lives and livelihoods of food producers and fisherfolk. There are very clear limits to adaptation to these constantly increasing pressures, leaving those who depend on the land and water with no options but to find alternate livelihoods, often through migration.

A loss and damage mechanism that can address these losses must be anchored in the agreement. A mechanism was established in Warsaw a few years ago (the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage), but developing countries are looking to anchor that temporary institution into the legal agreement, with the possibility to strengthen it by expanding its mandate. The mechanism to be anchored in the Paris agreement must at a minimum be able to: address slow onset climate impacts beyond adaptation; provide for reparations for permanent loss and damage; and protect climate migrants. These elements are all fundamental to protecting the right to food under the climate change regime.

4. For the right kind of climate finance to the right kinds of projects.

Several important fights are brewing at the Green Climate Fund (GCF), with developed countries on one side and developing countries and civil

society on the other. Two of the biggest battles are about who gets to disburse climate finance (national entities vs. private banks, multilateral development banks, and large intergovernmental agencies like the FAO) and under what terms (grants vs. loans). These battles will spill over into the discourse in Paris as frustrations around an overall lack of climate finance run high.

As it looks now, monies are more likely to be channeled through multilateral development banks and large intergovernmental agencies like the FAO than through national entities. Anyone who has been following the FAO's leadership of the "climate-smart" agriculture² agenda should be concerned that climate finance decisions will follow their priorities rather than those determined at a national scale.

There is no shortage of support needs for communities to address the impacts of climate change in agricultural systems, including support for adaptation for vulnerable regions and transformation to sustainable and resilient food production systems, built around local food economies. In particular, GCF monies should be directed towards small-scale community and ecosystem-based adaptation projects and away from "climate-smart" agriculture. A number of civil society organizations are working to define the right kinds of projects³ for the GCF to fund, which will lead to real and necessary transformations.

5. Against "climate-smart" solutions in the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA).

The Paris outcome will include the legal agreement and accompanying decisions, submission of intended nationally determined contributions, a finance package, as well as a random assemblage of voluntary initiatives bundled together under The Lima-Paris Action Agenda. The initiatives are collected together under themes, one of which is agriculture. The initiatives will be showcased on specific days during the COP, with agriculture scheduled for 1 December.

The FAO and the French government are in charge of the agriculture theme. Given that pairing, we should expect "climate-smart" agriculture to be prominently featured. Indeed, the French government has been heavily invested

in promoting "climate-smart" agriculture, including through support of the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture. In addition, Stephane LeFoll, the French agriculture minister, has a pet research initiative called "4 pour 1000" or "votre carbone nous interesse" – "your carbon interests us," which he plans to launch in Paris. LeFoll claims that if the soil carbon concentration in all the soils around the world was increased by 0.4% every year it would compensate for the total yearly carbon emissions from all sources.

Civil society groups are campaigning to keep "climate-smart" agriculture out of the LPAA solutions agenda, including with a widely supported sign-on letter calling for governments "*not to endorse Climate-Smart Agriculture as a solution to climate change, nor to label any other initiative that would be part of the "agenda of solutions" as part of the concept.*"

² <http://www.climatesmartagconcerns.info>

³ http://www.ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/7-2-15-FINAL-Getting_Climate_Finance_Right-web.pdf