

The role of equitable adaptation policies in promoting smallholder farmer engagement in agricultural trade

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Paper presented at the International Technical Conference on Climate Change, Agricultural Trade and Food Security, 15-17 November 2017, FAO, Rome.

Abstract

The key to improving trade in developing states is support to smallholder agriculture. The focus on smallholder agricultural holdings is in turn expected to accelerate the achievement of sustainable development, as more than 70% of agriculture in developing countries is conducted under smallholdings [1]. However, smallholder agriculture is extremely vulnerable to climate change risks through increased risks of crop diseases and rainfall variability. This is exacerbated by other stresses like land degradation and population growth. Supporting smallholder farmers² to engage in trade involves development of supportive policies that encourage adaptation to climate risks for improved agricultural production that goes beyond household consumption. Adaptation and agriculture policies at the national and sub-national level provide a starting point for this. This presentation will contribute to the conference theme on the role of domestic support in encouraging agricultural trade and food security. It will build on an ongoing PhD research project to make a case for an intensified focus on smallholder farmers in trade debates in developing countries, and highlight the possible ways through which agricultural and adaptation policies can contribute towards this. Case references will be drawn from the Ugandan agricultural sector National Adaptation Planning process and the draft policy output. The presentation will demonstrate that focusing on smallholder farmers allows for equity in adaptation and development interventions as it ensures that those who are most vulnerable to climate change benefit from such actions.

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² Smallholder farmers include those engaged in both crop and animal production, forestry and fisheries.

1 Introduction

Addressing climate change is a conditional precursor for sustainable development. Specifically, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 on climate action is expected to fast-track progress towards the achievement of sustainable development. This is due to the impacts of climate change on key areas of development like infrastructure, health, education and energy [2]. The integration of measures to address climate change is also prioritized under SDG 13 [3]. These strategies are required to enable groups to adapt to and mitigate climate change and safeguard development gains. Equitable climate change adaptation is especially important because it allows those who are most vulnerable to climate change to benefit from adaptation actions. Specifically, equity is important in agriculture, which is characterized by different degrees of socio-economic and political inequalities which affects ability of different groups to adapt to climate change. This paper places smallholder farmers at the center of equitable adaptation processes, and following the theme of the conference, attempts to demonstrate National Adaptation Planning Processes can contribute towards improved agricultural trade and food security.

The rest of this section discusses how equity fits into the sustainable development agenda. The second chapter provides a brief definition of equity and the different types of equity. The third section highlights how smallholder farming can contribute towards sustainable development in developing countries while the fourth section uses the Uganda National Adaptation Planning process for the Agricultural sector as a case example of how planning processes can address the needs of smallholder farmers. The last section is a conclusion that summarizes the discussion.

Equity within the sustainable development agenda

Climate change is describes as a paradox, with global root causes and local impacts [4]. Those who are most impacted by climate change also have the least capacity to act. These are mostly the poorest people in developing states, where vulnerability characterised by socio-economic and political marginalization, which results in differential vulnerability. Engaging in climate action requires that these factors be taken into consideration when designing and implementing adaptation activities. This would result in benefits of adaptation addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, which is an equitable approach to climate action.

Equity is a key component of the sustainable development agenda. Specifically, the SDGs are set on a 'leave no one behind' principle, which seeks to ensure that poverty reduction is achieved for everyone across the world. In her speech on 'A commitment to leave no one behind', Helen Clark emphasizes on the tackling inequalities by saying "The reasons for prioritizing inequality are obvious. It's a global problem. It shows up in badly skewed income distribution; in gender and other discrimination; and in equal access to the most basic goods and services like food, water, education and health. It extends to access to land and natural resources, and to political participation and decision-making" [5]. This demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of inequalities.

International climate action has also prioritized equity. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has 'differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities' as a core principles guiding action towards climate change [6]. Allocation of international adaptation funding is expected to be based on levels of vulnerability, where states that are most vulnerable receive support to adapt [7].

At the national and local levels, actors have been tasked with ensuring that adaptation is embedded within development planning processes. State governments and other stakeholders are urged to mainstream climate change adaptation on development plans. Efforts like the development of the National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) and the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are examples of combined efforts by national and international actors to ensure that development actions take into consideration current and future vulnerabilities. Many countries have already developed and started implementing the NAPAs. These have not been without successes, failures and criticism. Some countries like Uganda and Zambia have already started developing their NAPs. One key concern for both is the integration of equity within the adaptation policy processes.

2 What is Equity

Equity is based on an understanding that adaptation processes involve trade-offs. An equitable process is aware of these trade-offs and attempts to make sure that those who are disadvantaged are not left out of the adaptation process. Specifically, social equity is defined as "the way that social and political institutions distribute both goods and bads among constituent members" [8]. It is also defined as "fair processes dependent on due means, equal protection and rights, ... equity in the availability of services and benefits, ... equity in the provision services and benefits, ... an equal level of outcomes for all groups, and ... a guarantee of a place at the table to express views on policy choices and service delivery" [9]. Generally, equity entails fair processes and outcomes, which are guided by

inequalities and differential vulnerability to climate change. Equity is commonly conceptualized as having three main elements –distributive, procedural and recognition equity.

Distributive equity concerns the allocation of outcomes of adaptation processes [10]. Procedural equity relates to the processes that contribute towards decision making regarding the outcomes of these processes [11]. Recognition on the other hand involves an awareness of the differences within groups, including variations in what groups value and the losses incurred from climate impacts [12]. An equitable adaptation process would therefore ensure that adaptation benefits are allocated to those who are most vulnerable, whereby decisions about these allocations are made in participatory and inclusive processes which recognize that different groups and sub-groups in the population experience impacts of climate change in different ways.

3 Agriculture as an opportunity to achieve sustainable development

Agriculture and smallholder farmers in Africa

For the world, and specifically so many developing countries, agriculture a key component of the sustainable development agenda. For example, the SDG 2 on that strives to end world hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture is dependent on agricultural production systems. UN statistics also show that Agriculture provides employment to 40% of the global population, which is the largest proportion compared to other sectors [13]. Developing countries, like Tanzania for example, derives over half of its national income from agriculture [14].

A considerable proportion of agriculture around the world is characterised by smallholder farming. As a result, 2014 was declared the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). This year was used to garner political support for smallholder farming, which was expected to result in the creation of an institutional environment that would support improved smallholder farming. The UN estimates the presence of 500 million smallholder farms worldwide, which account for more than four fifths of the food consumed by the world [13]. Most of these farms are in developing states. FAO also reports that 80% of farmland in Sub-Saharan Africa is committed to smallholder agriculture [15]. In Ethiopia, for example, 96% of agriculture is small scale [16]. Investing in smallholder farming can therefore accelerate progress towards sustainable development goals. Additionally, the links between smallholder agriculture, poverty and gender inequalities are strong, which means that addressing smallholder farming would contribute towards equity. Most smallholdings are concentrated in poor regions. These are also increasingly facing other issues other than climate change [17], like increasing

pressures on land through land fragmentation and degradation. These pressures, resulting in unsustainable natural resource use and farming practices.

The key questions within research and practice in smallholder farming and climate change include: Can smallholder farming be leveraged to eliminate poverty? What approaches/processes will enable this? What are the systemic barriers to smallholder farming? Initiatives to promote smallholder farming are generally targeted towards improving productivity, incomes and a diversification in livelihoods. An investment in smallholder farming is therefore expected to reduce poverty levels in rural areas, improve gender equality, increase household income and food security. If this is achieved, smallholder farmers are expected to make enormous contributions towards trade through national and global agricultural markets.

Trade and sustainable development

Increased production can only contribute to poverty reduction if smallholder farming households and communities can produce surplus agricultural products that can reach the market, or if farming results in increased income through better nutrition and improved food security. The link between improved smallholder agriculture and market participation is therefore strong. Researchers have demonstrated the need to connect smallholders to local and international markets and the challenges that smallholder farmers face in accessing these markets [18, 19]. Policy recommendations include enabling access to investments, markets and productive services and resources into smallholder farming. Most of these recommendations target international and national trade policies, which are expected to create an enabling environment for the participation of smallholders in the market. While this is a much-needed approach, the role of national adaptation policy planning processes should not be overlooked.

NAPs enable countries to engage in medium and long-term national and local adaptation planning. UNFCCC guidelines on the NAP process present it as an iterative process, involving multiple stakeholders that can help states integrate adaptation into their development planning [20]. Agriculture, being an important sector in developing countries therefore becomes a central concern for NAP processes. Adaptation planning processes for the agricultural sector address the whole value chain, from production to consumption. Integrating agriculture into NAPs means that countries can engage in sustainable agricultural practices that promote both adaptation and mitigation. For developing states, equitable NAPs for the agricultural sector should not exclude smallholders.

4 Adaptation planning for the agricultural sector in Uganda

FAO and UNDP are currently supporting eight countries, including Uganda and Zambia, to develop agricultural sector specific National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag). The programs are described as "... country-driven process[es] to identify and integrate climate adaptation measures for agricultural sectors into relevant national planning and budgeting processes"[21]. Strengthening institutions and capacities at the national level are at the center of these programs. The Uganda policy process is already advanced. Over the past few years, the program has already undertaken scoping exercises, stakeholder consultations which have resulted in the development of the policy. The policy has also been designed to fit within the existing development and adaptation policy structures. Specifically, the NAP-Ag has been developed so as to contribute to the National Development Plans (NDP I and II), the National Climate Change Plan (NCCP), sectoral strategies and sub-national medium and long-term development plans. The NAP-Ag is currently in the process of gaining parliamentary approval. The policy process has been characterised by stakeholder consultations with groups at different levels and use of existing policy structures. A focus on smallholder farmers in these programs and resultant plans is essential.

However, an equitable approach to the NAP process for agriculture has to answer these questions: Who is adaptation for? Why is adaptation for smallholder farmers in specific country contexts important? How is an adaptation planning process outcomes determined? How is adaptation planning engaged in? Who are engaged in the adaptation planning process? This includes determining who should benefit from adaptation plans for the agricultural sector, and what measures need to be put in place to ensure that these benefits reach those who engage in agriculture and are most vulnerable to climate change.

Equitable adaptation policy processes that support smallholder farmers have three characteristics: Distributive –ensuring that smallholder farmers have access to the right types of resources that will support them to adapt; Procedural –Involving smallholder agriculture actors in the processes of policy design and implementation; and Recognition –being aware of the differences in needs between groups of smallholder farmers, including those that occur across geographies or socio-economic groups.

A key characteristic of an equitable policy process that cuts across these three characteristics is adoption of a systemic adaptation approach, where institutional structures that support specifically support adaptation needs for the most vulnerable are put in place. For example, adaptation planning processes should anticipate the medium and long term adaptation needs of smallholders and ensure

that institutions have the capacity to provide these. Planning and implementation of actions needs to be informed by risk assessments jointly developed by multiple stakeholders. This would result in a balance between technocratic and community-led approaches to adaptation within the agricultural sector. To support agricultural trade and food security, a key element of a systems approach would require development of markets that are smallholder farmer friendly.

5 Conclusion

This paper has briefly presented the justification of why a focus on smallholder farmers in adaptation planning processes can contribute towards equity in the sustainable adaptation agenda. Using a case example of the adaptation planning process for the agricultural sector in Uganda, the paper has identified possible ways through which smallholder farmers' capacity to adapt to climate change can be improved thus contributing to improved agricultural trade and food security. A key area of research however remains in regard to how equity is represented in cross-level policy processes. Specifically, this relates to how equity is understood by actors involved in the adaptation policy process, and how these understandings are integrated into policies and institutional structures to support adaptation.

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