

Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA): The Way Forward

39th FAO Conference Side Event

12 June 2015 (13:00-14:00), Sheikh Zayed Centre

Event objectives

- To facilitate and contribute to ongoing dialogue on CSA.
- To share practical experiences and lessons learned in upscaling CSA.
- To mobilize increased stakeholder participation in GACSA and strengthen the global drive and support for CSA.

Panellists (in speaking order):

- **Inge Rydland** (*GACSA Co-Chair*)
- **Carlos Seré** (*Senior Advisor on Strategic Partnerships and Global Initiatives, Office of the Director General, Bioversity International, CGIAR Consortium*)
- **David J. Lane** (*Permanent Representative of the USA to the UN Agencies in Rome*)
- **Marco Vinicio Vargas Pereira** (*Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the UN Agencies in Rome*)
- **Marco Marzano de Marinis** (*Secretary General, World Farmers Organization*)
- **Paul Zakariya** (*Smallholder farmer, Zimbabwe*)

Facilitator: **Martin Frick** (*Director, Climate Energy and Tenure Division, FAO*)

Closing remarks: **Ren Wang** (*Assistant Director General, Agriculture Department, FAO*)

Event recording: <http://intranet.fao.org/stream/?id=3953>

Event Summary

Mr. Frick welcomed all participants and briefly introduced the panellists. Over 200 participants attended.

Opening remarks: “What value addition does GACSA bring to the promotion and scaling up of CSA?” – Inge Rydland, GACSA Co-Chair

Mr. Rydland noted that this side event represented a landmark for GACSA, and introduced Dr. Achuo Enow, the new coordinator of GACSA’s Facilitation Unit. Mr. Rydland described GACSA as a platform for global discourse. Smallholders produce around 70 percent of the world’s food today. GACSA exists to help them become resilient, more productive on their land and to adapt to the changes in climate. GACSA works collaboratively through three thematic Action Groups (Knowledge, Investment and Enabling Environment). Mr. Rydland concluded by welcoming the panellists’ and participants’ discussion on what added value GACSA could offer.

Panel discussion: “What is the added value for CSA for smallholders, and how can policies and research make a difference?”

Carlos Seré, Senior Advisor on Strategic Partnerships and Global Initiatives, Office of the Director General, Bioversity International, CGIAR Consortium

Mr. Seré spoke on behalf of Mr. Frank Rybersman, CEO of the CGIAR Consortium. Mr. Seré drew attention to the CGIAR’s new [Strategy and Results Framework for 2016-2030](#), which focuses on

improved management of natural resources and ecosystem services in the face of climate change and other threats. He cited the example of maize: 90 percent of currently cropped areas in Africa were expected to see declining yields in coming decades. To address this threat, drought-resistant maize varieties are being developed and sorghum and millet are being explored as diversification options. Genetic resources are a crucial component of research towards adaptation, while weather forecasting and index-based insurance are key for risk management. Mr. Seré further stressed the importance of investment in soil management. He concluded by highlighting the CGIAR's support for climate-readiness in the agricultural sectors, with a commitment to support six countries over the next five years, aiming for 9 million farmers to adopt climate-smart practices and to increase their incomes by 10 percent while reducing carbon emissions by 10 million metric tonnes of carbon.

Country case – David J. Lane, H.E. Ambassador of the United States

Ambassador Lane underlined the United States' support to GACSA, welcomed Dr. Achuo in his role as Facilitation Unit Coordinator and noted that GACSA membership recently reached 90. He highlighted progress made in the programmes of work of the three Action Groups and noted that country case studies to showcase the experiences of GACSA members will be undertaken. The US focuses on CSA domestically (a severe drought is currently putting pressure on water resources in the south-western States) as well as in its development assistance (for example, through the Feed the Future programme as well as joint investment with GACSA partners in Caribbean fisheries). Science, technology, innovation, training and public-private-partnerships all have key roles to play. In this light, the US has pledged US\$ 3 billion to the Green Climate Fund and is deeply engaged through the G20 and G7 in the lead-up to COP21 in Paris this December. In the context of the [third U.S. National Climate Assessment](#), Obama's Climate Action Plan sets out to cut domestic emissions from oil and gas by 30-40 percent by 2025 compared to 2012.

Country case – Marco Vinicio Vargas Pereira, H.E. Ambassador of Costa Rica

Ambassador Vargas Pereira noted that CSA was a crucial step towards food and nutrition security, and saw GACSA as an important mechanism towards achieving these goals. He emphasized the importance of reducing soil erosion, improving water management and placing and supporting family farming. He cited the example of [NAMA coffee](#), which uses nitrogen fixing vegetable varieties to improve soil fertility while using waste produced in coffee bean processing as pasture fertilizer as well as fuel. Additional climate-smart production systems have been developed in milk, pineapple, sugar, banana and rice production. Ambassador Vargas Pereira saw GACSA as a means to foster interactions between public, private and scientific actors.

4. Marco Marzano de Marinis, Secretary General, World Farmers Organization

Mr. Marzano de Marinis noted that WFO supports the call to action on CSA in its Policy on Climate, and has supported GACSA substantively since its foundation. WFO recognizes farmers as part of the solution to climate change and welcomes the fact that GACSA has always given farmers the same status as governments and the private sector. After all, agriculture is an economic sector and that farmers are economic actors. Farmers also interact with their environments on a daily basis, and therefore have a role to play in environmental protection. The right incentive mechanisms to support farmers are essential, and an incentive-based approach to climate mitigation and adaptation was highly preferable to a punishment approach. Mr. Marzano de Marinis looked forward to GACSA gathering and sharing best practices for CSA.

5. Small holder farmer presentation – Paul Zakariya, Zimbabwe;

Mr. Zakariya shared lessons learnt culminating in success from Zimbabwe's experience in implementing conservation agriculture in the context of CSA. Zimbabwe suffers from the impacts of climate change, including droughts, erratic rainfall, flash floods and dry spells during rain seasons, and the Zimbabwean farmers' association has worked with development partners on the issue since 2009. Incentives in the form of inputs were given to farmers who agreed to implement conservation agriculture, however implementation was found to last only as long as the project itself. A baseline review conducted in 2012 found that average maize yields were under a tonne per hectare. An interactive process was initiated and 50 demonstration sites were established. Many of these sites were at local schools, thereby including the schoolchildren in their outreach as well as community members. Under this scheme, inputs are not provided to the farming communities, but field days, exchanges and competitions were organized at the sites, allowing for intense farmer-to-farmer learning, also ensuring the active participation of women farmers. Over 200 hectares are now independently farmed using conservation agriculture techniques and strong agribusiness links have been fostered. An average hectare now yields 3-4 tonnes of maize.

Discussion

Mr. Frick opened the floor for discussion.

A representative from Switzerland noted that Switzerland had asked itself the question of GACSA's 'added value' before becoming a founding member, and had concluded that a community of practice on agriculture and climate change, encompassing both mitigation and adaptation, was important. With COP21 on the horizon, GACSA has a critical role to play in COP21's Agenda of Solutions, turning CSA principles into real results.

A representative speaking on behalf of the Italian Government announced Italy's recent membership to GACSA and looked forward to fruitful cooperation.

A representative from Canada noted that Canada had also recently joined GACSA and was pleased to join the greater international effort to address the linked issues of climate change, food security and sustainability. Worldwide, approaches for rural development and agricultural productivity need to be linked, and farmers', especially women farmers', resilience needs to be built.

A representative from the African Union and NEPAD noted that 80 percent of agriculture in Africa is smallholder agriculture. CSA in this context is about resilience: what was GACSA's role in scaling up the wealth of local knowledge and experiences? The representative also asked about the nature of the relationship between GACSA and regional alliances such as the Africa Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture, with whom NEPAD has been working closely, or the CSA Alliance forming in Latin America?

Mr. Marzano de Marinis answered that WFO joined GACSA because it presented a unique opportunity for farmers to contribute as full counterparts. GACSA is about access to knowledge, education and all support that can help stabilize the livelihoods of all farmers, small-scale to large-scale.

Mr. Rydland responded that the regional CSA alliances are closer to the ground and implementation work than GACSA. GACSA could be seen as a resource bank, supplying knowledge, mobilizing institutions to help with finance, as well as supporting policy work. There is no hierarchy with respect to other CSA alliances; rather, they all conduct complementary work towards the same end.

Mr. Frick asked the panel to comment on GACSA's relationship to the G7, which recently placed an emphasis on hunger reduction. The new SDGs, too, will aim to eradicate hunger by 2030.

Ambassador Lane observed that sometimes the question arises whether there are not too many parallel processes. However, when dealing with an issue of the size of hunger eradication, it is hard to fault multiple efforts. All roads lead to COP21 in Paris, including the SDGs. In short: farmers are experiencing the negative impacts of climate change, and therefore need action now – waiting is not an option.

Mr. Frick thanked all contributors to the discussion.

Closing remarks by Mr Ren Wang, ADG-AG, FAO

Mr. Wang closed the event on behalf Ms. Semedo (FAO Deputy Director-General and Coordinator for Natural Resources). He recalled that FAO launched CSA in 2010 to respond to the linked challenges of food security and climate change. Previously, the opportunity for adaptation and resilience to be complemented, where possible, by mitigation has not been taken. GACSA exists to help transform our food production systems accordingly.

Mr. Wang emphasized that GACSA is owned by its members, while FAO simply hosts its Facilitation Unit. GACSA's goal of reaching out to 500 million farmers would be realized by GACSA members and farmers themselves, rather than FAO. He welcomed the positive trend towards the development of regional networks: alongside existing CSA Alliances in Africa and North America, networks in Asia Pacific as well as Latin America and the Caribbean are under discussion. With GACSA's membership nearing 100, Mr. Wang looked forward to further growth in membership and commended the excellent commitment and effort of early country advocates who worked so hard to develop the Alliance through a highly consultative process.

He referred to select case studies that demonstrate the Alliance's success on the ground and noted that FAO supports GACSA through its Major Area of Work on CSA (MAW-CSA) under Strategic Objective 2 ("Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more sustainable"), which has 50 ongoing programmes in 36 countries. Mr. Wang concluded by reemphasising FAO's commitment to GACSA and to supporting its Facilitation Unit, and looked forward to scaling up CSA together with GACSA partners.