

DRAFT

CFS: Water and Climate Recommendations “for Food Security and Nutrition”

Global Forum on Food and Agriculture

Statement by Andrea Cattaneo

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Thank you for the invitation. I am delighted to report results -relevant for CFS- from the 2020 edition of *The State of Food and Agriculture, SOFA*, whose theme is “overcoming water challenges in agriculture”.
2. Uncontaminated freshwater is at the core of healthy agri-food systems. Pastoralists need it for their stock, fisherfolk for their livelihoods, and food processors to ensure food safety.
3. Water is an essential resource to achieve many SDGs.
4. **However, this report finds that the lives of over a billion people are severely constrained by water scarcity or water shortages.**
5. Freshwater resources are becoming increasingly scarce as populations grow, incomes increase and diets change.
6. This is a very dangerous path for water-related ecosystems and the livelihoods that depend on them.
7. Rainfed agriculture is being seriously challenged as inadequate rainfall is leading to growing water shortages, and climate change is making things worse.
8. To put it in perspective, almost 800 million hectares, or 14% , of rainfed cropland and pastureland are severely affected by recurring drought.
9. Furthermore, over 60 percent of irrigated cropland (171 million hectares) are under high to very high water stress.

10. And growing competition for water resources worsens inequality in access to water, leaving behind the poorest and most vulnerable, such as small-scale farmers and women, and also communities such as inland fisherfolk.
11. We cannot ignore these serious challenges.
12. **The SOFA 2020 report sends a strong message: water shortages and scarcity in agriculture must be addressed immediately and boldly.**
13. Agriculture is central to the water-related challenges we face in order to achieve the SDGs. On the one hand, rainfed agriculture accounts for more than half of the world's food production. On the other hand, irrigated agriculture accounts for more than 70 percent of global water withdrawals.
14. **Clearly, our success in addressing water-related challenges in agriculture passes through a much more efficient use of water resources both in rainfed and irrigated agriculture.**
15. This is the only way to produce more with limited water resources. It sounds obvious but it is not, because using water more efficiently must be done while helping preserve water-related ecosystems that sustain livelihoods and ensuring equitable access to water for all.
16. With this in view, SOFA presents **three main entry points for action that depend on each other**: (i) technical and management options; (ii) the institutions and legal frameworks needed; and (iii) the overall policy environment to promote sustainable water use.
17. At the **technical and management level**, large productivity gains can be achieved through investments in rainwater harvesting and conservation, and improved irrigation systems, alongside the use of drought-tolerant varieties and improved grazing.
18. But these technical options need to be appealing to farmers, pastoralists, and fisherfolk for their proper adoption.
19. This calls for effective **institutional and legal frameworks** in order to create an inclusive enabling environment for these actors.

20. In this respect, the report stresses the importance of water accounting and auditing, secure water and land tenure, and mechanisms for ensuring incentives for effective water use.
21. Community-based water user associations can often play an important role in improved management of water.
22. Finally, **the overall policy environment** is key to promoting sustainable management of water. In particular, the right incentives need to be in place.
23. If subsidies on inputs and energy promote inefficient water use, efforts to improve water productivity may be made in vain.
24. Coordination across sectors and geographic areas to ensure policy coherence is also essential to ensure a favourable policy environment.
25. **I conclude** by highlighting the urgency of the problem at hand and the central role of agriculture and of all of us in addressing growing water scarcity and shortages.
26. There exists a suite of possible actions to address these challenges. Turning these “possible solutions” into “reality” on the ground will make a real contribution to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
27. Thank you for your attention.