

To be released November 17, 2011



PRESS RELEASE

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SACAU TAKES FARMERS' INTERESTS TO COP 17

The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) is taking farmers' concerns about climate change to COP 17 in Durban to call for the global negotiations to put agriculture firmly on the climate change agenda and establish a work program that will outline and coordinate the necessary responses for the sector.

SACAU has been granted observer status for the next session of the Conference of Parties of the UN framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which will be held in Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 9 December 2011.

SACAU is taking a 15-point position statement to COP 17 which reiterates the major role agriculture plays across the continent and the challenges that climate change poses to the sector.

"Agriculture is the economic foundation of most African countries and it makes a significant contribution to food security and poverty alleviation for millions of households on the continent," said SACAU CEO Ishmael Sunga. "Climate change will challenge our ability to feed ourselves and it will affect areas which are already vulnerable."

SACAU is concerned about the absence of agriculture in the current agreed text of the UNFCCC.

"We are calling for a secured text on agriculture in the UNFCCC negotiations in the common vision for Long-Term Cooperative Action (LCA)," said Sunga. "Specifically, SACAU wants a text that recommends the establishment of a work program on agriculture under the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Board for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA), covering both adaptation and mitigation", Sunga added.

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Agriculture is being coupled with bunkers fuels and trade in the negotiations. “We are calling for agriculture to be decoupled from bunker fuels, and for trade related issues to be handled separately within the international trade negotiations,” said Sunga.

SACAU also calls for the simplification of the financing mechanisms put in place within the framework of the UNFCCC, especially the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), to make them accessible to farmers in developing countries.

“It is clear that without sustained adaptation and mitigation measures, and the technologies and financing to support them, the goals of food security and poverty reduction will not be met and the progress made in economic development could be jeopardised on the continent,” added Sunga.

SACAU also adds its voice to growing calls for a binding agreement in the post-Kyoto regime and for Annex 1 countries to honour their pledges for financing adaptation and mitigation.

“We urge the global community to provide resources to support Africa’s initiatives and frameworks in responding to climate change. We also advocate for adequate allocation of Green Climate Fund resources to agriculture as well as the participation of farmers in the Fund’s governing bodies,” Sunga said.

SACAU (the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions) is a regional farmers’ organization that was established in 1992. Its core membership is open to national farmers’ unions in Southern Africa. It is involved in agricultural development in the region by strengthening the capacities of farmers’ organizations, providing a collective voice for farmers on regional and international matters, and by providing agriculture related information to its members and other stakeholders.

For more information:

Ishmael Sunga, CEO of SACAU, ceo@sacau.org

info@sacau.org

saubin@sacau.org

012 644 0808

www.sacau.org

Obakeng Mooko

sacauinfo@gmail.com

082 222 9636

Attached: SACAU position statement on agriculture and the climate change negotiations