

IPC Alert

International
Food & Agricultural Trade
Policy Council



Climate Change and Food Security

On December 7, leaders from around the world will gather in Copenhagen to establish a new global framework for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The agricultural sector – perhaps more than any other sector – will be severely impacted by climate change and requires increased efforts targeted at adaptation in order to promote global food security. At the same time, it has the potential to play a significant role in climate change mitigation, but such efforts should not jeopardize global food security. Recently released recommendations of an international, interdisciplinary “**Platform on Climate Change, Agriculture and Trade: Promoting Policy Coherence,**” convened by the International Food and Agricultural Trade Policy Council (IPC) and the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) set forth a number of priorities which should be considered by policymakers:

- **Increased and sustained financing for agricultural development is required to promote food security, alleviate poverty, and address climate change.** Developing country and donor country governments should point to these three very important rationales for providing increased support to the agricultural sector.
- **Global food security requires substantial adaptation efforts directed towards the agricultural sector.** Emphasis must be placed on strengthening adaptive capacities in developing countries, with an eye toward also promoting socio-economic development and food security.
- **Efforts to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions should not jeopardize food security, but rather seek to enhance it.** Agricultural productivity on arable and degraded land must be increased so as to reduce deforestation, which contributes 20% of total emissions. Agricultural practices that contribute to increased carbon sequestration should be pursued as they importantly also lead to yield increases. A focus on relative carbon intensity in the food and agricultural sector is more advisable than a focus on absolute emissions reductions.
- **Innovation and dissemination of new technologies will be important for both adaptation and mitigation.** Public as well as private research is required, especially given developing countries’ limited capacity to fund new research in this area. Existing tools and knowledge can already be employed and should be encouraged via concerted extension services.
- **An open and equitable trade system for food and agriculture is vital for food security and can contribute to both climate change adaptation and mitigation;** it can help offset climate-induced production decreases in certain regions and facilitate the transfer of food and agricultural products from regions where their production requires relatively less greenhouse gas emissions to regions where production would result in higher emissions.
- **Climate change and international trade policies should be coherent with each other.** This will be more difficult to achieve if countries adopt unilateral trade-related climate change measures. Members of the World Trade Organization should engage in a process to consider the range of climate change/trade issues, with a view towards increasing members’ understanding, a possible clarification of WTO rules or even as preparation for future negotiations. Such a process does not require a new institutional framework or mandate and can occur within the WTO’s Committee on Trade and Environment.

Click here to read a full text version of the [IPC-ICTSD Platform Recommendations](#). Click here to read an [editorial on producing more food on less carbon](#), based on the Platform recommendations. For more information, email Heather Miller at hmillier@agritrade.org.