ADAPTATION, RESILIENCE AND MITIGATION THROUGH AGROECOLOGY

A COP28 policy brief for enhancing climate adaptation and resilience through agroecology

Summary

This policy brief details the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa’s (AFSA) vision and priorities for agriculture, adaptation, loss and damage, and finance. AFSA’s Climate Change intervention focuses on integrating agroecology into climate policies and negotiations. Our position is backed by policy research conducted in more than 10 African countries and at the regional level, national consultations of key stakeholders across the continent, over 100 case studies (https://afsafrica.org/case-studies-agroecology/) on agroecology documented across the African continent, scientific studies from international climate science bodies and engagements with African governments and climate negotiators.

Introduction

With Africa’s agriculture predominantly dependent on rain-fed farming, hundreds of millions do not have the same safety net afforded those in wealthier, industrialised nations. More than any other region, climate change has reduced agricultural productivity growth by 34% since 1961 and future warming is predicted to negatively affect food systems in Africa by shortening growing seasons and increasing water stress with global warming above 2°C resulting in yield reductions for staple crops across most of Africa (https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/outreach/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FactSheet_Africa.pdf). As a matter of concern, the IPCC findings show that extreme weather events will increase food insecurity risks, food price rises, reduced food diversity, and reduced income for agricultural and fishers’ livelihoods, preventing Africa from achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 by 2030.

AFSA’s position

AFSA’s climate goal is to strengthen Africa’s resilience to climate change by integrating agroecology into climate change decisions and policies. In this, we prioritise adaptation actions that put small-scale food producers and indigenous communities at the centre of climate solutions, blending local and indigenous knowledge with cutting-edge science without threatening biodiversity and food security.

We strongly promote agroecology, which encompasses a model of agriculture based on diversifying farms and farming landscapes, transitioning from chemical inputs to bio-inputs, optimising biodiversity and stimulating interactions between different species as part of holistic strategies to build long-term healthy and climate-resilient agroecosystems, promote territorial markets and secure livelihoods.

AFSA's position

Agriculture

Recognising Decision 3 CP/27 on adapting the Sharm El Sheikh Joint Work Programme on Agriculture and Food Security, we call for adopting a road map to implement climate actions on agriculture and food security. It is of great concern that the parties have reached no significant agreement one year down the road. The June Bonn sessions ended in a deadlock, with no progress on the negotiations. It is of concern that this trend might continue in the 59th SBS at the COP28.

To the millions of vulnerable communities, a continued deadlock is failing to make any progress towards enhancing climate actions for food security.

The current draft text on agriculture includes a topic on sustainable agriculture approaches, including agroecology as one of many. It is of concern, however, that much of what is included as sustainable approaches are undefined concepts and false solutions such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Nature Based Solutions and Carbon trading, all of which have not been proven to contribute sustainably to climate action on agriculture and food security.

Notably, some African countries are also taking steps towards developing agroecological strategies. This further emphasises the need to move from the predominant industrial agriculture models.

Based on hundreds of case studies, agroecology has been established to ensure healthy diets, food security, improved livelihoods, and overall adaptation and mitigation of the impacts of climate change while working in harmony with nature. It builds on traditional agricultural practices using research, technology and indigenous knowledge while ensuring that farmers control all aspects of food production.

Finance

Direct new and accessible climate finance to sustainable climate actions that support the needs of people and local communities. Developed countries should meet the $100 billion pledge and beyond; this finance should be in grants, not loans.

There's an urgent need to improve and simplify access to existing climate finance funding mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for local communities and civil society organisations, especially in the Global South.

Parties to the Paris Agreement should fulfil their pledges of doubling adaptation finance by 2025, as agreed at COP26.

Loss and Damage

At COP27, parties agreed to establish a Loss and Damage Fund and new funding arrangements to provide financial assistance to climate-vulnerable countries. Noting the increasing urgency of enhancing efforts to avert, minimise and address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change and the significant impacts on vulnerable populations and the ecosystems on which they depend.

Once established, the Loss and Damage fund should not ultimately increase the indebtedness of vulnerable communities and countries. The fund should be easily accessed and specifically highlight and support the implementation of sustainable climate actions such as agroecology.

The proposal to seek for the fund to be controlled by organisations like the World Bank is worrying, wrong and inappropriate, especially as this will most probably still bind accessibility to strict loan accessibility guidelines. The fund should be created under the Convention's financial mechanisms as a stand-alone entity.

Adaptation

UNFCCC decision 1 CP/27 notes with serious concern the existing gap between current levels of adaptation and levels needed to respond to the adverse effects of climate change in line with findings from the contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The recent United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 2023 report also emphasises the slow progress on adaptation investments and planning. It concludes that the gap between implementing adaptation actions and the accelerating climate risks is widening.

With the knowledge that Africa faces the highest climate vulnerability, especially within the agriculture and food security sectors, agroecology presents an opportunity to strengthen the resilience of food producers and ensure food security in light of the climate crisis.

There is a need for an increased financial commitment to adaptation actions especially for those that are mostly affected.

Conclusion and Key Recommendations

COP28 creates opportunities for decision-making and a concrete way forward on the implementation of actions in agriculture and food security, adaptation, finance, loss and damage, among others. It should allow parties to conclude an honest stock-taking exercise and agree on concrete goals and targets to secure a sustainable and liveable future for all, putting the most vulnerable at the forefront of climate action. We call for transitioning from high-emitting industrial agriculture, corporate monopolies of food systems, and false climate solutions towards agroecology and self-sufficiency.

Key recommendations

1. Prioritise agroecology as a standalone topic in the negotiations on the implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security.
2. Meet finance pledges and beyond and ensure climate finance is accessible through grants, especially for vulnerable communities.
3. Activate the Loss and Damage Fund with easy accessibility to the most vulnerable and give precedence to agriculture as a critical sector.
4. Agree on a Global Goal on an Adaptation Framework prioritising sustainable adaptation actions such as agroecology.
5. Reject false climate solutions such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Nature Based Solutions and Carbon Trading.