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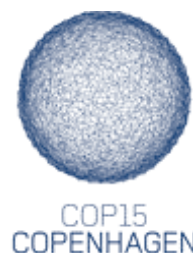
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As a reaction to the on-going COP-15 Climate Summit in Copenhagen, a coalition of German organisations interested in agrobiodiversity and agriculture have written a position paper on agriculture and climate change. SAVE Foundation also stands in support of this position paper.

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CONFERENCE
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Position paper

Agricultural Diversity as a Strategy of Agriculture in Climate Change



Climate change creates a new challenge for agriculture.

Already today extreme weather events, e.g. storms, floods and droughts as well as rising sea levels destroy harvests and fertile arable land. In the future damage due to the impacts of climate change will get worse even if emissions are drastically reduced. Because of this, food security is increasingly put at risk. Nowadays, every sixth human being on earth suffers from hunger. Regarding this, adaptation strategies to climate change in agriculture are inevitable. At present however, mainly technical solutions are propagated, such as an increased application of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, building of huge irrigation systems as well as concentration on the development of a limited number of drought resistant and flood-tolerant crop varieties.

Rarely considered are measures that farmers have practiced successfully in many places for centuries: They use agricultural diversity of species, varieties and non-homogeneous plantlines in different cropping systems, they also consider long term soil fertility. A great number of varieties increases the probability that only part of the harvest will be destroyed, instead of everything, in the event of extreme weather or the shift of the rainy season. Agricultural Biodiversity works as an insurance policy for small farmers and allows them a degree of self-determination. That is why it is an important element of food sovereignty.

Instead of promoting individual varieties and focusing on short term success, sustainable adaptation strategies are needed that minimize the risks for people in developing countries, who are already suffering the most from the impacts of climate change and face strong pressure to adapt. Agricultural biodiversity is the key to adaptation. The IPCC as well as the German Adaptation Strategy (DAS) highlight, that a sustainable and diverse agriculture can take the pressure from climate change. This should be considered in decision making processes for financing research.

Examples in development cooperation of various organisations show, that this form of assistance is a part of sustainable development help and gives more independence for small scale farmers than the environmentally harmful intensification of agriculture aiming at increasing the yield per hectare. Food security is first of all a matter of access to food and not a question of the overall production. The International Assessment for Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) clarifies that farmers, with their local knowledge, make a special contribution to food security and agricultural diversity. This knowledge must be included in all climate negotiations relevant to agricultural.

The conservation of agricultural diversity is an instrument for securing the human right to food. All political decisions and programmes on climate change adaptation have to be based on countries' commitments to this human right. It is surprising therefore, that so far, the negotiation paper for Copenhagen does not mention the promotion of agricultural biodiversity.

When discussing adaptation in agriculture, signing parties must consider the following aspects nationally and internationally:

1. Sustainability and Agriculture:

- All adaptation measures in agriculture should focus on locally adapted and sustainable agriculture and on small scale farmers with a diversified production.
- Agricultural Biodiversity must become an accepted adaptation strategy. It has to be promoted, protected and developed in the field (in situ), considering the actual environmental situation.
- Homogeneity as a prerequisite for the certification of a variety impedes the development of agricultural diversity and consequently the adaptation to climate change and has to be abolished.
- Price dumping in exports with or without subsidies, which destroy local markets along with the possibility of growing local varieties and breeds, must be prevented.
- Efforts towards a "climate efficient intensification" of agriculture should not impede Agricultural diversity, but promote and protect it.

2. No Intellectual Property Rights to Genetic Resources:

- Adaptation strategies must strengthen marginalized groups and provide and guarantee permanent free access to genetic resources. This right may not be restricted in any way by patenting or other property rights.
- A prerequisite for local genetic diversity is the implementation of Farmers Rights in national seed laws as recommended in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture (ITPGR) of FAO.

3. Participation and Capacity Building:

- The integration of farmers and their knowledge into a participatory plant breeding is an important contribution to a successful adaptation. Furthermore, it is less expensive than breeding research in international research centres, which focuses on breeding single varieties.

- Equitable partnership between farmers and researchers as well as the exchange of experiences between farmers from different countries to develop a successful adaptation strategy should be supported.
- Civil society should be involved in decision making processes regarding the funding of adaptation measures on national, EU- and UN-level.

4. Coherence and Mitigation Strategies:

- Mitigation measures as part of climate policy must be coherent with the goals of the adaptation strategies and must not put food security at risk.
- A possible integration of agriculture in market mechanisms for mitigation in the climate convention should not be contrary to sustainable adaptation strategies.

5. Financial Support:

- Funding for adaptation to climate change must be provided in addition to finances for development cooperation (0,7 % of BIP).
- More financial support must become available to develop a locally adapted and genetically diverse agriculture, instead of financing the extension of a highly intensified unsustainable agricultural production.
- National and international agricultural research must focus increasingly on the demands of small farmers, including a direct promotion of on-farm-research in cooperation with farmers.

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Supporting organisations:

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AGRECOL e.V.
Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche
Landwirtschaft, AbL e.V.
Bioland e.V.
BUKO Agrar Koordination (FIA e.V.)
BUKO Kampagne gegen Biopiraterie
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