

Agri SA

Media Release

Private Bag X 180 Centurion 0046, Tel +27+12 643 3400, Fax +27+12 663 3178

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CLIMATE CHANGE – COP 17

“We call on negotiators at COP 17 to recognize the important role of agriculture in addressing climate change. In particular, farmers are key to providing essential services needed for life, including: food, feed, fibre, energy and ecosystem services,” said Johannes Möller, president of Agri SA.

Möller added that farmers interact daily with the environment. They are thus well placed to implement sustainable agricultural practices that can help to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

According to Möller, agriculture is different by nature and must be differentiated from other sectors. Most of agriculture’s green house gas (GHG) emissions are directly linked to natural biological cycles. Farmers cannot be held accountable for emissions resulting from natural biological processes, especially since the latter are required for food security.

It is also difficult to compete with other sectors in terms of cost efficiency in reducing GHG emissions, unless there are monetary incentives aimed at carbon sequestration and displacement potential along with energy efficiency improvements and supply of renewable energies peculiar to the agricultural sector.

Many studies acknowledge that GHG sequestration by agriculture is a quick and cost-effective means to mitigate emissions. Significant benefits associated with soil organic carbon storage make sustainable land management a solution to the inter-related issues of poverty, resilience and sustainable development.

Rewarding farmers for carbon sequestration will enhance the carbon storage potential of the agricultural sector and economic incentives are needed to enable farmers to implement ‘climate smart agriculture’ practises. There is a need to establish voluntary carbon credit systems to reward farmers for their contributions to climate mitigation through carbon sequestering activities and other agriculture emission reductions.

Securing GHG-savings and energy supply through sustainable bio-energy and other embedded renewable energy technologies should be included in the analysis of the agricultural sector.

“Given the peculiar position of the agricultural sector in relation to climate change, the following should be addressed as part of a future process,” said Möller.

- Official recognition of agriculture as a sector that is adversely affected by the effects of climate change and, at the same time, as a sector with a huge potential to provide solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

- A commitment for substantial increase in investments in and support for agriculture. The sector must be prioritized in international and national policies and strategies as well as in budgets in order to increase agriculture's resilience to climate change, while boosting economic growth.
- Recognition of the specific characteristics and needs of agriculture in a future agreement in order to take full advantage of the mitigation and adaptation potential of the agricultural sector as the current Kyoto does not deal with this to the required extent.
- Establishment of appropriate financial mechanisms to reward farmers for the carbon sequestration, ecosystem services and permanent reductions that mitigate climate change, providing them with the right financial incentives to adopt the most sustainable practices and to supply low-carbon services (energy and materials) alongside food, and fodder products.
- Recognition of Farmers' Organizations as partners linking farming communities and the international carbon market, and as a link to the international institutions.

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Enquiries

Mr Johannes Möller, President Agri SA, 082 647 8481

Mr Nic Opperman, Director: Natural Resources, 079 892 9910