

Climate-smart revolution ... or a new era of green washing? CIDSE briefing – May 2015

The Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA) launched in 2014 on the occasion of the New-York Climate Summit, has since been attracting criticism from civil society organisations. CIDSE, with a large number of NGOs and social movements, signed a letter rejecting the Alliance, denouncing the consequences that this Alliance and the approach it supports would bring to the complex relation between agriculture and climate change policies. In October 2014 CIDSE also published a discussion paper – “Climate Smart Agriculture: The Emperor’s New Clothes?” – where we outlined issues related to the concept of ‘climate-smart agriculture’, as well as to the Alliance’s flaws specifically on safeguards, governance and investments. With this *briefing*, CIDSE aims to examine the new developments of the Alliance. Building on this analysis, CIDSE wants to shed light on the numerous concerns we have about this initiative.

The Alliance will not define criteria for stakeholder engagement nor establish accountability mechanisms

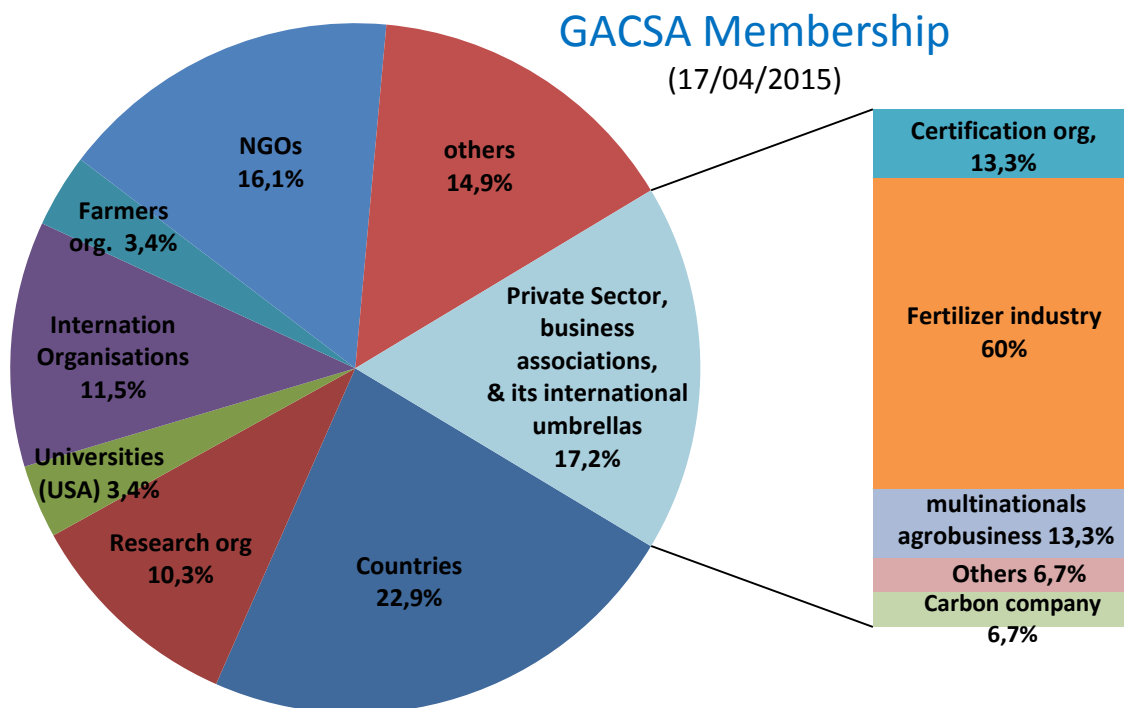
The governance structure of the Alliance has been one of the main issues criticised by civil society organisations, and CIDSE in particular, since the GACSA was launched. As more than 60 organizations underlined in September 2014, “*the governance structure of the Alliance is unclear. There is a significant risk (...) that the unequal power relations seen elsewhere in the world are echoed in the Alliance, and the agendas of corporations and wealthy governments are given greater weight than those of civil society organisations, small-scale farmers and developing countries.*”¹ In response to this critique, one of the main objectives of the first meeting of the GACSA –Rome, December 2014– was to provide some clarity on the governance of the Alliance. 2015 was identified as the Inception Year, and two co-chairs were appointed: Inge Herman Rydland from the Norwegian Government and Martin Bwalya from the NEPAD Agency. A Strategic Committee (SC) and a Facilitation Unit (FU) were set up, and three “Action Groups” were also created on the following topics: knowledge, investments, and enabling environment. The role, function, and composition of these bodies were subsequently clarified and some rules regarding participation and decision making were also elaborated. Observers would also be authorized in the future meetings organised by the different GACSA bodies. Additionally, a Forum (the annual meeting) would be organised every year to gather the work of the different working groups, and present on a voluntary basis climate smart projects developed by members².



One of the main shortfalls of the GACSA today remains the total absence of monitoring and accountability mechanisms. According to the report of the 2014 annual meeting, the message was very clear: “*Accountability was felt to be too strong a word for members (...) Reporting by GACSA members on a voluntary basis on their experiences and progress was proposed as an alternative approach (“sharing” rather than “reporting”)*”. So far, the only proposal to enhance accountability has been to set up “*a clear structure of regional/ national objectives aligned with the global objectives (...) associated with clear roles for (potential) members on how they can contribute*”. Beyond that, the lack of social and environmental safeguards has still not been addressed and will not be discussed, at least not during the Inception Year.

Evolution of the GACSA membership

Since September 2014³, the Alliance has been expanding, the number of members has almost doubled (from 46 to 87 members). It now has 20 member countries (an increase from the 14 countries which initially joined the Alliance in September). This expansion of the Alliance is linked to a clear outreach strategy. This is a key objective of the Inception Year, as reported by the GACSA meeting held last December. The United States has revealed that they have approached the governments of 193 countries to invite them to become members of GACSA through their embassies⁴. But while the GACSA is presented as a “voluntary farmer-led, multi-stakeholder, action-oriented coalition committed to the incorporation of climate-smart approaches within food and agriculture systems”⁵, only three farmer organizations have officially joined the Alliance so far.



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Focus on the private sector

Considering the composition of the Alliance, member countries make up the greatest portion, with the private sector representing the second key group in the Alliance. 15 private sector entities are represented directly or through business associations, professional organizations, and international umbrellas. 60% of the private sector members come from the fertilizer industry. The remainder is composed of multinationals from the agribusiness and business platforms (DANONE

^a **Others:** The Alliance of Religions & Conservation; CSA Youth Network; UK-China Sustainable Agriculture Innovation Network; Youth Millennium Development Ambassadors Initiative; Netherlands Development Organization; Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network; Evergreen Agriculture Partnership; EcoAgriculture; Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development; Global Forum for Innovations in Agriculture; Aequator Groen & Ruimte; The Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project; Global Biotechnology Transfer Foundation **Farmers associations and organisations:** Asia Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Development; World Farmers Organization; CROPP Cooperative **NGOs:** Institute of Himalayan Environmental Research and Education; Africa Partnership on Climate Change Coalition; World Resources Institute; Pan African Vision for the Environment; Organic Consumers Association; Environmental Defense Fund; Agriculture for Impact; International Union for Conservation of Nature; Central Himalayan Environment Association; Solutions from the Land; The Nature Conservancy; 501 Carbon; Rainforest Alliance; Tropenbos International **International organisations:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; World Bank; World Food Programme; International Coffee Organization; New Partnership for Africa’s Development; Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture; Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation; The Global Forum on Agricultural Research; Association for Agricultural Research Asia Pacific **Universities:** Colorado State University; University of Missouri (National Center for Soybean Biotechnology); University of California

and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development – WBCSD), Carbon companies (Carbon Drawdown Solution), and certification companies. While analysing private sector participation in the GACSA and its evolution, two main remarks emerged:

- Some private interests are represented several times through direct membership and through subscription to private sector umbrellas. This increases the weight of actors who have a low interest in supporting the transition towards truly sustainable food systems and poses a serious threat to the future development of the Alliance. The chart below highlights the various interlinkages existing between companies from the fertilizer industries (Haifa Chemicals Ltd., Yara and the Mosaic Company) and various private sector umbrellas. It also highlights the interlinkages which exist between various private sector umbrellas^b. The column on the left lists the different actors while the crosses indicate the private sector umbrella to which they are affiliated. For instance: Yara and Haifa Chemicals Ltd. are both members of Fertilizers Europe while the latter is also member of the International Fertilizer Industry Association – an association which is also representing Yara, Haifa Chemicals, The Mosaic Company and the International Plant Nutrition Institute.

Columns = actors	The Fertilizer Institute	The international Fertilizer Industry Association	International Plant Nutrition Institute	World Business Council for Sustainable Development	Fertilizers Europe	International Fertilizer Development Center
Rows = umbrella(s) to which they are affiliated						
Haifa Chemicals Ltd.		X			X (via its subsidiaries)	
Yara	X	X	X	X	X	X (partnership)
The Mosaic Company	X	X	X			
Fertilizers Europe		X				
The fertilizer institute			X (allied organisation)		X (allied organisation)	X (provides funds)
The international Fertilizer Industry Association						X (partnership)
International Plant Nutrition Institute		X				X (provides funds)

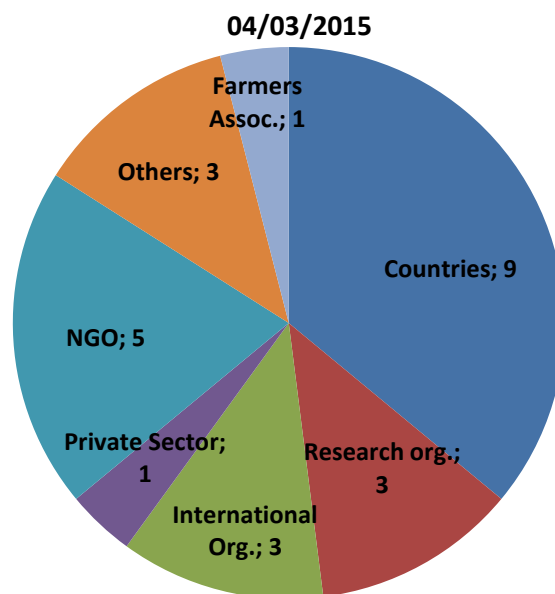
- Two certification organisms have recently joined the initiative, Global G.A.P and SCS Global Services, which may lead to the development of labelling and standards for climate-smart agriculture. The certification and auditing processes proposed by these companies already specialize in certain agricultural products and are based on voluntary standards. In addition to the proposed certification and auditing processes, SCS Global Services has also developed a label for carbon offset projects (which allows such projects to generate carbon credits).

^b **Note:** The World Business Council for Sustainable Development is a CEO-led lobby organization which comprises of several major multinationals including Unilever, BP, BASF, Bayer, Syngenta, Nestlé, Monsanto, Shell, Coca-Cola ...; The International Fertilizer Development Center is also funded by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Focus on the Strategic Committee

In order to assess the evolution of the Alliance over the past months, it is important to take a closer look at its governing bodies and in particular at the Strategic Committee (SC). The SC is currently composed of 18 members. The largest proportion of the SC is made up of “states” with consists of nine countries, 75% of which are European countries (France, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, UK). The other three members are the USA, the African Union/Nepad and Nigeria. Therefore, in spite of the fact that all the success stories and projects presented so far by the Alliance have been focused on developing countries, these states are highly underrepresented in the main governance body of the Alliance.

Membership of the Strategic Committee



The composition of the remainder of the SC reveals a great deal about its vision for climate-smart agriculture. For example:

- Yara (Norway) [Private sector] is one of world’s largest producers of fertilizers. According to Yara, smart farming practices can reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions because they allow for an increase in the productivity of agriculture⁶. Yara has also played a key role in establishing *Grow Africa* (an initiative of the World Economic Forum which led to the establishment of the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa⁷) and is one of the leaders in the “African green revolution” – towards which it intends to invest “up to US\$2 billion to build a world-class fertilizer production facility (...) and develop regional fertilizer distribution hubs”⁸. Yara also initiated the idea of “growth corridors”⁹ (see the section on investments).
- The Nature Conservancy (USA) [NGO] has been identified by many as a champion of green washing. The NGO is led by Mark Tercek, a former managing director at Goldman Sachs¹⁰, who has declared: “biotech products should be carefully assessed on a crop-by-crop basis and appropriately regulated. We would also be smart to put more focus on making GMO technology available to lower-income farmers, given the potential benefits that climate-resilient GMO crops could bring to the developing world”¹¹. This NGO is “part of the United States Climate Action Partnership (...) that includes Shell, Rio Tinto, Dow, Exelon and PepsiCo among its collection of giant energy, pharmaceutical and automobile multinationals”¹².
- Agriculture 4 Impact (A4I) (UK) [NGO] is an independent advocacy initiative led by Professor Sir Gordon Conway (who was President of the Rockefeller Foundation) and is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. They are promoting sustainable intensification.
- Environmental Defense Fund [NGO] is a United States–based non-profit environmental advocacy group, which has also been accused of green washing by its peers (especially for joining the “Center for Sustainable Shale Development”¹³). The Economist once called EDF “America’s most economically literate green campaigners” due to the fact that corporate partnerships formed a cornerstone of EDF’s approach. Their long term partnerships with McDonalds and Walmart, as well as their collaboration with Dupont and Starbucks, illustrate this affiliation with corporates.

Among the remaining members of the SC, two others also raise concerns; CATIE [Research institute] is found to be working on Biochar, which we identified as a false solution¹⁴, and the CGIAR [Research Institute] – see section below.

The model of production which these actors are promoting is, however, not the only concern regarding this SC. It also shows repeated failure to place those who are most impacted by food and climate policies – i.e., small scale food producers and consumers – at the centre of policy negotiations and decision making. To date, there is only one farmer organization involved in the SC^c.

The Alliance will not define what they understand as climate-smart agriculture and practices

One of the weaknesses highlighted in our previous publication was that the Alliance did not seem to be willing to give a clear definition of what truly climate-smart agricultural practices and models are, nor were they willing to distinguish them from practices and models which are not climate-smart. Although the members of the Alliance seem to acknowledge these critiques and the need to respond to them, it seems unlikely that this will occur. This is because such definition would require the Alliance to form criteria for members which would call into question the investments and projects they are claiming to be climate-smart. As repeated in the leaflet presenting the Alliance, “membership in the Alliance does not create any binding obligations and each member individually determines the nature of its participation”¹⁵. Members of the Alliance may therefore have different conceptions of what “climate-smart agriculture” means. Concerning the research institutes which are members of the Alliance, it is clear that the type of understanding on the concept prevailing: in addition to the CGIAR Consortium, the CGIAR – one of the international organisations which created the concept of “climate-smart agriculture” – is represented through five of its institutes^d. Only three other research institutes have joined the Alliance so far: the Centre de Cooperation Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD), the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA) and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE). The CGIAR – whose creation was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation – is the child of the first green revolution. Additionally, the CGIAR is currently working with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA, backed and created by the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation) towards an African green revolution. A document published by the CGIAR called: “Climate-smart agriculture: success stories from farming communities around the world”¹⁶ provides interesting insight into the perspectives of these organisations.

One of the featured success stories has the following title: “Herbicide-tolerant (HT) crops contribute to climate change resilience and mitigation”. The report claims that “HT crops, for example, reduce the need for ploughing and other types of mechanised weed control, reducing fuel consumption by up to 44% in maize and 60% in soybean”, which indicates that the hidden energy costs in this case have been omitted. These hidden energy costs include the machinery needed to spread the chemicals, the development of the chemical, and the fuel needed to transport the chemicals. There are other hidden costs including the threat to the resilience of farmers and food systems; such as heavy dependence on seeds and herbicides that need to be bought every year and which depend on a volatile market. While one advantage of such crops is supposedly that their use “reduces the amount of chemicals that farmers need to apply”. However, examples from North and South America have shown that the repeated application of herbicides on the same area of land led to the development of herbicide-resistant weeds: crop yields decreased, the need for herbicide increased, as did production costs¹⁷. Another promised advantage of HT crops is that they reduce the need for tillage. Unfortunately, one of the answers to the development of herbicide tolerant weeds is to use tillage. Let us also recall that the World Health Organization (WHO) recently classified glyphosate – the world’s most widely used weed killer – “as probably carcinogenic to humans”¹⁸. In addition, Bob Kremer, a scientist from the U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) working on soil quality has shown that HT crops appear “to be causing harmful changes in soil and potentially hindering yields of the genetically modified crops that farmers are cultivating”, this highlights the fact that the “chemical could be causing fungal root disease”¹⁹.

For others, climate-smart agriculture means sustainable intensification. An example of this is seen in a joint project developed by Yara, Syngenta, Sokoine University of Agriculture and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (linked to the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania – SAGCOT – and part of the World Economic Forum’s New Vision for Agriculture). This project intended to “test if intensification of agriculture through the use of agricultural inputs can be compatible with environmental sustainability and climate change, while also improving productivity and

^c The Asian Farmers Association (AFA)

^d Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

profitability at the farm level²⁰”. As “test results show on average doubling of maize yields and increased farmer profitability of 50-75%” they claim that “this kind of sustainable intensification reduces the need for deforestation, thereby avoiding GHG-emissions”²¹. What they understand as climate-smart agriculture is quite limited in its scope. It results in truncated logic which assumes that any increase in productivity results in reduced deforestation and subsequently avoids GHG emissions. With that kind of rhetoric, everything which leads to increases in crop production on the same amount of land is “climate-smart”. This would allow the fertilizer industry and others to continue with business as usual since “productivity” is their core business.

This shows that the concept of climate-smart agriculture varies according to the people defending it: for some it means business as usual with a nice touch of green – and when we see the actors that have become members of the Alliance, we can fear that this vision will be the predominant one – while for others it means something closer to agroecology. Indeed, a small number of members are trying to push for agroecology within the GACSA, such as the Asian Farmers Association (AFA) or the French research centre CIRAD, who believe that “*mitigation and adaptation to climate change can only be realized through techniques based on agroecology*”²². But their weight is not sufficient (see the chart above). If climate-smart agriculture is such a broad and catchall concept, how can it be relevant?

Scientific diplomacy as a means to mainstream the concept of climate-smart agriculture

Research and scientific knowledge plays an important role in the Alliance. Beyond showcasing success stories on climate-smart agriculture projects, a specific Action Group – called the Knowledge Group – has been set up in the GACSA, with quite a political agenda. The first objective of this working group is to identify and fill “knowledge gaps that hinder decision making/policy setting, adoption and implementation of climate-smart agriculture”²³. The second objective is working to ensure that the climate-smart agriculture scientific community gets “*engaged beyond frontiers developing the interfaces with stakeholders and policy makers and promoting scientific diplomacy*”.

The concept is spreading beyond the Alliance – the mainstreaming of the concept of climate-smart agriculture

Influencing international negotiations and processes is not part of a hidden agenda. On its new website, the Alliance underlines the fact that its “activities at the international level include (...) working towards the inclusion of climate-smart agriculture in the main international processes, negotiated texts, declarations and outcome documents (...) by sending out a strong message to negotiators and policy makers, we aim to ensure that food security and responding to the challenges of climate change through climate-smart agriculture are a priority on the global agenda”. By analyzing what has happened over the past eight months we can say that they seem to have put a lot of energy behind this task:

- A GACSA side event will be organized during the **FAO 39th Conference** (June 2015) to pursue and motivate more countries and organizations to join GACSA.
- France in its submission for setting the **Committee on World Food Security (CFS)** priorities for 2016-2017 proposed the topic of sustainable food systems as a potential major work stream and offered to work on this issue hand in hand with the GACSA. The **42nd CFS session** (in October) will also “include a GACSA side event and a special session on NGO/CSO engagements” within the Alliance.
- The concept was first mentioned in a **G7 & climate change** paper. The G7 “decided to set up and task a working group with evaluating the study’s recommendations”, one being to: “provide technical expertise and training on new practices such as (...), climate-smart agriculture, climate-smart infrastructure, and improved water, energy, and ecosystem management”. Moreover, the SC and the GACSA share numerous similar members with the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa: 10²⁴ out of the 18 current members of the SC of the GACSA are also part of the New Alliance while the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) – which is a flagship project of the New Alliance – seems to draw a lot of attention from various members of the SC ([see the section on investments](#)).
- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**: The Montpellier workshop’s statement expressed the willingness of the Alliance to bring its messages to the table ahead of COP21: “*The conclusions of the present Statement will be channelled to the UNFCCC negotiators meeting in Paris in December 2015 for the COP 21. The present recommendations are to be discussed and enriched within the different arenas and meetings in preparation for the COP21 negotiations*”²⁵. Issues related to agriculture in the UNFCCC have always been contentious: the 2013 negotiations resulted into a de facto 2-year work programme under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), with a focus on building climate resilience as well as looking for integrated approaches that consider the impacts of climate change on livelihoods, food and nutrition security in national adaptation plans (NAPs), or as part of countries’ Intended Nationally

Determined Contributions (INDCs). It is therefore in this context that the Alliance will likely play a key role in continuing to promote ‘climate-smart agriculture’ solutions. This assumption finds its foundation in the “Lima-Paris Action Agenda”, which aims to catalyze action on climate change to further increase ambition before 2020 and to support a Paris agreement. However the main challenge is to ensure that these voluntary actions comply with environmental and social criteria and safeguards. It is already clear that the GACSA has identified COP21 as a critical venue for the presentation of its work. The risk that the terminology of ‘climate-smart agriculture’ might enter the global deal through the Lima-Paris Action Agenda is very high.

The GACSA may be part of the Lima-Paris Action Agenda, but it will not be the only agricultural initiative in the plan. The French minister for agriculture, Stéphane Le Foll, has announced the inclusion of a new initiative called “4*1000”²⁶, which aims to increase carbon sequestration in soil and thus reduce GHG emissions. Even if the Minister insists on the fact that the best methodology to sequester carbon and contribute to food security is to develop agroecological practices, other models of carbon sequestration (such as large-scale privatization of land by businesses) might be promoted through this initiative. This is also clearly linked to the new UN climate agreement that will be discussed in Paris, which is likely to include the large-scale use of land to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change. Some countries hope that language aiming for “net-zero emissions” will allow industrial emissions to continue business-as usual, while countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are used to offsetting their emissions through land-based technologies such as biofuels, biochar and Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS). Scientific scenarios project that up to 6 billion hectares of land globally could be required to mitigate climate change. Climate strategies that require large-scale land use are therefore likely to drive land grabs at an unprecedented scale.

It is therefore worrying to see how the concept of climate-smart agriculture, a relatively new concept, has successfully made its way into all of these international processes in such a short period of time. This clearly shows that the formation of an Alliance to help spread the concept of climate-smart agriculture has been effective. Indeed, before the formation of the Alliance, climate-smart agriculture was not prominent in international scenes, however, concerns about this concept started to be raised at COP19 in 2013. At this meeting organizations like La Via Campesina, the world’s largest organization of peasant farmers, issued a media release to highlight the problems of this concept, and the fact that the World Bank and the governments of The Netherlands and South Africa were going to convene an international conference in Johannesburg to promote climate-smart agriculture, and set up a new Alliance to achieve it²⁷. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that agroecology, a concept which has been at the core of social movements and civil society organizations’ demands, has been named and endorsed recently by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food; by the 10,000 member strong Ecology Society of America; by the IAASTD scientific report as well as by La Via Campesina²⁸. These achievements were, without presumption, possible thanks to the efforts and work undertaken by civil society organisations in the last years. For example the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, adopted by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), acknowledges that agroecology has potential “for improving agricultural sustainability and income generation, as well as its resilience in the face of climate change”²⁹. Based on the analysis provided in the paragraphs above, it is clear that the power game of the corporate sector inside the Alliance has been successful in positioning them as the solution to the food and climate crisis.

The Alliance will not monitor and assess investments presented within the GACSA

As highlighted in the previous section, climate-smart agriculture is a catchall concept and there are no clear criteria for membership or accountability. Considering that members are free to join and report voluntarily on their own actions and can decide what kind of project they want to submit as their contribution to the efforts of the Alliance (with these contributions possibly being in line with only one or two of the three pillars); How then is it possible to assess the true impact of investments, projects and actions?

The broadness of the concept has allowed multinational companies, who are not part of the Alliance, to develop their own “climate-smart” projects: Kellogg’s, Walmart and Mc Donald’s have all committed to increase the amount of food in their respective supply chains that are produced with climate-smart approaches³⁰. This means that companies and stakeholders that are not part of the Alliance can easily use the “climate-smart agriculture” label to promote any of their projects, leaving the doors open to green-washing strategies.

The aims of the Action Group on Investments provide a serious point of concern. Among its current objectives, it is willing:

- “To help encouraging existing public and private investments in agriculture to review their compatibility with climate-smart agriculture”
- To assist by “engaging government departments, institutions, farmer organizations, the private sector and agribusinesses (large and small) and others in multi-stakeholder partnerships for climate-smart investments in agriculture and food systems, including supply chains”³¹;

Various pieces of evidence give us an indication of the direction that the Alliance may intend to take: in a speech delivered at the Global Climate-Smart Agriculture Summit, Sean de Cleene – Vice President of Yara – put emphasis on the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) as a model from which we can learn about green growth efforts: “I think Tanzania serves as a great example of what can be done at the country level”. According to him, “SAGCOT is a public-private partnership aimed at increasing agribusiness investments that benefit the region’s small-scale farmers, and in so doing, improve food security, reduce rural poverty and ensure environmental sustainability”. This is why he welcomed the fact that Tanzania is co-chairing the Investment Action Group of the Alliance³².

This partnership – which is already part of “Grow Africa”, an initiative of the World Economic Forum, and of the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa – has been heavily criticised. Launched at the UN General Assembly by Yara in 2008 and adopted later by the World Economic Forum, “the concept of ‘African Agricultural Growth Corridors’ is designed to facilitate the conversion of millions of hectares of land to industrial agriculture, to be served by building infrastructure (roads, railways, irrigation, storage, processing and ports) and led by private companies (...). The ports are vital for the export of agriculture (...) and also for importing the basic requirements for industrial agriculture such as fertilisers and agricultural machinery”³³. Moreover, “much of the promised increase in agricultural production is for export” which “creates dependency on importing staple crops, making countries highly vulnerable to global food price fluctuations and can mean valuable foreign currency reserves are spent on purchasing food rather than being used to address other development needs”³⁴. This initiative was described by a hundred African producer groups and civil society organisations “as a ‘new wave of colonialism’ to take control of Africa’s resources and agricultural inputs as well as extracting resources and profits out of Africa”³⁵.

Yara isn’t the only one to see the “climate-smart” potential of such projects. The FAO recently released a report entitled “Making economic corridors work for the agricultural sector”, which “highlights ways large-scale development plans can foster inclusive, sustainable and transformative rural growth”³⁶. Many actors that are behind SAGCOT are also members of the SC of the Alliance: The Nature Conservancy, USAID (USA), World Bank, DFID (UK), Royal Norwegian Embassy (Norwegia), CIAT (CGIAR)^e. Eco Agriculture (a member of the SC of the Alliance) recently stated that “climate-smart elements can be incorporated into agroindustrial investment programs”³⁷ – quoting SAGCOT as an example – while the CGIAR and IFAD are also on board “aiming to promote wide-scale adoption of locally appropriate climate-smart agriculture practices”³⁸ within the corridor.

The Alliance, a Trojan horse for climate finance?

It is expected that the GACSA is looking to identify potential sources of funds for climate-smart agriculture. This poses a few risks as climate-smart can be tied to adaptation, mitigation, food security and sustainable land-management goals. Overall, there is a strong push for a market based approach in agriculture, certification schemes and “carbon offset” projects like the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation including the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+), as well as integrating the concept into national, regional and local plans especially tied to adaptation, such as the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) that countries need to submit under the UNFCCC. A clear example of investment based on voluntary carbon markets which are promoted by the FAO as climate-smart practice is, among others, a pilot project in the Qinghai Province in China to restore degraded pastures due to overgrazing, where a standard methodology is applied to estimate CO₂ transfer between the air and the soil³⁹. The problem with this project is that this method is meant to be applicable to other regions of the world, for instance encouraging international investors to perform land-grabbing in order to conduct carbon

^e In addition to this SAGCOT is also backed by many multinationals of the food sector: Diageo, Bayer, Monsanto, Nestlé, SABMiller, Syngenta, Unilever, ... which are either part of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and/or from one of the many umbrellas of the fertilizer industry which are already member of the Alliance

offsets. Furthermore it is relevant to note that the GACSA Action Group on Enabling Environment has an objective to mainstream “climate-smart agriculture practices into local, community-driven programs, national investment and food security plans and policies for development assistance, including NAPs”⁴⁰.

According to the FAO the “integrated landscape approaches” that GACSA promotes can “be included in the activities covered under different carbon finance funds and mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, Programme of Activities (PoA) in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), as well as Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) in developing countries⁴¹”. Agriculture is present in 59% of countries that have prepared NAMAs, and this number increases to 70% for least developed countries⁴². This poses the risk of a huge diversion of already limited international climate finance (funds from public sources whether bilateral or multilateral) from adaptation, resilience building and mitigation action in developing countries towards false solutions like CDM, which have been linked to numerous cases of human rights abuse, land-grabbing and displacement of local communities⁴³. This is something that opposes what the framework convention on climate change addresses. The Adaptation Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and Special Climate Change Fund were set up to prioritise adaptation and build climate resilience in countries which are most impacted with vulnerable front-line communities. The Adaptation Fund allows National Implementing Entities, such as local NGOs, to access the funds directly rather than channelling them through National Governments⁴⁴. Of LDCF funding, 39% has targeted food and agriculture⁴⁵, and almost all of the 18 Adaptation Fund projects involve agriculture and food security in some way⁴⁶. Over half of the LDCF projects are dedicated to increasing resilience in Africa. Agriculture and food security, with least developed countries in Africa as a focal point, will likely continue to be a primary target for any new funding streams. Hence the introduction of climate-smart agriculture could risk diverting flows away from these priorities, and also risk reducing flows of private finance – which developed countries are looking to substitute for public finance to meet the \$100bn commitment made in 2009 – going back towards already lucrative industry players.

Conclusion

With this briefing, we intended to provide a broad and detailed analysis of the recent developments of the Alliance. We found that the only improvement related to its governance has been made in terms of transparency. However, criteria for membership and an accountability framework will never be developed (the latter would require a clear definition of what ‘climate-smart’ is and is not as well as clear criteria for membership and for the projects that the members can submit to the Alliance). The broadness of the concept and its lack of social and environmental criteria result in it being a catchall concept. This confirms the conclusions of our discussion paper on climate-smart agriculture: rather than contributing to more socially and environmentally sustainable agriculture, the Alliance and its political marketing are placing food security, sustainability and resilience at risk. The Alliance and its promotion of this vacuous concept also risks opening the door for States, investors and agribusiness companies to mask business as usual approaches with weak, superficial and ultimately harmful false solutions, leading to green-washing of undesirable agricultural production models. These agricultural models aim at perpetuating an inefficient and unjust food system while supporting the further commodification/financialization of agriculture. If the Alliance and its concept were to be legitimized as the best way forward towards a transition to sustainable food systems, and mainstreamed in all international agreements and foras, this would pose a great threat to the future of food and agriculture as well as to the future of our planet.

Due to the fact that world leaders will have to sign a new agreement this year at COP21 attempting to fix the climate change chaos, CIDSE believes that decision makers should redirect their attention towards solutions that truly address the food and climate crises. As likewise previously stated, our main recommendations would be to:

- Develop policies that jointly address adaptation and mitigation challenges, with specific focus on adaptation needs for small-scale farmers and mitigation responsibility of industrial agriculture in the sector’s GHG emissions;
- Address underfunding of adaptation and considering it a priority for the delivery of new and additional public climate finance;
- Use the “precautionary principle”^f as stated in Article 3.3 of the UNFCCC as the guiding principle for any climate-related measure in the field of agriculture.

^f “Countries need to take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing such measures”.

Overall, the 2015 agreement should formulate ambitious actions for the agricultural sector, by providing the necessary support to help developing countries implement adaptation strategies and meet mitigation goals in order to ensure low emissions agricultural development. While doing so, it is of utmost importance to avoid falling into “false solutions” but rather consider existing alternatives such as, among others, agroecology practices, small scale farming systems, reducing dependency on import/export chains and strengthening local and regional markets. This also applies to other national and international political processes that are dealing with matters related to agriculture and climate. More information on CIDSE’s position, proposals and recommendations can be found in two previous CIDSE publications:

- [Agriculture : from problem to solution – achieving the right to food in a climate-constrained world](#)
- [Climate-Smart Agriculture: the emperor’s new clothes?](#)

- ¹ International statement signed by 60 CSOs, september 2014, see climatesmartagconcerns.org
- ² See the minutes of December 2014 meeting
- ³ The initial list of members is available here: <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/09/AGRICULTURE-Action-Plan.pdf>
- ⁴ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-au904e.pdf>
- ⁵ <http://www.fao.org/gacsa/events/details/en/c/284754/>
- ⁶ http://www.yara.com/sustainability/climate_smart_agriculture/high_yields_stop_co2/index.aspx
- ⁷ http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/files/download/the_new_alliance.pdf
- ⁸ <http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/more-3-billion-private-sector-investment-new-alliance-food-security-and>
- ⁹ http://www.yara.com/sustainability/how_we_engage/africa_engagement/growth_corridors/index.aspx
- ¹⁰ <http://magazine.wsj.com/hunter/second-chapter/natural-causes/>
- ¹¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-tercek/a-new-diet-for-the-planet_b_3189719.html
- ¹² <http://socialistworker.org/2013/09/24/the-truth-about-greenwashing> & <http://www.us-cap.org/>
- ¹³ http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/environmental-defense-fund-scolded-by-other-green-organizations/2013/05/22/edb93980-c31f-11e2-914f-a7aba60512a7_story.html and http://www.huffingtonpost.com/wenonah-hauter/even-environmental-groups_b_2965751.html
- ¹⁴ http://www.misereor.org/fileadmin/redaktion/MISEREOR_Paper_4_Biochar_final.pdf & http://www.cidse.org/publication/content/publications/just-food/food-and-climate/biochar_a_climate_smart_solution.html
- ¹⁵ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-au980e.pdf>
- ¹⁶ https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/34042/Climate_smart_farming_successesWEB.pdf
- ¹⁷ Increased use of herbicide: <http://www.enveurope.com/content/24/1/24> and <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/gmos/HerbicideTolerance.php>
- “Roundup-resistant weeds (...) are forcing farmers to go back to more expensive techniques that they had long ago abandoned. That threatens to reverse one of the agricultural advances bolstered by the Roundup revolution: minimum-till farming”. Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/04/business/energy-environment/04weed.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 “the indirect costs of herbicide use are undermining the economic viability of GE herbicide-tolerant crops. (...) A 2012 national BASF survey found that 73 percent of farmers surveyed faced reduced yields because of herbicide-resistant weed infestations. (...)”. Source: <http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/doc/Superweeds.pdf>
- ¹⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/21/roundup-p-cancer-who-glyphosate->
- ¹⁹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/12/us-glyphosate-idUSTRE77B58A20110812>
- ²⁰ <http://oeso.nl/vertegenwoordiging.org/binaries/content/assets/pos-tenweb/f/frankrijk/permanente-vertegenwoordiging-oeso-occd-in-parijs/bijlagen/bijlagen-nov-2014/presentation-sean-de-cleene-yara.pdf>
- ²¹ http://www.yara.com/media/news_archive/pushing_climate_smart_agriculture.aspx
- ²² http://www.liberation.fr/terre/2015/02/20/agriculture-et-climate-une-relation-contre-nature_1206800
- ²³ ToR of the Knowledge Action group
- ²⁴ France, USA, UK, Nigeria, African Union/NEPAD, CGIAR, YARA, World Bank, COMESA
- ²⁵ http://csa2015.cirad.fr/var/csa2015/storage/fckeditor/file/Statement%20for%20policy%20makers%20from%203rd%20Climate%20Smart%20Agriculture%20conference_logo.pdf
- ²⁶ Le Foll veut inscrire l'agro-écologie à "l'agenda des solutions" de la COP21, April 2015 - <http://www.actu-environnement.com/ae/news/agro-ecologie-sol-carbone-solutions-cop21-climat-24425.php4>
- ²⁷ <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/actions-and-events-mainmenu-26/-climate-change-and-agrofuels-mainmenu-75/1515-climate-summit-don-t-turn-farmers-into-climate-smart-carbon-traders>
- ²⁸ <http://www.soilassociation.org/blogs/latestblog/article/1027/climate-smart-agriculture-or-corporate-greenwash>
- ²⁹ <http://www.cidse.org/publication/content/publications/just-food/food-governance/global-strategic-framework-manual-for-social-movements-and-csos.html>
- ³⁰ <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/05/AGRICULTURE-PR.pdf> Most of these commitments have been announced during the Ban-Ki Moon Summit (September 2014): McDonald's said that “the impact of collaboration in the Global Roundtable on Sustainable Beef (GRSB) to deliver principles and criteria that are consistent with the principles of Climate-Smart Agriculture. (Source: <http://news.mcdonalds.com/Corporate/news-stories/2014/McDonald%E2%80%99s-CEO-to-Speak-at-United-Nations-Climate>); Kellogg Company announced its collaboration with Walmart on Rice Crop Sustainability. They are willing to align this initiative with the GACSA. (Source: <http://newsroom.kelloggcompany.com/2014-05-06-Kellogg-Company-Collaborates-With-Walmart-On-Commitment-To-Long-Term-Rice-Crop-Sustainability>); Walmart is planning to launch of its own Climate Smart Agriculture Platform. (Source: <http://news.walmart.com/news-archive/2014/10/06/walmart-announces-new-commitment-to-a-sustainable-food-system-at-global-milestone-meeting>)
- ³¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-au960e.pdf>
- ³² http://www.yara.com/media/news_archive/pushing_climate_smart_agriculture.aspx
- ³³ http://www.econexus.info/sites/econexus/files/African_Agricultural_Growth_Corridors_&_New_Alliance_-_EcoNexus_June_2013.pdf
- ³⁴ http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/resources/a4_briefing_web_march_2014_-_final_0.pdf
- ³⁵ http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/resources/a4_briefing_web_march_2014_-_final_0.pdf
- ³⁶ <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/279554/icode/>
- ³⁷ <http://www.agricultureandfoodsecurity.com/content/1/1/12>
- ³⁸ <http://ccaafs.cgiar.org/blog/simple-yet-comprehensive-climate-smart-agriculture-rapid-appraisal-prioritization-tool#.VUDvqPBdc6I>
- ³⁹ https://france.attac.org/IMG/pdf/note_climate-smart.pdf
- ⁴⁰ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-au933e.pdf>
- ⁴¹ <http://www.fao.org/climatechange/29723-0e174581f92a9d71a125c30981e7b42fb.pdf>
- ⁴² Bockel, L., A. Gentien, M. Tinlot and M. Bromhead. 2011. From Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) to low-carbon development in agriculture: NAMAs as a pathway at country level. EASYPol Module 103. Rome: FAO.
- ⁴³ For instance: <http://carbonmarketwatch.org/un-approved-hydroelectric-barro-blanco-dam-suspended-over-community-rights-violations/>; Bajo Aguan: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09557571.2014.961407?journalCode=ccam20> or <http://www.euractiv.com/climate-environment/carbon-credits-tarnished-human-r-news-508068>; http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/Report_DarkerSideofGreen_hirez.pdf - more examples here: <http://carbonmarketwatch.org/project-campaigns/>
- ⁴⁴ Nakhoda, s., a. caravani, n. Bird and I. schalatek. 2011a. adaptation Finance. Climate Finance Fundamentals 3. Washington, DC and London: Heinrich Böll Foundation North American and Overseas Development Institute
- ⁴⁵ <http://www.thegef.org/gef/ldcf>
- ⁴⁶ http://www.adaptation-fund.org/funded_projects



CIDSE members



CIDSE is an international alliance of Catholic development agencies. Its members share a common strategy in their efforts to eradicate poverty and establish global justice. CIDSE's advocacy work covers global governance; resources for development; climate justice; food, agriculture & sustainable trade; and business & human rights - www.cidse.org

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