

The Durban Outcome – Progress on Addressing Food Security and Agriculture?

MRFCJ had hoped that COP17 in Durban could deliver a work programme on agriculture to initiate work on the links between climate change and food security under the Convention. We welcomed and participated in a number of high level events on agriculture and food security. Although negotiations on a possible work programme have been ongoing since Copenhagen, there had been little progress due to difficulties related to international aviation and transport, also included in discussions on sectoral approaches.

Negotiations continued to be difficult in Durban and a decision seemed very unlikely at times. Compromise was found by deleting the framing paragraphs and agreeing to enable an exchange of views on agriculture under the SBSTA. The loss of parts of the framing paragraphs is unfortunate as they contained language on safeguards and the links between food security and climate change. However, the scope of the discussion on agriculture is now wide open and all of these issues can potentially be included.

Submissions are invited from Parties and accredited observer organisations by the 5th of March 2012 to inform discussions at SBSTA 36 in May in Bonn. This will be an opportunity to decide on further work to address food security and agriculture, taking into account adaptation and mitigation and the synergies between the two. It will be important to stress the gender dimensions of food security and climate change to make sure that policy responses are gender equitable. The COP 17 decision is important because it brings agriculture and food security issues onto the work agenda of UNFCCC for the first time. This should enable the sector to get the attention that other sectors such as energy and forestry have benefited from.

At times during COP17 separate decisions on agriculture under adaptation and mitigation agenda items were suggested. MRFCJ remains of the opinion that the adaptation and mitigation challenges of agriculture and food security should be looked at in a holistic way, maximising linkages with other agenda items (e.g. capacity building, technology, Nairobi Work Programme) and other multilateral organisations and processes (e.g. IFAD, FAO).