



# STRENGTHENING NDCs IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TO BE MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF FARMER INTERESTS



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## INTRODUCTION

**Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** are policy instruments, mandated under the Paris Agreement, to set out a country's self-determined plans to curb greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and enhance resilience by 2030. They are bottom-up processes in which countries contextualise and self-differentiate their climate targets and contributions based on their national circumstances and priorities. These roadmaps are intended to guide future actions across all sectors and stakeholder groupings, incorporating domestic climate-related risks, challenges, priorities, and opportunities from an economy-wide perspective. In both their aspiration and implementation, NDCs are essential for ensuring that cumulative global efforts lead to net-zero emissions and climate-resilient development by 2050 and that countries demonstrate commitment towards achieving the mitigation and adaptation goals of the Paris Agreement.

**Countries have been mandated to update and revise their original 2015 NDCs by the 26th Conference of the Parties meeting (COP26) in November 2021 (and every 5 years thereafter).** Within Southern Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola,

Namibia, Malawi, Tanzania, South Africa, the Seychelles and Angola have submitted their second or revised NDCs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), while others are still undergoing domestic processes to finalise stakeholder engagement and endorse their NDCs within the required government channels. NDCs vary per country, in ambition and detail, and much needs to be done to strengthen their content and implementation processes.

**Agriculture, land-use sectors and food systems should form the cornerstone of the NDCs** in Southern Africa. These sectors play a critical role in the global response to climate change adaptation and mitigation as a large source of GHG emissions, as a significant carbon sink, as well as the most vulnerable sectors to climate extremes and variability. If integrated within NDCs appropriately, and accompanying transformative, robust and inclusive climate policy architecture, implementation strategies and the requisite support, the agricultural sector can simultaneously deliver climate mitigation and adaptation goals while delivering socio-economic benefits related to the eradication of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.





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## AGRICULTURE SHOULD BE THE CORNERSTONE OF NDCs IN AFRICA

Agriculture is a major social and economic sector in the SADC region, contributing to a large proportion of the region's GDP, its overall export earnings, and to the value of its intra-regional trade. Agriculture also provides a livelihood, including subsistence, employment, income, and wealth creation for two-thirds of the region's population. Beyond economic support, it also holds deep social importance and cultural heritage, especially to indigenous peoples and pastoralist communities, and is deeply interconnected with almost every other sector of the economy.

There is a combination of climatic and non-climatic drivers that exacerbate the vulnerability of the region's agricultural systems to climate change. Unless drastic and immediate climate action is taken globally, these stressors will interrupt the development progress made in Southern African countries over the last decades and are likely to affect all aspects of food security and malnutrition. It is imperative that the actions that are encapsulated in the NDCs include both the new and on-going measures intended to improve the resilience of agriculture, to enhance its capacity to deal with conditions associated with climate change, and to reduce the vulnerability of agriculture to the changing climate, as well as actions to remove GHGs from the atmosphere by employing best farming and management practices. In addition, NDCs must include an integrated approach that includes food systems and value chains more broadly. NDCs must focus on practical actions and opportunities to realize adaptation and sustainable development co-benefits when reducing emissions in the agriculture and food sector.

These include, amongst others:

- The adoption of **improved cropland and animal production management** practices;
- Sequestering carbon through **conservation farming practices** such as climate-smart agriculture and conservation agriculture;

- **Improved forest management** practices;
- **Afforestation and reforestation**;
- **Agroforestry and restoration of degraded land**;
- **Crop rotation and intercropping** to reduce reducing soil disturbance, crop residue retention and crop diversification.
- **Value chain** improvements.

Given the diversity of farmers and farming systems in Southern Africa, these measures should be site-specific, and practical, delivering improvements in both productivity and resilience at farm level. NDCs should not favour one farming system over another, but rather speak to the specific climate interests and needs of farmers in their communities and contexts.



## STRENGTHENING THE CONTENT OF NDCs TO BETTER REFLECT FARMER INTERESTS

While there are significant variations in the agro-ecological and climatic contexts in Southern African countries, as well as the relative size of the agriculture sector, its employed population, value added and productivity, there are many opportunities to strengthen the content of NDCs across the board. At a fundamental level, NDCs should speak to the heart of farmers' concerns and interests and seek to minimise their climate-related risks and enhance their opportunities.

By combining investments in climate-resilient agricultural development with non-climate interventions, for example, empowering rural women and young farmers through equitable access to education, tenure rights and labour markets, governments in Southern Africa can make climate action in the agricultural sector a powerful driver for sustainable development, and thus work towards achieving countries' ambitions under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Unless these fundamental challenges faced by farmers are addressed adequately, no climate solution will be scalable or sustainable.



## GENERIC CHECKLIST OF CONTENT TO INCLUDE:

- ✓ **Increase agriculture-specific mitigation targets and opportunities.** This includes the addition of specific quantifiable actions to reduce emissions, specific emissions reduction targets and sectoral GHG targets.
- ✓ **Increase the specific policies and actions to build resilience and enhance adaptation** in the agricultural sector.
- ✓ **Describe, balance and promote synergies between agricultural adaptation and mitigation.** For example, cropland and nutrient management, land restoration, forest management and protection, and preservation of ecosystems offer opportunities to achieve simultaneous climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits. Explicitly acknowledge these synergies in their NDCs and support their uptake and scaling.
- ✓ **Include specific reference to the important role of farmers and farming organisations** in climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- ✓ **Align NDCs with existing national development/sectoral plans and targets,** especially those that relate to food security and nutrition, sustainable livelihoods, as well as degraded ecosystems and land.
- ✓ **Ensure a stronger link to the SDGs,** including reference to a just transition, social equality, human rights and food security.
- ✓ **Ensure that the voices of marginalised groupings,** especially women farmers and the young farmers, **are included,** specifically linking gender to the agricultural sector.
- ✓ **Be informed by up-to-date data** in the climate and agricultural sector.
- ✓ **Include an implementation roadmap** with farmers as important executing bodies.
- ✓ **Include sectoral budget allocations** to support agriculture and farmer-related interventions.

There are also other **key opportunities** in the agriculture sector for smallholder farmers and commercial entities that can be integrated into NDCs. For individual farmers, this can include the development of a valuation model for the ecosystems management services they provide and payments thereof; subsidised costs for farmer support technologies such as irrigation and digital infrastructure network expansion; as well as the promotion of carbon farmers and associated credit schemes, especially with respect to livelihoods and income opportunities for young farmers.

There are other areas that can also be included and explored in NDCs. This includes specific mitigation and adaptation targets related to the food system—including food loss and waste, sustainable diets, and food consumption; alignment with eco-based disaster risk reduction and nature-based solutions; green financing and economic incentives to encourage good practices and environmental and social outcomes; as well as growing opportunities for digitally enabled smallholder business models and innovative partnerships. Elements to improve transboundary land and ecosystem management should also be considered as a priority to enhance regional collaboration.



## IMPLEMENTATION OF NDCs: WHAT'S NEEDED TO SUPPORT FARMER INVOLVEMENT?

The realisation of agriculture's contribution to the NDC targets will require an enabling environment and appropriate instruments to **encourage farmers, and the entire value chain, to adopt more climate-sensitive systems.** In this regard, national farmer organizations have a critical role to play in working with their respective national governments to support the mobilization of resources and investments and to ensure that adequate finance, technology, capacity building, reskilling and social protection are embedded in these processes to enhance farmers' capacities to adopt a suite of climate smart technologies, approaches and practices. To date, NDCs include only modest details about the support needed for implementation.

At a fundamental level, NDCs should speak to the heart of farmers' concerns and interests, such as the lack of socio-economic infrastructure and services, and the general lack of inclusion, equity and fairness in sharing of value and risk amongst all systems and value chains. Gross power imbalances amongst key actors still exist, and access to production factors are still limited. There is also still a lack of payment for ecosystem management services as a public good.





## SPECIFIC REQUESTS BY FARMERS FOR IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT COULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- **Financial support**, particularly resources targeted for the benefit of small-scale women farmers and their communities. This can include specific calls for support for detailed budget allocations to finance transitional costs; subsidize costs for gadgets and data; digital infrastructure network expansion; climate insurance; and conservation agriculture inputs. This can also include green financial products that are tailored to the needs of smallholder farmers, including products designed to reflect smallholders' repayment capacities as well as products that are receptive to the innovations introduced by digital service providers.
- **Enabling services**, such as climate information services, local data needs, capacity building and technology needs (including improving knowledge and capacity of farmers to implement conservation agriculture).
- **Technology transfer and digital services** that can support planning and forecasting (such as early warning systems), as well as technologies to support concrete climate action (including renewable energy, irrigation and wastewater management).
- **Technical capacity needs and training requirements**, including enhanced capacities to engage decision makers in inclusive planning and implementation processes and raise awareness and

outreach. Strengthening the capacities of national farmers' organizations (NFOs) to conduct monitoring and reporting is also essential. NFOs can become leaders in accountability for national and international commitments to sustainable and ethical development.

- **Risk management** needs, such as insurance and credit mechanisms.
- **Awareness and knowledge** to improve climate knowledge and decrease the resistance to change.
- Farmers need to strengthen their **agency and capacity to engage**, so that they can proactively seek out participation and assert themselves. To achieve the above, farmer participation in drafting and design of NDCs and other climate policy needs to be strengthened, as well as the role of farmers in implementation and monitoring. Farmers must use national climate platforms and opportunities to lobby policy makers and ensure that their interests are heard.

**2020 is also the milestone for countries to prepare their long-term, low emissions, climate-resilient development strategies.** To reach net-zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050, transformative decisions need to be taken today, which includes key actions in the agricultural sector. The NDCs are the steppingstones to achieve these mid-century goals. So far only very few countries have submitted Long-Term Strategies to the UNFCCC, but many have indicated their intention of planning towards carbon neutrality, including many in the Southern African region. These mid-century strategies are another policy opportunity to pursue farmer interests.



## CONCLUSION

**2021 is a critical year for galvanising support for NDC enhancement from Southern African countries**, to promote bolder climate action. To date, NDCs submitted to the UNFCCC have not delivered the ambition that is required by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to limit the average global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees needed to curb runaway climate change. It is thus imperative that NDCs are strengthened to include more ambitious mitigation and adaptation efforts and plans. **The agricultural sector is key to achieving these global climate ambitions.**

With countries currently revising their NDCs and Long-Term Strategies, timing could not be more opportune to highlight that these policy instruments are overlooking the inclusion of farmers, and their right to meaningfully participate in climate policy making that affects them. **With the NDC renewals on-going, it is imperative that policy makers are made aware of the critical gaps in their current NDCs as they relate to farmers, agriculture and food security more broadly.** These challenges, concerns

and opportunities need to be reflected in the NDCs. The NDC revision process therefore provides a **timely opportunity for farmers and farming organizations to engage with their national policy processes to ensure that the needs and interests of their broader constituency are sufficiently integrated.**

Through inclusion in the revision process, farmers can engage their policy makers to **ensure that the content and substance of their NDCs is aligned with key farmer priorities** and that NDCs reflect a integrated approach to food systems transition. This includes the identification of innovative opportunities to pursue, as well as the requisite support to farmers, and other key stakeholders in the value chain, to ensure their participation in NDC implementation. If these concerns are not captured, it is unlikely that they will be adequately reflected in the national agenda for climate change, and that adequate resources will be allocated to it. It is also imperative to invest specifically in a new generation of young women and men to encourage the adoption of climate-sensitive practices.

