



RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
**Climate Change,
Agriculture and
Food Security**



**Linking policy and research to mainstream climate change adaptation:
CCAFS West Africa hosted a high level policy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso**

Ouagadougou, October 2012

The 4th IPCC reports that by 2020, between 75 and 250 million of people are projected to be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change in Africa, and in some countries, yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50%. Agricultural production, including access to food, in many African countries is projected to be severely compromised. This would further adversely affect food security and exacerbate malnutrition.

West Africa is among the most affected regions by climate change and variability due to its rainfed dependent agriculture which is the mainstay of most national economies and way out of poverty of billions of small-scale farmers. Policies and strategies are needed to address effectively adaptation of agriculture to climate change and vulnerability and achieve the millennium development goals.

Poorly institutionalized communication of scientific information for evidence-informed policy making in developing countries is a major constraint regarding climate change adaptation. A study by ODI (2009) highlighted that in developing countries, the low level of scientific understanding by policy-makers, limited openness by politicians to using science, technology and innovation (ST&I), limited dissemination and uptake of research findings, and the lack of institutional channels for the incorporation of ST&I information into policy are some of the systemic obstacles in development policy dialogues and decision-making processes. With the increasing needs of science-based policies on climate change adaptation, strengthening the communication at the science–policy interface becomes critical.

Recognizing the gap in communication, knowledge and understanding by policy-makers of researchers associated processes and vice-versa, and the need for science-based and informed adaptation policies to improve agricultural resilience to climate change, CCAFS WA RP hosted a high level policy session during the PMC/ISP meetings in Ouagadougou (25 October 2012). The session brought together national, regional and international stakeholders representatives (researchers, policy-makers, farmers' umbrella organizations, development partners, etc.) to exchange on challenges and ways forward for better inclusive communication (knowledge sharing, information), dialogue (on setting research and policy agendas) needed to promote climate-smart agriculture in the region.

In his opening remarks, the Minister of Science and Technology of Burkina Faso welcomed all the participants and the organizers for having chosen Burkina Faso to host this important



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event. He highlighted some of the impacts of climate change on small scale holders farmers in Burkina Faso.

Two keynotes presentations framed the discussions:

- How can CCAFS research contribute to improve the adaptive capacity to climate change in West Africa by Dr Robert Zougmore, CCAFS WA regional program leader.
- Climate change in West Africa: challenges and opportunities by Dr Abdulai Jalloh (CORAF/WECARD).

Both presentations highlighted the effects of climate change in West Africa and key challenges and opportunities to develop appropriate policies and technologies needed to reduce the vulnerability of agriculture to climate change. Some of the impacts of climate change are:

- 10 – 15% of species likely to be lost in an Africa that is 2 °C warmer
- Yields from rainfed agriculture fall by as much as 20% by 2020
- Many pests and diseases of crops , animals and humans could change
- Productivity in fisheries is likely to be reduced due to habitat displacement towards higher latitudes

Adaptation to climate change will require innovation in technology as well as policy responses. Innovations in technology and policy require however and foremost effective linkage between researchers and policy makers for science-informed and based policies development and implementation for the benefit of the vulnerable populations.

Key messages:

- Climate change will continue to undermine the livelihoods of billions of small-scale farmers through its impacts on agriculture and livelihood assets
- Need for a bi-directional quest for information, knowledge, needs and priorities from both policy and research perspectives through interactive and regular concertations and consultations (e.g. platforms) between researchers and policy-makers to develop adaptation policies and strategies grounded in science-based information;
- Capacity strengthening is needed at both researchers and policy-makers levels to better understand and engage concomitantly in identify research priorities that feed and comply with policy needs on climate change risks and to integrate climate change issues into development goals;
- Climate change is a cross-cutting issues and should be considered in designing sectoral policies with engagement of small-scale farmers through participatory action research;
- Research and policy need to engage, consider and integrate local/indigenous knowledge and practices as a valuable source of adaptive practice and a pathway to integrating new approaches to adaptation;
- Need to increase adaptation funding and channel through agriculture sectoral policies

“Climate change will continue to threaten the livelihoods of billions of small-scale holders farmers in West Africa, and other part of the world, and will remain on the top of priorities of national, regional and international agendas”, said CCAFS ISP Chairman Thomas Russel in his concluding remarks. Achieving sustainable food security in a world of growing population and changing diets is a major challenge under climate change. Successful mitigation and adaptation will entail changes in behavior, technology, institutions and food production systems. These changes cannot be achieved without improving interactions among scientists, policy makers and civil society. As such, the CCAFS program visions through its two overarching objectives i.e. a) identify and test pro-poor adaptation and mitigation practices, technologies and policies for food systems, adaptive capacity and rural livelihoods; and b) provide diagnosis and analysis that will ensure cost-effective investments, the inclusion of agriculture in climate change policies, and the inclusion of climate issues in agricultural policies, from the sub-national to the global level in a way that brings benefits to the rural poor, to be the foremost global source of relevant research that leads to strategies to tackling food insecurity in the face of climate change. Research and policy linkages is critical, but should also be open to other relevant stakeholders and decision-makers in a more holistic approach. By creating these linkages and therefore spaces for dialogue and regular consultations, countries can identify relevant priorities that can feed/lead into international negotiations. Mechanisms need to be developed to ensure that the scientific community, policy makers have an exchange of views and experiences involving all other stakeholders.