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Climate and Sustainable Development Goals Begin on The Farm

Don't abandon farmers to climate change, minister tells audience of first CGIAR Development Dialogues

NEW YORK, USA (25th September 2014) – Nigeria's agriculture minister today issued an impassioned plea to governments and the agriculture research community "not to abandon farmers to climate change", with the head of a UN specialized agency emphasizing the need for research in tackling rural poverty and climate change.

"Agricultural research is one of our most powerful allies in the battle against poverty," Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, told the 300 academics, policymakers and scientists who gathered at Columbia University today for the [inaugural CGIAR Development Dialogues](#).

The CGIAR Development Dialogues, convened to discuss the vital role of agriculture research in achieving climate change and sustainable development goals, opened with keynote addresses from President Nwanze, Nigerian agriculture minister Akinwumi Adesina, Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture at the African Union, and Peruvian environment minister and UNFCCC COP20 president Manuel Pulgar-Vidal.

The event followed CGIAR's announcement at the UN Climate Summit this week to dedicate at least 60 percent of its annual budget to climate-smart agriculture, benefiting half a billion farmers over 15 years.

"There can be no sustainable development or halting the effects of climate change if we do not pay due attention to the billions of people engaged in agriculture that manage the world's natural resources and produce the food our ever increasing population demands," said Frank Rijsberman, Chief Executive Officer of the CGIAR Consortium. "Agriculture research is the backbone of sustainable development."

Akinwumi Adesina, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, called for greater support for smallholder and women

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farmers in adapting to climate change, and urged governments to support investments in agricultural research.

“There is no doubt at all in my mind that investment in agricultural research has one of the highest rates of return you can think of,” he said in his address.

“This is the time for greater support of the CGIAR and its partners.”

CGIAR, a global consortium of 15 agricultural research centers, thousands of scientists, and hundreds of partners, carries out research programs in 96 countries in pursuit of the scientific, policy and technological advances needed to overcome such complex challenges as climate change, water scarcity, land degradation, and chronic malnutrition.

Commissioner Tumusiime Rhoda Peace also emphasized the importance of research.

“The agriculture future we want is a modern and productive agriculture anchored in a solid science and knowledge foundation,” she said in her keynote address.

“We call on the global agricultural science community in general, and the CGIAR in particular, to buy into this ambitious agenda and partner with Africa's national, regional and continental research systems to deliver on the agriculture future Africa wants.”

Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, echoed these calls in his closing address.

“Small farmers are going to be extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. I think it would lead to a loss of welfare for human society at large if we did not address this problem,” Pachauri said.

“I can't think of an organization better than the CGIAR system to focus on this as an immediate and a long-term goal, because the impacts of climate change are going to become progressively more serious.”

CGIAR dedicates approximately half its one billion dollar annual budget to research that supports smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, and approximately 25 percent to support research programs in South Asia.

“There is nothing in terms of evidence suggesting that agriculture could not transform from being the big challenge to being the large solution,” Johan Rockström, Director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre said in his closing keynote.

Jonathan Wadsworth, Executive Secretary of the CGIAR Fund Council, emphasized the need for major change.

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“To capitalize on the vast potential of agricultural research and achieve the kind of transformational change required over the next 15 to 25 years, we need to act urgently and ramp up funding significantly,” Wadsworth said.

“Incremental change won’t do. The challenges are too many and multi-faceted and the consequences of failure too great.”

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

About the CGIAR Development Dialogues

The CGIAR Development Dialogues was an invitation-only, high-level, one-day event intended to focus global attention on the vital role of agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, landscapes, and food systems in achieving sustainable development. Linking key and innovative research in agriculture specifically to the emerging United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the event featured lively high-level panel debates among leading scientists, prominent private sector players, philanthropic organizations, and prestigious academic institutions.

The debates and keynotes focused on four key themes:

1. Prosperous, food secure and resilient livelihoods
2. Healthier, innovative, capable and inclusive communities
3. Efficient agriculture technologies for sustainable intensification
4. Climate-change resilient agro-ecosystems

For further information, please visit: dialogues.cgiar.org

About CGIAR

CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future. CGIAR research is dedicated to reducing rural poverty, increasing food security, improving human health and nutrition, and ensuring more sustainable management of natural resources. It is carried out by the 15 centers that are members of the CGIAR Consortium in close collaboration with hundreds of partner organizations, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector. www.cgiar.org

CGIAR is a founding member of the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture, a voluntary partnership of governments, researchers, civil society organizations, businesses, and farmer organizations to strengthen global food and nutrition security and resilience to climate change, which was formally launched earlier this week at the UN Climate Summit.

Some of the potential impacts from CGIAR Research Programs include:

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- By 2020, 12 million households in Africa will have access to sustainable irrigation, thanks to research on water, land and ecosystems
- By 2022, research will help increase harvests of grain legumes—a key source of protein for the poor – in low-income countries in five regions, improving their nutrition from 2.1 million tons of extra protein
- By 2018, 50 million people will have access to staple food crops specifically bred to be rich in key vitamins and minerals – namely, iron, zinc or vitamin A – in an effort to combat malnutrition
- By 2020, research on forest, trees and agroforestry will prevent deforestation on 0.5 to 1.7 million hectares, reducing carbon emissions by 0.16 to 0.68 billion tons per year