Policy Roundtable on Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation in the Agriculture Sector towards Food Security in Southeast Asia

6-7 February 2014 | Phnom Penh, Cambodia

BACKGROUND

The agriculture sector constitutes a major aspect of climate change adaptation (CCA) within the National Adaptation Program of Action on Climate Change of countries in Southeast Asia (SEA). Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, for example, have listed agriculture as a priority sector with many priority projects under it, signaling these measures as responding to urgent and immediate needs. Further delay may increase vulnerability and could lead to bigger costs later.

Mainstreaming CCA can be defined as the process of integrating adaptation considerations into policy-making, budgeting and implementation processes at the national, sector and subnational levels (UNDP-UNEP 2011). The expected benefits include avoided policy conflicts, reduced risks and vulnerability, greater efficiency compared with managing adaptation separately, and leveraging the much larger financial flows in sectors affected by climate risks than the amount available for financing adaptation separately (Lebel et al. 2012).

The Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that for successful CCA, there should be “development of climate change policy that is specifically geared towards the more vulnerable sectors of the country, with emphasis on poverty reduction” and “the establishment of public policy that encourages and supports adaptation at local or community levels and in the private sector.” This would translate to the integration of adaptation concerns into current or planned policies and development efforts and spreads the responsibility of implementing adaptation to all administrative sectors and civil society rather than just on individual government institutions.

This roundtable would be in accordance with the commitment of parties, as stated in the UNFCCC, for the promotion and cooperation in the “exchange of relevant scientific, technological, technical, socio-economic and legal information related to the climate system and climate change, and to the economic and social consequences of various response strategies.” Likewise, this activity could be considered as part of the education, training and public awareness component of the Convention as it contributes toward overcoming barriers to mainstreaming: the dearth of science-based information, of communication between the science and policy communities, of a knowledge base on successful processes and methods, and of financial resources/instruments.
OBJECTIVES

This Roundtable aimed to:

1. Discuss an array of adaptation strategies on coping with the challenges in agriculture and food brought about by climate change;
2. Appreciate the requisites for an enabling environment to meet its challenges;
3. Understand mainstreaming approaches and challenges;
4. Identify appropriate entry points at both policy and implementation levels for integrating climate change adaptation strategies into development plans;
5. Identify financial instruments to fund efforts in mainstreaming; and
6. Explore possible partnerships between and among APAN, SEARCA, other APAN nodes, governments, and other development organizations to actively collaborate on research, capacity building, and other activities to mainstream adaptation strategies in the agriculture sector.

OUTCOMES

Participants included an expert on the subject matter, eight senior and middle-level agriculture and environment officials and senior policy researchers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV), plus 15 observers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) and partners in Cambodia, and six from SEARCA and UPLB.

This policy roundtable had two expert and four country presentations. The expert presentations discussed views on mainstreaming CCA into development plans and investments; frameworks for mainstreaming CCA; challenges and prospects of mainstreaming, specifically on communicating and coordinating it vertically and horizontally from national to sectoral to local levels, provision of wide and financial support, capacity strengthening, ensuring political will, with due emphasis on the importance of robust and reliable research and development. The presentation on financing CCA provided principles in climate financing, the financial architecture for CCA and mitigation (CCAM), online sources of more information on climate financing, and tips on sourcing funds for CCA.

The four country presentations revealed varying extents of CCAM mainstreaming integrated with disaster risk management and green growth in national policy, strategy and action planning down to local levels, each with unique experiences and practices to share. A common need for capacity strengthening and climate financing emerged. Vietnam demonstrated a strong commitment for CC mitigation and demonstrated a solid research base for CCAM mainstreaming.

The participants had a workshop where they summarised what they learned and identified gaps and discussed ways forward for research, capacity development, policy and governance, and in other concerns. The result of the roundtable discussions and the workshop are embodied in a Policy Roundtable Statement.

CONCLUSION

The roundtable emphasized the elements of mainstreaming: outcomes, actors, areas, levels, and processes as well as the dimensions that need equal attention: temporal, spatial, and the implications of the ASEAN Economic Community 2015. It was highlighted that mainstreaming and CCA are dynamic. Climate change brings new risks, hence, models of development have to evolve and new forms of governance and cross-country collaboration are required.