



Africa's Biocarbon Interests – Perspectives for a new climate change deal



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The Africa Biocarbon Initiative is promoting a whole-landscape approach to carbon management that takes into account the full opportunities for reducing emissions and increasing carbon stocks in agriculture, forestry and other land uses (AFOLU). Africa contributes least to greenhouse gas emissions but is most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and has the least capacity to adapt to these changes. The Africa Biocarbon Initiative calls on the international climate change community - and African negotiators in particular - to urgently consider the significant potential of African countries to contribute to and benefit from land-based climate change mitigation efforts.

The Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) is promoting the Africa Biocarbon Initiative, with scientific support from the World Agroforestry Centre

Desired outcomes from the 15th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP-15)

1. A post-2012 climate change agreement that includes Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) and takes decisive actions towards reducing emissions and increasing carbon stocks in the broader domain of agriculture, forestry and other land uses.
2. These actions shall be consistent with Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Activities and the UNFCCC principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities.
3. A decision is reached to fast-track negotiations on AFOLU building on the way REDD was brought into discussions at COP-11 in Montreal in 2005.
4. The UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) undertakes a work plan to quickly address key issues relevant for a mechanism to reduce net emissions from AFOLU.
5. The UNFCCC recognizes sub-national or landscape-level approaches to REDD-AFOLU that have been implemented beyond readiness and demonstration phases, particularly where national circumstances (insecurity, high costs of compliance etc) hinder national-level accounting.
6. A provision in the post 2012 climate change agreement that recognizes and provides a framework for admission of biocarbon credits.

The basis for the African Biocarbon Initiative¹

The Africa Biocarbon Initiative emphasizes the high potential for AFOLU to contribute to climate mitigation while providing co-benefits. In particular it calls on the international community to:

- 1. Incorporate REDD+ in the post 2012 climate change agreement** as a first step to a broader AFOLU climate change deal. There is broad consensus for a REDD agreement in Copenhagen that will include reducing emissions from deforestation, forest degradation, forest conservation and afforestation (known as REDD+). Emissions reductions via forest management in Africa are intertwined with agriculture. A REDD mechanism is unlikely to be successful without taking an integrated approach to AFOLU.
- 2. Reward countries that take measures to mitigate the drivers of deforestation and therefore reduce emissions.** Emissions from deforestation can be decreased by increasing the productivity of climate-resilient agricultural systems, promoting sustainable land management and sustainable bio-energy, alleviating poverty and addressing food security.
- 3. Support capacity development for nationally appropriate mitigation actions that are focused on the full range of AFOLU activities.** These can be market and non-market based and could fall under a REDD mechanism or be part of a comprehensive biocarbon approach.
- 4. Request SBSTA to consider any remaining methodological issues on the full range of biocarbon options.** This must ensure effective participation of local communities, civil society and indigenous people.
- 5. Reform financial mechanisms such as global carbon markets and the Clean Development Mechanism to increase meaningful African participation.** This will require development of practical methodologies, simplified procedures and realistic criteria for crediting carbon sequestration and other reductions in emissions of biocarbon. These could be achieved through interventions including conservation agriculture, agroforestry, soil health restoration and other agricultural activities.
- 6. Employ a full range of technology transfer and research and development programs to support all of these goals.**
- 7. Urgently expand and make available resources for small landholders and the rural poor to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.** Policies and/or measures with both mitigation and adaptation benefits need to be given priority.

¹ Summarized from COMESA, 2008; 2009



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The road to AFOLU should build on key moments in the REDD process

November – Governments of Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica request the UNFCCC to put REDD on the agenda; **December** – REDD receives wide support during the 11th Conference of Parties in Montreal. Parties agree to establish a 2-year process led by SBSTA to address issues

May – 21 Parties present their views on REDD at the SBSTA meeting; **August** – first REDD workshop in Rome, where parties discussed scientific, socio-economic, technical, and methodological issues, and policy approaches and incentives

March – second REDD workshop, Cairns, Australia
December – SBSTA 26 drafts text on REDD which is finalized in light of decisions on long-term cooperative action at COP-13, released as the Bali Action Plan.

June – Parties share their views at SBSTA 28 in Bonn workshop in Tokyo, COP 14 in Poznan, their views on need for capacity-building and to indigenous

The Challenges

More than 30% of all greenhouse gas emissions come from the land-use, land-use change and forestry sector, with 18-20% estimated to result from deforestation and forest degradation, and between 10–12 % from agriculture (Smith et. al 2007). About 70% of emissions from agriculture could be mitigated through activities in developing countries but so far only the forestry sector has featured in UNFCCC mitigation strategies and mechanisms. Agriculture is inextricably connected to deforestation and forest degradation in many countries, especially in Africa. Reducing emissions from agriculture and storing carbon in agricultural lands can increase the effectiveness of global efforts against climate change globally. [see *World Agroforestry Centre PolicyBrief 04 – The Case for Investing in Africa's Biocarbon Potential*]

A number of salient issues stand out and will need further consideration by SBSTA.

Monitoring, reporting and verification

Relevant Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) methodology exists for estimating many of the policy options for mitigation within the agriculture and land-use sector. Some of these methodologies have been successfully applied in the national greenhouse gas inventories and in Clean Development Mechanism projects but these have recorded varying degrees of uncertainty. Multiple tools and methods can potentially be streamlined for improved estimates in the light of tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the IPCC Good Practice guidelines (IPCC 2006) to enable progressive improvements without hindering progress.

Permanence and leakage

Permanence and leakage in carbon sequestration projects on agricultural lands remain a management challenge, especially at the project and landscape levels. Permanent carbon gains within agriculture could be reversed by future land management decisions. Successful carbon sequestration in one area might simply displace the greenhouse gas emitting activities to another area, a problem known as leakage. Mechanisms to adequately address these two problems must be sought in order to make emission reduction credits in AFOLU as attractive as those from other sectors in the carbon market. Mechanisms to address permanence may include banking, insurance or buffering, and discounting the credits by appropriate risk factor. Leakage can be addressed through area-based approaches and provision of alternative sources of livelihoods and products. A comprehensive landscape-scale approach to accounting can also help reduce leakage problems.

Accounting

The IPCC guidelines for reporting emissions from Agriculture, Forestry and other Land Uses can be used as a comprehensive reporting system in all countries, rather than develop a patchwork of rules for different aspects of land use. A comprehensive, landscape approach to accounting can help address issues such as leakage and additionality, without having to create new and complex accounting rules.

What mechanism will include agriculture?

Currently, a subset of afforestation and deforestation in mitigation options in developing countries fall under the Clean Development Mechanism. Parties to the UNFCCC are negotiating for a REDD+ deal in Copenhagen. The question is whether the future inclusion of agriculture will come under a new AFOLU mechanism, be an expansion of REDD+ or constitute part of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions? Links with the Clean Development Mechanism must also be considered.

How to ensure AFOLU contributes to sustainable development and generates co-benefits

Many Clean Development Mechanism projects have not yielded the sustainable development impacts expected. There will be a tradeoff between building a fair mechanism that addresses sustainable development goals, and an efficient one, which is simple to access and encourages African participation.

Financial mechanisms

There may be a need for specific financial mechanisms for greenhouse gas mitigation in the agricultural sector. While it is recognized that developing countries need a combination of funds and markets to finance mitigation activities, there is little specification about how much is needed, over what period, for whom, and how these funds or markets would be managed. Given the predominance of small farmers in African agriculture, distribution of benefits will be a critical issue.

Technological and institutional capacity

Building capacity for reducing emissions from agriculture, forestry and other land uses will require acquisition and development of appropriate mitigation technologies and adjustment or reform of institutions and policies. Frameworks for assessing and delivering relevant technical, institutional and policy support merit serious consideration.

Sources: UNFCCC, 2008; FAO, 2009; Smith et. al 2007.

are views on methodological issues
nn and follow up at the third REDD
Japan; **December** – at SBSTA 29 and
Poland, Parties are invited to submit
needs for technical and institutional
and cooperation, and on issues relating
peoples and local communities.

March/April – the Ad-hoc Working Group
on Long-term Cooperative Action considers
several aspects of REDD and generally
endorses REDD+. **June** – SBSTA-30 drafts
negotiation text; **December** – at COP-15 in
Copenhagen, the post-2012 international
climate change framework will be
determined.

The Bali Action Plan included a decision on 'Reducing Emissions
from Deforestation in Developing countries: approaches to
stimulate action' which

- invited parties to explore a range of actions, and options,
undertake demonstration activities and mobilize resources
- requested the SBSTA to undertake a programme of work
on methodological issues related to a range of policy
approaches and positive incentives for REDD

The Bali Roadmap is a good template for an AFOLU process.

Proposed Decision

African Parties should consider requesting the UNFCCC to:

1. Agree to consider and refer the issue of land-based emissions to the most relevant UNFCCC bodies for consultation, review and deliberation
2. Request SBSTA or other relevant bodies to undertake a program of work on AFOLU methodological issues and policy approaches, and subsequently report back to COP-16 with recommendations for deliberations and further decisions.

Key Terms:

AFOLU – Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses
Biocarbon – carbon stored in vegetation, dead wood and organic litter, and soils

COP – Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

REDD – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation

SBSTA - Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (of the UNFCCC)

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Way Forward

To prepare Africa for Copenhagen:

1. African regional organizations, in particular the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), need to consider and adopt a common African position on the key elements of the future international climate change regime currently under discussion.
2. African Union institutions, together with the regional economic communities (RECs) need to develop and coordinate a media awareness campaign on their common position.
3. The African Union, AMCEN and RECs need to put in place an elaborate framework for strengthening the capacities of African negotiators in terms of skills and numbers, as well as scientific backup.
4. Negotiators need to be well-informed on the different options and scenarios being discussed, and understand the implications for Africa.

Sources and further reading

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The Africa Biocarbon Initiative was endorsed by the heads of state of the countries of East and Southern Africa in 2008, and launched at the UNFCCC meeting in Poznań, Poland. The Africa Biocarbon Initiative is being promoted by the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Government of Norway and the Rockefeller Foundation are providing financial support. The World Agroforestry Centre and partners are providing technical support.

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