

The Africa Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance

WHAT IS THE “AFRICA CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE ALLIANCE”?

The “AU-NEPAD-INGO Alliance for Scaling-Up Climate-Smart Agriculture in Africa”, or “Africa Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance”, is designed to support the rapid scaling-up of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) across Africa, through the collaborative efforts and practical, on-the-ground experience of Alliance members in agricultural research and implementation. The Alliance aims to support the uptake of CSA practices and approaches by at least 6 million farming households by 2021, contributing to the African Union’s broader goal of supporting 25 million farm households by 2025.

The Africa Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance is comprised of 10 core members representing government, research institutes and civil society organizations. The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), via the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP), is the convener of the Alliance, which will directly support CAADP’s goals of increased agricultural performance and inclusive socioeconomic development. Five INGO partners serve as the core implementing agencies for the Alliance: CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam and World Vision. Two technical partners are represented by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the African policy and advocacy NGO known as the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN). The research consortium CGIAR, and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) comprise the two remaining technical partners.



Photo by Laura Elizabeth Pohl for CRS.

WHY CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE?

Smallholder farmers represent 80 percent of sub-Saharan Africa’s farming population, and suffer disproportionately in the face of droughts, floods and other weather-related events. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe, threatening the reliability and productivity of agriculture, exacerbating already extreme levels of poverty, and reinforcing persistent inequity and chronic under-nutrition. These problems can only be solved through the widespread adoption of more resilient, productive, sustainable, equitable and increasingly efficient farming practices.

Adopting Climate-Smart Agriculture practices can reduce the risks faced by smallholder farmers, as well as mitigate the effects of extreme weather events on farms. Enhancing crop production through minimum tillage systems/conservation agriculture, evergreen agriculture and agroforestry systems, are key elements of the portfolio of CSA solutions. CSA offers a “triple win” for farmers:

1. enhanced food security by sustainably increasing the reliability and productivity of agricultural livelihood activities;
2. increased smallholder resilience and adaptation to the likely effects of climate change; and,
3. *where appropriate, and in the interest of smallholder farmers*, reduced greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and improved carbon sequestration.

The Alliance will seek the best approaches to promote the resilience of African smallholder farmers, particularly women and vulnerable groups, focusing on methods to strengthen livelihoods, reduce inequities and increase the productivity and reliability of agricultural activities.

HOW WILL THE INITIATIVE BE FINANCED?

NEPAD will seek support from multiple donors – bilateral, multilateral and private to finance the activities of the Alliance. There is currently broad support among donors for the CSA initiative, in recognition of the significant climate impacts on food security throughout the world. Alliance members, and in particular NEPAD, will make the business case for CSA to attract investments at the various scales. A CSA investment framework through existing National or Regional Agricultural Investment Plans will promote practical scaling up projects. Innovative financing approaches, including grants, loans and South-South Cooperation, will be developed to gain the necessary momentum for the action-orientated approach of the Alliance.



Photo by Sara A. Fajardo/CRS.

WHY THIS UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP?

The Africa CSA Alliance is particularly exciting because it is the first time that NEPAD/CAADP has established an explicit role for non-governmental organizations. The central position of the INGO members in the Alliance recognizes their contributions to reaching and improving the lives of vulnerable populations over many decades. The INGO membership will enable the Alliance to quickly scale interventions as well as leverage the strong partnerships they have developed with local NGO partners and community-based organizations. In addition, each of the 10 members will benefit from one another's areas of expertise, while learning and knowledge sharing will be facilitated across membership and beyond. The premier technical and research organizations will ensure that implementing partners have the best, most up-to-date technical information and evaluation capacity, as well as provide a neutral platform through which to support the establishment of an enabling institutional framework. Working together, all 10 organizations will incorporate learning into program design and delivery. Real-time feedback to policymakers will enhance evidence-based decision-making and contribute to efforts to establish the kind of enabling environment necessary to address systemic issues related to improved agricultural production, food and nutrition security and climate change adaptation. The African-led nature of the Alliance ensures the alignment of implementers, researchers and donors to locally developed solutions.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ALLIANCE'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES?

Central to the goals of the Alliance is the desire of all members to improve food, nutrition and livelihood security, resilience, and productivity, along with the equity and sustainability of agricultural systems. Food insecurity and climate change cannot be addressed in isolation of systemic issues connected to poverty and marginalization. The Alliance aspires to a goal of transformational impact on people, communities and systems which requires attention to the access, equity and other constraints faced by African women farmers, youth and other vulnerable groups. As part of the approach, the Alliance is committed to local capacity strengthening at the farmer, community, local NGO and local extension service levels.

Consistent with the current philosophies of the INGO members, the Alliance is committed to strengthening the processes of outreach and inclusion and building on proven community-based and farmer-led approaches. Outreach to local organizations and associations provides essential information for learning and implementation. This information must in turn reach policy makers to support an enabling environment that favours smallholder farmers and sustainable, equitable and resilient agricultural production. The Alliance upholds that investments and practice in CSA must be responsible and thereby adhere to the Committee on World Food Security *Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment* and the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests*.