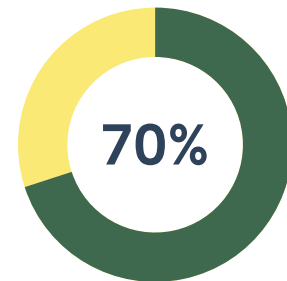




WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE?

Over a third of global greenhouse gas emissions are a direct result of food systems, with over 70% of these coming from agriculture and land-use change activities. Livestock operations also present significant contributions by accounting for 44% of the world's methane emissions. However, over 70% of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) overlook food systems.



The July 2023 UN Food Systems Summit+2 Stocktaking Moment demonstrated how all parties are off track in meeting 2030 goals. To rally nations attending the Summit, the COP28 presidency released a Food Systems and Agriculture Agenda (FSAA) which establishes four pillars for action at the upcoming COP. The COP28 presidency further introduced a Leaders Declaration on Food Systems, Agriculture, and Climate Action, which links food systems and agricultural strategies into NDCs, National Adaptation Plans, and National Biodiversity Strategy.



RELEVANCE TO COP 28



An important driver poised to influence decisions at COP28 around food security and the FSAA pillars is the agriculture innovation mission for climate (AIM for Climate). As a relatively new co-development between the United States and the United Arab Emirates to increase global technology and spending on climate smart agriculture (CSA), investments in AIM for Climate exceeds \$13 billion from both private and public partners, plus an additional \$3 billion annually from the World Bank.

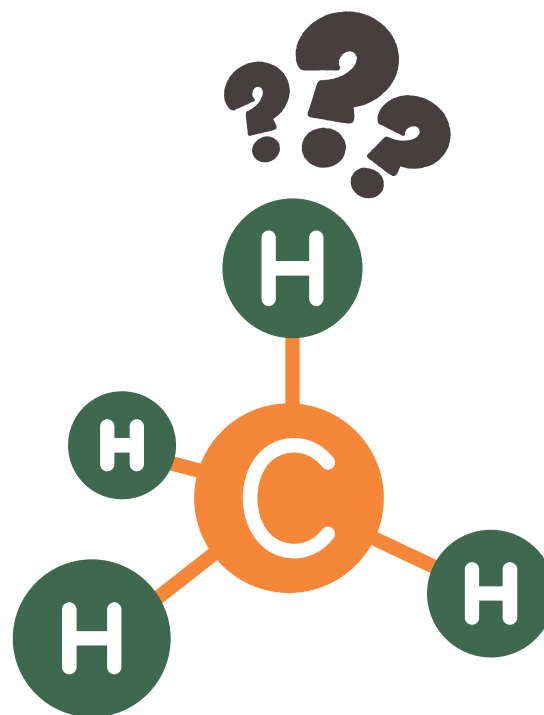
AIM for Climate's latest initiative—Innovation Sprints—supports projects under the categories of smallholder farmers in low-and-middle income countries, methane reduction, emerging technologies, and agroecological research. Its 500+ partners working on Innovation Sprints and other developments include a vast array of the public and private sector including global chemical and seed companies, industrial meat producers, carbon offset firms, technology companies, global corporations, government bodies, major foundations, and capital producers, among many others.



RELEVANCE TO COP 28 (CONTINUED)

The Korovina Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA), the UNFCCC’s only “food arm,” places a heavy emphasis on CSA and has been instrumental in promoting it across the globe. At COP27, the KJWA laid the foundation for the Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security (SSJW), which will introduce three key features at COP28: 1) nature-positive food production, 2) healthy sustainable diets, and 3) food loss and waste.

At COP 26, nations agreed to tackle the dangers of methane through the Global Methane Pledge, but specific language targeting agriculture was notably absent. At COP 28, leaders at the Day of Food, Agriculture, and Water plan to launch a Dairy Methane Action Agenda where agriculture is expected to reckon with its methane emissions, yet it will be led by financial actors and private entities. Here, attention should be paid to the language of “global warming potential,” a relatively new term used by meat and dairy producers to calculate methane’s highly potent atmospheric effects before it is effectively neutralized. The term can subtly allow meat and dairy producers to dress up their climate commitments while doing very little to actually reduce emissions.



Finally, finance for climate adaptation and loss and damage could have key implications for food and farming in developing countries. For instance, smallholder farmers in developing countries are being encouraged to modify practices in order to join the global supply chain. In developed countries, attention to emissions reductions and climate resiliency appear to be at the top of the to-do list, but soil and methane offsets—and their potential for government subsidies—will continue to demand attention.



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

The UN often prioritizes food security over food sovereignty. Rather than supporting Indigenous-led, community-centered, autonomous decision-making around food and farming practices, “food security” can take on a predatory nature where “expert” knowledge, proprietary seeds, chemicals and external influence entrenches Indigenous practices of farming into a dependent system of homogeneous production. These systems further perpetuate biodiversity loss, increased pesticide use, land use change and nutritional deficiency for humans and the planet.



The corporate, profit-seeking, development-minded focus of CSA and AIM for Climate stand at odds with the self-determination and land-use decisions of Indigenous Peoples’ food systems of hunting, gathering, farming, fishing and livestock herders and pastoral communities. Such market-driven solutions designed by agribusinesses and international financial institutions reinforce dominant forms of power that threaten Traditional Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous food sovereignty.

Many of the proposals claiming to better improve systems of food and agriculture facing the climate crisis are not designed to deliver resources directly to communities. Instead, the violence of colonialism continues to surface by farming prescriptions that defer to Eurocentric science and the latest in Western technology. Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge, traditions, seeds, territories, and time-honored connection with the land are not safeguarded against the agenda of “Big Agriculture.”





DEBUNKING MYTHS

WHAT THEY SAY

Regenerative agriculture promotes climate resilient practices, like cover-cropping, no-till, and organic farming.

Regenerative agriculture helps to sequester carbon in the soil, enhances biodiversity and farm-based conservation.

WHAT WE SAY

Traditional Indigenous Knowledge, regenerative agriculture and agroecological practices can improve soil health, conserve water, and enhance biodiversity.

However, on a large scale, regenerative agriculture is coupled with industrial methods, and can act as a con to incorporate engineered seeds and pesticides, monocropping practices, and other destructive agribusiness tactics alongside traditional methods.

Fundamental flaws plague the practicality of depending on corporate-backed regenerative agriculture as a means of climate mitigation.

Soil-carbon sequestration is always susceptible to reversal through weather, natural disaster, and land-use change. **Current methods for measuring and monitoring soil carbon are inconsistent, designed to sell offsets, and are often estimated by satellites. Further, soil carbon offsets do not cut emissions at source and allow polluting industries to increase pollution.**

The latest approach to corporate-driven regenerative agriculture is to introduce genetically engineered microbes into the soil. The biochemical industry has invested billions of dollars into engineering technologies that pose grave risks and uncertainties to the health of existing farmland.



DEBUNKING MYTHS

WHAT THEY SAY

WHAT WE SAY

COP28's "Regenerative Landscapes" initiative is an excellent program.

At COP27, calls were made for 40% of farms to practice RA by 2030. This year, the COP28 presidency, along with private interests including PepsiCo, Mars, Archer Daniels Midland, and Yara (chemical/fertilizer manufacturer) have crafted the new "Regenerative Landscapes" initiative which encourages large scale adoption of regenerative agriculture grounded in procurement and investment commitments.

CSA will lead to better outcomes for farmers and people.

CSA is a deceptive strategy promoted by governments, agribusinesses, and international financial institutions as a promising way for agriculture to combat the climate crisis. **CSA acts as a smokescreen to promote carbon offsets.**

The USDA's Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities will support farmers.

In the United States, the USDA's Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities has awarded billions of dollars to develop and scale CSA projects for national replication (think of these as pilot templates for others to use); the program has funded many projects, including grants to Exxon/Mobile, agrochemical companies Corteva and Bayer (Monsanto), and carbon market firm Truterra.