

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS
Faculty of Agriculture

CSA Policy Dialogue
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Ladies and Gentlemen

A very warm welcome to you all to the University of Mauritius.

We have gathered here today for a policy dialogue on Climate Smart Agriculture.

Climate change and its impacts, and our responses for adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage, etc. concern one and all. As was witnessed in Paris last year at the conference of parties (COP 21), people from all over the world were on the move; in many cities and towns across the world, they had taken to the streets, in a mass mobilization for change – change in attitudes, behaviours, life styles and acceptance of responsibility, with respect to climate change.

Climate change impacts are driven by insufficient mitigation actions at global level, which increases the adaptation burden on developing countries. The less mitigation actions are taken, the more societies will be forced to adapt and to contend with loss and damage.

The African continent, although contributing the least to climate change, is predicted to be the worst hit. Even a 2-degree rise is expected to have serious consequences for food and water security, economic stability and international peace. The Small Island Developing States have even less room to manoeuvre, and are desperately asking the world to limit

temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. But everything points to the fact that we may already be too late; in parts of the world, we are more than halfway to a 1.5 degrees rise in temperature.

As far as Mauritius is concerned, the 2014 World Risk Report puts Mauritius in 14th place in the list of countries which are at high risk of suffering an extreme climatic event. Temperature and sea level rise are increasing beyond the global average, while annual rainfall is decreasing.

However, developing countries now have the greatest mitigation potential, particularly the larger ones. Collectively, African countries have pledged mitigation efforts up to 2020 that exceed those of developed countries. Although, Mauritius cannot compare with the big countries, we have our small part to play. One year ago, Mauritius submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), which aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030 and to take the path of sustainable, low-carbon development.

2015 was a record year for worldwide discussions related to major sustainability issues culminating in some important global Agreements, e.g the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction, the adoption of the 17 SDGs, formulation of a protocol for financing sustainable development. 2016 should be the year that sees the beginning of serious implementation of all these Agreements. Our small island has committed to all these Agreements, and now requires the development and implementation of targeted and robust strategies and policies to meet our commitments.

On a different note, as climate change starts to impact the global food supply, global production of food will be reduced. A food importing country such as Mauritius therefore needs to promote food security through import substitution, and an increase in local food production, in order to remain resilient in our food supply.

Climate Smart Agriculture is one such approach in the agriculture sector. CSA is an approach that sustainably increases productivity resilience (adaptation), reduces or removes greenhouse gases (mitigation) and enhances the achievement of national food security and development goals. CSA builds further upon the concept of sustainable agriculture, and uses the ecosystem approach as well as principles of sustainable land and water management, along with

resource and energy use assessments, to make decisions on the appropriate site-specific farming methods to use.

Climate change also provides green growth opportunities for agribusinesses and other businesses indirectly linked to agriculture. There is tremendous growth potential for SMEs, R&D and creative problem-solving among communities and businesses in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Examples include the development of specific farm inputs for CSA, such as high quality compost and seeds, pest traps, biological control agents for pest and disease management, renewable energy systems for agricultural activities, rainwater harvesting, infrastructural and other capital equipment for new farming systems, such as aquaponics, aeroponics, vertical gardens, roof top farming, storage of postharvest produce for better market dynamics, innovative postharvest processing, packaging and marketing, development of innovative foods, etc. etc.

Climate change is here. Whether it is of our own making or not, we are all being affected. The way forward now is to ensure that we leave to our future generations, a world that is fit to live in comfortably, where one can breathe clean air, where fresh, clean water is available, where food is safe and healthy to eat, where birds still sing, where butterflies still flit about, and where one can still walk outdoors to watch the sunset.

I am proud of my Faculty staff for their initiative in collaborating with the FANRPAN to organise a national policy dialogue on such an important issue. The presence here today of so many of you from different public, parastatal, and private institutions and organisations for this event testifies to your genuine and legitimate concern about climate change impacts, and your determination to find sustainable solutions for the long term future of our agriculture and food security. And I sincerely thank you for it.

I also express my heartfelt gratitude to FANRPAN for its technical and financial inputs in this important event, to the Vice Chancellor and the two Pro Vice Chancellors for their continued support and encouragement to our Faculty endeavours.