

Strengthening Southern Africa's NDCs to Bolster Farmers' Interests

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African perspectives Global insights









Executive summary

Agriculture and other land-use sectors play a major role in the global response to climate change – as a large source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as a carbon sink, and as a sector vulnerable to climate extremes and variability. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are important policy instruments under the Paris Agreement that guide national climate actions in the near to short term. While most Southern African countries have included agriculture in their current NDCs, many lack sector-specific, quantifiable commitments to drive targeted action. In addition, few NDCs in the region have detailed information on the support needed to accomplish these plans, or the necessary governance mechanisms. Countries are expected to update and revise their NDCs every five years. This means that their contents can be strengthened and interested stakeholders can engage in the review process. Farming stakeholders can leverage these processes to ensure that the needs of their constituencies are integrated. The extent to which the agricultural sector can contribute to the effective implementation of the NDC targets will depend on how various stakeholders, specifically farmers, are supported in their transition to low-emission, climate-resilient development pathways.

Introduction¹

Agriculture is a vital social and economic sector in SADC, contributing about 35% of its gross domestic product, approximately 13% of its overall export earnings and about 66% of the value of intra-regional trade.² Most of the region's farming takes place in rural areas, mainly on smallholder farms, supporting 70% of its population (through subsistence farming and small- and large-scale commercial agriculture).³ Beyond these benefits, the sector also has deep cultural importance, especially to indigenous and pastoralist communities.

The agricultural sector can be transformative in eradicating poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Women and youth are often among the poorest agricultural producers, owing to their limited access to education, tenure rights, inputs, technologies and markets. By combining investments in climate-resilient agricultural development with non-climate interventions, governments can ensure that climate action in the agricultural sector drives sustainable development. This will support the objectives of the AU's <u>Malabo Declaration on</u> <u>Accelerated Agricultural Growth</u> (2016) and <u>SADC's Regional Agricultural Policy</u> (2014). Promoting sustainable agricultural practices (eg, climate-smart agriculture) is also a key strategic intervention in the region's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.⁴

¹ This paper is based on a longer advisory piece commissioned by the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions.

² SADC, "Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020–2030 Blueprints" (Draft version, SADC, Gaborone, 2020), 61, https://imanidevelopment.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/4th-Draft_RISDP-2020-30-Blue-Prints2.pdf.

³ SADC, "Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan".

⁴ SADC, "Draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2020–2030" (Gaborone: SADC, 2020). This draft document is yet to be validated by the ministers of environment.

Given the vital importance of agriculture to the region, this policy insight provides recommendations for Southern African countries on strengthening their NDCs and other climate policies to better reflect agricultural priorities and the interests of farmers. They also aim to enhance the agency and intervention opportunities of farmers and national farmers' organisations (NFOs) in climate policy processes.

Progress on NDC revision

The Paris Agreement, negotiated through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), aims to avert dangerous climate change by phasing out carbon emissions by the second half of the century. NDCs are the backbone of the Paris Agreement.⁵ They describe each country's self-determined plans to curb GHG emissions and enhance resilience, typically in five- or 10-year periods. In 2015, 186 nations submitted their first NDCs to the UNFCCC.⁶

Despite the delay, the 2020/2021 revision process allows countries to update the basis of their 2015 NDC and to demonstrate leadership and engage a broader group of stakeholders to increase ownership of climate commitments

NDCs were to have been reviewed by <u>COP26</u>, originally scheduled for 2020, but global disruptions caused by COVID-19 have delayed these processes. COP26 is now scheduled for November 2021. Most countries had not submitted revised NDCs by the end of 2020.⁷ However, despite the delay, the 2020/2021 revision process allows countries to update the basis of their 2015 NDC (for example, to reflect improvements in technology, science and data) and to demonstrate leadership and engage a broader group of stakeholders to increase ownership of climate commitments. The scope of revisions and the extent to which they reflect strengthened climate ambition vary by country. According to Climate Action Tracker,⁸ some countries have merely restated their past commitments or made

⁵ While this paper focuses on NDCs, many other country-level climate strategies need the same level of public scrutiny and research, such as Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions, National Adaptation Programmes of Action, National Climate Change Strategies, Climate Bills, Green Economy Strategies (or other formal sectoral policies/strategies) and Long-term Strategies (longterm visions towards low-carbon, climate-resilient development by 2050).

⁶ International Institute for Sustainable Development, "<u>Climate Ambition Summit 2020</u>", December 12, 2020, <u>https://enb.iisd.org/</u> climate/ambition-summit-2020/about.html.

⁷ At the time of publication, 34 countries had submitted revised NDCs, including four African countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal and Zambia).

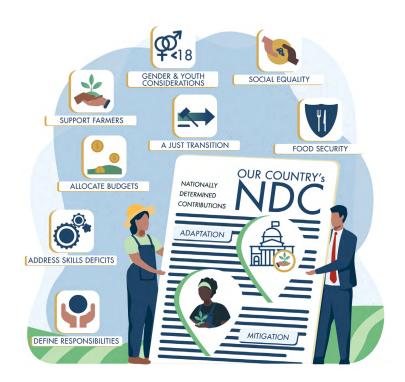
⁸ Climate Action Tracker, "<u>CAT Climate Target Update Tracker: List of Non-Updating Countries</u>", Database, <u>https://climateaction</u> tracker.org/climate-target-update-tracker/list-non-updating-countries/.

new commitments that do not show much more ambition. In other cases, like that of Rwanda, the revised NDC includes new commitments to enhance the overall ambition of current plans and gives detailed information on sector-specific targets, as well as implementation plans for achieving these targets. In order to keep global warming below 1.5°C, as per the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, countries need to include far stricter mitigation and adaptation targets.

Strengthening the content of NDCs to better reflect agricultural priorities

Most NDCs submitted in 2015 make at least some reference to agriculture, which shows a recognition that actions in the agricultural sector can be transformative in the response to climate change and sustainable development. In 2017 CGIAR's Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) conducted research on the specific agricultural contributions of 162 NDCs.⁹ The analysis showed that 102 of these

NDCs included agriculture as a priority sector, with some countries specifying livestock (70), fisheries (71), land use (128) and forestry (153). It also showed that the most cited mitigation and adaptation references to agriculture included climatesmart agriculture, conservation agriculture, agroforestry and afforestation. References were also made to livestock, crops. fisheries and aquaculture management, irrigation and water management, knowledge transfer, agricultural diversification, and soil and land management.



Despite these references, the revised NDCs should ensure agriculture, and farmers specifically, are included in a more ambitious, explicit and direct manner. The existing NDCs tend to focus on climate-smart agricultural practices. Less attention has been paid to those services that can facilitate uptake of these actions, and to the risk management services and financial means necessary to protect vulnerable groups. Both these areas are of

9 Meryl B Richards et al., "How Countries Plan to Address Agricultural Adaptation and Mitigation: An Analysis of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, CCAFS Dataset Version 1.3" (CCAFS, Copenhagen, 2016), https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/73255. particular importance, as agriculture's contribution to the NDC targets will depend largely on how stakeholders are helped to transition to climate-resilient development pathways. Support for NDC implementation can include new and additional climate finance, technology, capacity building and reskilling, as well as access to good climate information services, social protection, insurance and credit mechanisms.

The revised NDCs should ensure agriculture, and farmers specifically, are included in a more ambitious, explicit and direct manner

While most countries say they intend to seek international financial support for their adaptation and/or mitigation contributions, only 16 (12 of which are African) explicitly refer to financing requirements for agricultural adaptation. Zimbabwe, for example, is the only country in Southern Africa that has identified its financing needs (\$35 billion).¹⁰ Within the NDC revision process, these financing needs should be specific and more detailed in terms of farmers' priority sectors and actions. In this regard, NFOs could play a critical role in working with their respective governments to ensure that farmers' interests are integrated into the NDCs. They could also make sure that support for the mobilisation of resources and investments is embedded in these processes to enhance farmers' capacity to adopt climate-smart technologies, approaches and practices.

Ultimately, farming should increasingly demonstrate its potential to reduce emission intensities in the sector, while increasing food production and providing livelihood benefits. Currently, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, adaptation-mitigation synergies in the agricultural sector are mentioned in only about 30% of NDCs.¹¹ There are also new mitigation areas to consider in the NDC enhancement process, such as reducing emissions across the food supply chain and shifting to healthier and more sustainable diets. Currently, 6% of GHG emissions globally come from food waste,¹² and yet few countries in Southern Africa mention policies or actions to address this issue. In addition, the urbanisation trend could have a considerable impact on demand for different food types, including fast food. These factors will affect emissions from agriculture and should be considered in the revision of NDCs.

¹⁰ UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, NDC Registry, "Zimbabwe's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) Submitted to the UNFCCC" (UNFCCC, New York, August 2017), <u>https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/</u> Zimbabwe%20First/Zimbabwe%20First%20NDC.pdf.

Food and Agriculture Organization, "<u>The Agriculture Sectors in the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions: Analysis</u>" (Environment and Natural Resources Management Working Paper 61, FAO, Rome, 2016).

¹² Joseph Poore and Thomas Nemecek, "Reducing Food's Environmental Impacts through Producers and Consumers", *Science* 360, no. 6392 (June 2018): 987–992.

It is important that adaptation and mitigation policies in the agricultural sector recognise that climate change disproportionately affects the poor, women farmers and youth. While many current NDCs do refer broadly to gender equity and the inclusion of women, few countries note gender in the context of agriculture. The youth demographic bulge also seems to be largely missing in these NDCs – as are social equality, human rights and food security, all pillars on which the Paris Agreement rests. These concepts need to receive more attention in the revision of the NDCs.

Stronger links with the UN Agenda 2030's <u>Sustainable Development Goals</u> (SDGs) should also be addressed when submitting new and revised NDCs. Agriculture links directly with the achievement of multiple SDGs, including SDG 2 on zero hunger, SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production, and SDG 13 on climate action. Ultimately, the SDGs could become a key indicator of resilience at the national level.

While various issues related to agriculture should be integrated into NDCs (as described above), it is also important to strengthen the governance mechanisms that support NDC development. NDCs generally lack detail on the policy environment needed to advance agricultural climate action, such as improved policy coherence, inclusive planning and institutional coordination.

The systematic mainstreaming of agricultural considerations in climate policy frameworks is essential. For example, in order to combat deforestation through integrated land-use management, those ministries responsible for crops, livestock and forests must collectively pursue approaches that sustainably intensify production on existing land. These different policy areas are rarely under the sole remit of the Ministry of Agriculture or Ministry of Environment, and are often spread across multiple line ministries and government authorities. Many SADC countries will need support to develop and implement policy frameworks and incentive structures that provide coherent support for climate action across sectors. Having a focal point for agriculture in the climate change department is a practical way to integrate issues. NDCs will not succeed without clear financing plans; strong and enforceable requirements for measuring, reporting and verification; appropriate capacity development at all levels; and a high degree of political commitment.

Advancing climate action by strengthening the policy environment

African countries have frameworks that guide their policy commitments in the agricultural sector. These vary in depth and interconnectedness, as well as the extent to which they include various stakeholders. The following are examples of mechanisms in the region that can be used to strengthen climate action in the agricultural sector and include the voices of different stakeholders. The more inclusive these governance processes are, the more likely that farmers' concerns will be heard and taken on board.

BOX 1 STRENGTHENING THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT TO ADVANCE AGRICULTURAL CLIMATE ACTION: AFRICAN EXAMPLES

Improved intergovernmental processes

In South Africa, the low-carbon, climate-resilient transition is being led by the <u>National</u> <u>Planning Commission</u>. Various national climate structures and inter-governmental processes have been established to enhance multisectoral coordination, such as the <u>National Committee on Climate Change</u>, the Intergovernmental Committee <u>on Climate Change</u> and the Forum of South African Directors General. In Kenya, the National Change Commission (NCCC) provides overarching coordination with the Climate Change Directorate, which also serves as secretariat to the NCCC. These sectoral agencies mainstream climate at national and county level, as well as with assemblies.

Multi-stakeholder platforms to enhance the inclusion of non-state actors

The <u>Tanzanian Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance</u> discusses pertinent issues and then communicates these needs to the government, to inform government and development partner interventions. The Zambian Climate Smart Agricultural Alliance performs a similar function.

Long-term, low-emission strategies to guide shorter-term targets

Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia are all developing long-term low-carbon climateresilient development pathways for the agricultural sector, aimed at informing policy input into the NDC revision process. To achieve this, the African Group of Negotiators Expert Support (AGNES), CCAFS and other partners are helping countries to move towards one such approach - a process that requires several steps.^a Step 1 consists of a situation analysis of relevant policy frameworks and development plans to establish the status/baseline of the agricultural sector. This will identify the actions needed for countries to shift from business-as-usual activities towards agricultural transformation. Next, a national multi-stakeholder consultation (step 2) will bring together key stakeholders (in-person or virtually) who will interrogate and validate the situation analysis and help define the scope of the long-term strategies. A team consisting of partner organisations will then create future climate scenarios/pathways (step 3) by downscaling climate projections and presenting plausible scenarios to inform the choice of the most appropriate options. After this, a national expert working session (step 4) will be held to co-design pathways. This will bring together technical experts from ministries of agriculture, planning, environment, meteorological services and others to develop long-term scenarios and agree on priority mitigation and adaptation actions. A national stakeholder validation workshop (step 5) will allow stakeholders to consider the draft long-term agriculture strategies/NDCs for final inputs. Finally, the revised agriculture strategies and updated NDCs (step 6) will incorporate comments from the national stakeholder validation meeting and be finalised.

Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV)

Rwanda has developed an MRV framework with indicators for each of the key emitting sectors, which can be used for both international reporting and domestic tracking of NDC implementation.^b The framework enables the monitoring of 'business as usual' baseline emissions, as well as actual emissions arising from the implementation of NDC mitigation measures and of adaptation activities. It will also facilitate tracking of climate finance flows for NDC implementation and other forms of international support. It is necessary to use Africa-based emission factors, rather than globally derived ones, to get a realistic estimate of the continent's emission levels from agriculture.

Inclusion of farmers and NFOs in NDC planning and implementation process

The South African government provides various open platforms for public consultations on issues relating to the NDC and other climate processes. These include national climate change structures, pre-COP and feedback meetings, and workshops.

Inclusion of agricultural-sector actions into an emissions reduction target

Rwanda's revised NDC of 2020 sets specific targets for the agricultural sector. This includes timeframes and finance required. Malawi has also set ambitious agriculture-related mitigation targets. The same is true for South Africa's National Climate Change Response Policy, which requires sectors to develop their own adaptation and mitigation plans, in compliance with the national regulatory legislation and the National Development Plan.

Inclusion of agricultural-sector actions in adaptation target

Rwanda includes six adaptation actions that specifically refer to agriculture.

Inclusion of farmers' representatives in climate negotiations

Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana and Malawi, among other countries, have official representatives from the agricultural sector on their national climate negotiation teams. In Tanzania, the Environment Management Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture is represented in the delegation. In Zambia, the climate change focal person from the Ministry of Agriculture is part of the delegation, as are other agricultural civil society organisations. In Botswana, a youth delegate representing the farming community attends COP as part of the national delegation.

The use of parliamentary portfolio committees

These committees can provide an oversight role on all climate change programmes implemented by government. South African government departments often brief the Portfolio Committee of Environment and Natural Resources on progress made on programme implementation, policy development, compliance issues, country positions in the UNFCCC, etc.

Gender-responsive climate action

Gender elements are being integrated into NDC and policy revisions, legal frameworks and budget reforms. Zambia, for example, has integrated gender indicators into its NDC implementation plan and is incorporating gender considerations into its MRV framework.

Detailed needs analysis for climate finance

The total estimated cost of Rwanda's identified NDC measures through 2030 is around \$11 billion. For mitigation and adaptation combined, unconditional measures account for around 40% of the total estimated funding requirements, and conditional measures around 60%. The combined contribution is a 38% reduction in GHG emissions compared to business-as-usual in 2030, or 4.6 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2030.

- a Erick Omollo et al., "Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia Get Help to Formulate Climate-Resilient Development Strategies to Inform Updating Their Agricultural Nationally Determined Contributions", CCAFS, April 2020, <u>https://ccafs.cgiar.org/news/</u>formulating-long-term-climate-resilient-development-strategies-agriculture.
- b UNFCCC, NDC Registry, "Republic of Rwanda: Updated Nationally Determined Contribution", May 2020, <u>https://www4.unfccc.</u> int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Rwanda%20First/Rwanda_Updated_NDC_May_2020.pdf.

Enhancing the agency of farmers in climate policy

In theory, the formulation of a well-designed NDC is a bottom-up process in which countries contextualise and self-differentiate their targets and contributions based on their national circumstances and priorities. This should be arrived at through transparent and inclusive processes to build trust and accountability with a broad range of domestic and international stakeholders, and to promote horizontal and vertical integration across government sectors. While most governments are implementing outreach and engagement plans as part of their NDC revision processes, there is a need to enhance consultation and improve stakeholder engagement mechanisms in all countries. This includes involving a broad range of non-governmental stakeholders from the beginning of the NDC revision process to strengthen its ownership, legitimacy, quality and durability.¹³

¹³ Katherine Ross et al., "<u>Enhancing NDCs: Opportunities in Agriculture</u>" (Working Paper, World Resources Institute and Oxfam, Washington DC, December 2019), <u>https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620922/dp-ndc-enhancement</u> -opportunities-agriculture-011219-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

While most governments are implementing outreach and engagement plans as part of their NDC revision processes, there is a need to enhance consultation and improve stakeholder engagement mechanisms in all countries

Also, it must be noted that NDCs will have to be implemented by all actors, not just by governments. Everyone will have to work together to achieve targets, so the creation of those targets should be as broad-based as possible.

Despite being at the frontlines of the climate–environment nexus, farmers and farmers' organisations have to a large extent been excluded in the formulation, development and delivery of climate policy in the region. Most NDCs still do not recognise farmers as important agents for change and instead position them as vulnerable yet passive victims of climate change impacts. Yet, with the appropriate supporting mechanisms and engagement platforms, farmers can drive climate action, promote accountability for national commitments to sustainable, climate-resilient development, and serve as communicators of good practice. In addition, NFOs' participation in both policy and practice will make climate change solutions more effective and sustainable, and build equality and participation.

A range of engagement processes and mechanisms can enhance farmers' meaningful contribution to the formulation and implementation of climate change policy.

Engage farmers in the NDC review processes

Farmers need to be aware of countrylevel stakeholder engagement forums and opportunities to provide formal input into policy – from the initial stages of policy drafting to the implementation and monitoring of outputs. Farmers' organisations must engage with the focal points of their respective governments to establish the status of NDC review processes. This will ensure a shared understanding of timelines, key milestones, relevant avenues for intervention and engagement processes.



With the appropriate supporting mechanisms and engagement platforms, farmers can drive climate action, promote accountability for national commitments to sustainable, climate-resilient development, and serve as communicators of good practice

Include farmers in formal multi-stakeholder processes



Farmers should lobby for recognition in climate-related forums. The onus to ensure they are included in pivotal moments is equally on governments and on NFOs. Understanding the processes, and when and where they take place, is a first step towards developing more inclusive policy processes.

Increase farmers' capacity to engage effectively with policymakers

If NFOs are empowered with knowledge, skills, technology and networks, and have meaningful opportunities to participate in review processes and engage with decision makers, they will take the lead in holding their governments to account. To increase their technical knowledge and enhance their strategic interventions, it is essential that farmers undergo training, as well as skills and capacity development. Partnerships with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government can help in this regard.



Build relationships with policymakers and high-level officials

Government representatives can help to establish durable alliances and develop supportive networks between government and civil society. These government allies can alert NFOs to policy windows and opportunities for engagement, and champion or push an agriculturally sensitive climate advocacy agenda.



Leverage the power of social media

Social media can help give farmers access to policymakers and be used to broadcast, and amplify climate advocacy campaigns and expand networks with other relevant climate advocates.

Strengthen partnerships with NGOs, think tanks, universities and the private sector

Partnerships can play an important role in facilitating farmer engagement in intergovernmental meetings, providing resources to NFOs for capacity development, strategic advocacy guidance and support, and research-based policy inputs.



Include farmers in national climate delegations to annual COP negotiations

Currently, only a few countries include farmer representatives in their delegations to climate summits. NFOs should advocate for representation in negotiating teams, as well as for financial support and skills development through technical mentorship programmes. Getting NFOs to track key issues in the agriculture discussions at these negotiation processes can be a win-win, especially for country delegations that lack capacity. Excellent work is currently being done by the AGNES, which focuses on capacity building on a variety of thematic areas, including agricultural issues, at the COP level.

Build farming coalitions and umbrella bodies

Organisations such as the <u>Southern African Confederation</u> of Agricultural Unions and World <u>Farmers' Organisation</u> are better positioned to represent the voices of NFOs in a consolidated fashion at regional, continental and global forums. Although they represent a multitude of heterogeneous perspectives, these platforms provide a structure where NFOs can come together to develop



collective policy input. It is, however, important that these umbrella groups are as inclusive as possible, addressing barriers to inclusion such as financial constraints, geographical isolation, restrictions imposed by government or other authorities, lack of awareness, etc.

Conclusion

The goals of the Paris Agreement cannot be met without transformative changes in the agricultural sector. Although the majority of NDCs mention agriculture in some way, the current round of NDC updates is an opportunity to strengthen the mitigation and adaptation contribution of the agricultural sector. It is also a chance to be more explicit about the actions and investments each country intends to make, what it will take to achieve those changes, and what support is needed. This means that the needs, vulnerabilities, rights and agency of farmers can be included in the NDC revision process. In addition, governance and coordination mechanisms can be adopted to ensure their integration in the entire policy lifecycle. As such, the following measures should be adopted:

- Farmers should become more involved in climate policy development, implementation and monitoring, through national multi-stakeholder dialogues and negotiating teams, parliamentary portfolio committees, climate alliances and advocacy networks. They should also build relationships with key officials in government.
- Farming stakeholders, including NFOs, can leverage the NDC revision process to ensure that the needs of their constituencies are sufficiently integrated.
- NDCs must make explicit reference to farmers and agricultural institutions as active and valuable stakeholders in the process.
- NDCs should be explicit about the enabling and risk support needed to successfully implement agricultural commitments defining responsibilities, addressing skills deficits and allocating budgets to support farmers specifically.
- Revised NDCs should integrate agriculture-specific gender and youth considerations, and engage with issues such as a just transition, social equality and food security.
- Governments should adopt best practice in terms of policy coherence and institutional coordination mechanisms to facilitate NDC development and broad stakeholder engagement.

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Acknowledgement

SAIIA gratefully acknowledges the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for this publication.

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