

REGIONAL INITIATIVE FOR THE CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT

Name of the Initiative: “Building Resilience in the Central American Region under a Synergistic Approach between Mitigation and Adaptation - Focusing on Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU) sector”

This proposal provides a framework of understanding and cooperation of a highly sensitive and vulnerable region, to implement coordinated and synergistic actions to face the challenges of Climate Change.

Area of action / coalition: Nature-based solutions, and synergic with the Resilience and Adaptation coalition.

Justification and Background:

This initiative is a proposal of several countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA), recognizing the advantages of a significant contribution to the global goal of 1.5° C, and the benefits of a collective and non-isolated action that encourages action in other regions of Latin America and the world.

The initiative is highly consistent with the last IPCC Report on “Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems”¹; which highlights the changes in land use conditions and their link to the global climate; indicating that many activities to combat desertification can contribute to adaptation with co-benefits in mitigation to climate change, as well as to stop the loss of biodiversity and have co-benefits in the sustainable development of societies. The report also establishes that avoiding, reducing and reversing desertification would enhance soil fertility, increase carbon storage in soils and biomass, and while benefitting agricultural productivity and food security; therefore, the prevention of desertification is preferable to trying to restore degraded land due to the possibility of residual risks and maladaptive outcomes.

In this regard, it has been identified that in the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use AFOLU sector, the region has high emissions, just over 50% of its total emissions, and that it already has relatively homogeneous strategies, action plans and technical operating instruments, which would enable the construction and implementation of a collective action within the parameters set in the Global Climate Action Summit.

The AFOLU sector is responsible for almost a quarter of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and according to FAO, emissions related to the activities in this sector will increase in the future. Latin America and the Caribbean contribute in 17% to the total emissions in AFOLU, and Central America only contributes in 2.2% to the total emissions. However, in most countries of the SICA Region, with the exception of Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, the AFOLU sector accounts for more than half of the total greenhouse gas emissions.

This has been an issue that the countries of the Region have addressed with certain priority, showing significant progress. They have National REDD+ Programs and strategies to face the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. In addition, the eight countries of the Region have made voluntary commitments, within the framework of the Bonn Challenge Initiative, and most of them

¹ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/08/4.-SPM_Approved_Microsite_FINAL.pdf

even have national restoration plans or strategies. Currently, the region's restoration commitments add a total of more than eight million hectares.

The Central American Region has been identified as the most sensitive tropical region to climate change (IPCC AR5). The Region has experienced in recent decades hydro-meteorological events, such as extreme rains and severe droughts, which have meant very high losses and damages, with important implications and obstacles to development. Central America is severely affected by severe droughts, affecting mainly in the area identified as the Central American Dry Corridor, with strong implications in food production and food security, infrastructure and productive activities in general. For instance, the severe drought of 2015 affected 3.5 million people in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Climate scenarios show that the Region will experience extreme weather events in a more intense and more frequent manner.

On the other hand, the Central American region is recognized as a World Megadiversity Center, with only 2% of the earth's surface having 12% of the world's biodiversity. The Region has a 39% forest cover, being also a center of origin and diversity of important genetic resources of interest for food and agriculture. Taking advantage of this, and by doing a good management of its biodiversity richness, restoring and conserving valuable ecosystems, and moving to sustainable land use practices, the region could build greater resilience, and enhance its adaptation strategies and plans to climate change, as well as to significantly contribute in reducing their emissions in the AFOLU sector.

Vulnerability of the SICA Region

	1991-2010	1992-2011	1993-2012	1994-2013	1995-2014
El Salvador	23	15	13	12	14
Guatemala	12	11	10	9	10
Honduras	3	1	1	1	1
Nicaragua	4	3	4	4	4
Costa Rica	69	72	66	60	75
Panamá	110	108	103	90	69
Belice	29	26	22	21	23
República Dominicana	7	10	8		

Source: Germanwatch Climate Risk Index 2016

Target: By 2030, the SICA region will establish and manage ten million hectares of "Sustainable productive landscapes that are resilient to climate change", with a goal of no less than 40% reduction in emissions from the AFOLU sector in 2010.

In the agriculture and forestry sectors, the reduction and emissions of greenhouse gases would be related to the control of deforestation and forest degradation, and the adoption of a multi-benefit, sustainable, resilient and low carbon agriculture. This is a comprehensive landscape restoration approach, where forest areas will be rehabilitated and conserved, biological corridors will be established through the adoption of resilient agroforestry systems and agricultural areas will be transformed by adopting sustainable low carbon practices and seeking land degradation neutrality.

Components of the initiative:

1. Conservation of forests and forest ecosystems.

Promote actions to reduce GHG emissions related to deforestation and forest degradation, through the adoption and implementation of effective strategies to address the main direct and indirect causes of

deforestation, promoting sustainable forest management and the rehabilitation of degraded forest ecosystems and the promotion of resilient agroforestry systems.

2. Transformation of Agricultural Production Systems, moving towards a low-carbon and resilient agriculture and livestock management.

Move to a sustainable and resilient, low carbon agriculture, reducing the use of agrochemicals and nitrogen fertilizers, improving water resource management by adopting sustainable soil resource management practices.

3. Integration and promotion of sustainable practices in sugarcane, pineapple, oil palm, cocoa and coffee, and involvement of the private sector.

4. Conservation of the main forest areas of the region and their ecological connectivity.

Restore and conserve the main forest masses of the SICA region, the Mayan jungle, Trifinio, the Mosquitia, Río Plátano / Bosawas; Indio Maiz; La Amistad and Darién reserve, with a relaunch of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor program that would allow the recovery of the ecological connectivity and stability of the forest ecosystems

5. Develop / Establish an expanded monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) system, which includes agriculture - mitigation and adaptation.

Design and establish an efficient and effective mechanism for monitoring, reporting and verification for both forests and agriculture, including a monitoring mechanism that allows the evaluation and measurement of the efficiency and impacts of conservation and restoration actions, as well as of the transformation of food systems. In addition to monitoring carbon capture and storage capabilities, and providing information on adaptation benefits.