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U.S. Climate Smart Farm Leaders Call on COP21 To Address Role of Agriculture in Battling Climate Change

Paris, France (Dec. 2, 2015) – Leaders of the [North American Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance](#) (NACSAA) told policy makers and others attending climate talks here this week that agriculture can provide impactful and measurable contributions to global efforts to reverse climate change.

Speaking at a panel discussion sponsored by Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) and the sustainable agriculture group Field to Market, the U.S. farm leaders today called on participants in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, also known as Conference of the Parties, or COP21) to embrace the three pillars of climate smart agriculture (sustainable intensification of production, adaptive management and resiliency, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions), and adopt the policies and mechanisms that promote and incentivize the agricultural practices that mitigate the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are increasing global temperatures.

The panel event showcased opportunities for positive climate action by companies and growers around the world to support governments' carbon reduction targets while fostering productivity and global competitiveness.

The NACSAA contingent is in Paris to share grower perspectives on opportunities to achieve large-scale GHG reductions while also improving resilience; with a focus on the engagement, technology, resources and policies needed to feed a world population that is expected to reach 9.5 billion by mid-century.

"Most of the discussion about agriculture's role in climate change has been narrowly focused on actions growers can take to reduce direct emissions that are generated through the production of food, feed and fiber," Fred Yoder, Chairman of the NACSAA Steering Committee, told those attending the event. "What needs to be emphasized is adaptive management strategies, and the scope and magnitude of additional mitigation services that agriculture can deliver."

He cited among those mitigation services the sequestration of carbon in soil through practices like conservation tillage and cover crops. Yoder also spoke of efforts like the 4Rs Nutrient Stewardship initiative, a fertilizer industry program that emphasizes using the right fertilizer source, at the right rate, at the right time and with the right placement, all to improve sustainability and soil carbon retention, while increasing productivity and profitability. In addition Yoder said, the reduction in GHG emissions provided by biofuels when compared to petroleum-based fuels, is also a benefit to countering climate change that agriculture provides.

Yoder, a former president of the National Corn Growers Association, said COP21 should direct its [science advisory body](#) to establish agricultural sequestration protocols similar to a forestland program ([UN-REDD+](#)) first established in 2008.

"It has taken several years for countries to gain interest and ownership in the forestlands program and it will take time for countries to develop their agricultural protocols and record their baseline levels," Yoder said. "So it's critical that the UNFCCC use the opportunity that's here in Paris to begin this process for agriculture now, including the development and harmonization of measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) standards."

Furthermore, he said, "there needs to be a better integration of production, conservation, sustainability and greenhouse gas initiatives."

"COP21 is a historically significant event, but the real work begins on the ground when the conference is over," said A.G. Kawamura, a farmer and Co-Chair of Solutions from the Land, the host of NACSAA, adding that the alliance was broadening to focus on post-COP21 implementation.

Kawamura, a former secretary of the California Department of Agriculture and Food, cited examples of progress to date including the U.S. dairy industry's voluntary goal to reduce GHG emissions for fluid milk by 25 percent by 2020 and its promotion of anaerobic digesters on operations to process waste and generate renewable energy. Other examples cited by Kawamura included the U.S. production of ethanol and other lower carbon fuels have reduced emissions from the U.S. transportation sector over the past decade by nearly 590 million metric tons.

"What we are seeing in the United States is an increase in productivity that is allowing growers to provide the full range of needed ecosystem services, while also developing production systems that are becoming more resilient," he said. "Landowners and managers are making more efficient use of inputs, reducing waste and overall consumption of natural resources. Going forward we want farmers, ranchers, foresters and other land managers to be supported and compensated for their stewardship of ecosystems and the ecosystem services their land provides, such as clean air and water, wildlife habitat preservation, promotion of biodiversity and carbon sequestration."

"Climate change will present new opportunities and challenges for agriculture and forestry," said NACSAA coordinator Ernie Shea. "Through dialogue and the appropriate measures, producers can adapt to a changing climate. Adaptation is an investment into the future of our nation and its producers, and it has the added benefits of reducing costs, increasing productivity and expanding market access."

A statement issued by NACSAA - an initiative supported by [Solutions from the Land](#) - detailing the Alliance's views, recommendations and objectives at COP21 is available by clicking [HERE](#).

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