



United Nations
Climate Change Conference

AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL-BASED FOOD PRODUCTION, AND INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture contributes more to climate change than land use changes, forestry, or industrial processes.¹ The agriculture sector alone emits approximately 11 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions²—an estimate that may be somewhat low, as a considerable amount of land-use change and deforestation is for the purpose of developing agriculture.³ However, policymakers sideline food production at the United Nations climate negotiations. They discuss agriculture and food systems in a series of optional workshops rather than at the United Nations’ primary convenings.⁴

Furthermore, climate policymakers primarily treat agriculture as a victim of climate change, rather than as a cause. For instance, the Paris Agreement mentions food twice. In both instances, the Paris Agreement frames food production as vulnerable to climate disruptions, rather than as a driver of the problem or a potential solution.⁵

THE CLIENT: BRIGHTER GREEN

A growing number of academics and nongovernmental organizations aim to raise the profile of food systems at the United Nations climate negotiations. Brighter Green, a public policy “action tank,” has worked to raise the profile of food and animal agriculture at the United Nations climate negotiations for ten years.⁶ Together with partners, Brighter Green has helped convene the Food and Climate Alliance, a coalition of more than 30 organizations to advance plant-centric diets as a global climate change solution.⁷

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

How can Brighter Green more effectively elevate agriculture and animal-based food production at the United Nations climate negotiations, alone and with its Food and Climate Alliance partners?

FINDINGS

This Policy Analysis Exercise surfaces three findings. It derives those findings from careful analysis of interviews, direct observation at the 24th annual United Nations climate change negotiations, existing literature, and case studies.

Those findings are:

- **Structural, cultural, and political barriers sideline agriculture at the United Nations climate change negotiations.** The United Nations climate negotiations center on questions of mitigation and adaptation, rather than specific economic sectors (including agriculture). Negotiators shudder at the idea of legislating how people can or should eat. And policymakers often represent farmers, ranchers and agricultural corporations—the very constituencies that may resist policies to decarbonize the agriculture sector.

- **Brighter Green brings key resources to the United Nations climate negotiations.** These resources include relationships with Global South partners and a clear understanding of the United Nations process.
- **Brighter Green faces internal capacity constraints.** Brighter Green operates within an FY2017 annual budget of \$273,500. It employs a total of three full-time staff who spend approximately one-fifth of their time on international climate change advocacy.⁸ These realities limit the organization's capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of five recommendations flow from the data and findings.

IN THE SHORT-TERM: Brighter Green's capacity constraints and the time-bound nature of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) limit the options Brighter Green can implement immediately. Short-term recommendations include:

- **Build a strategic communications strategy.** The strategy should tailor messages to motivate a diverse array of audiences. It should complement the Food and Climate Alliance's broader communications and media relations programs.
- **Deepen participation in the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture process.** Brighter Green should leverage the KJWA process, which ends in late 2020. Through the KJWA, Brighter Green can identify Parties to the UNFCCC who are most likely to champion issues of food and animal agriculture.

IN THE LONG-TERM: With more staff capacity, funding, and/or time, Brighter Green can pursue more ambitious projects. Long-term recommendations include:

- **Expand and diversify Brighter Green's coalition partners.** Greater coalitional diversity will strengthen Brighter Green's political power.
- **Convene unofficial workshops with Parties to the UNFCCC, other policymakers, and members of civil society.** These workshops can connect Parties—who focus on climate change at the UNFCCC—with other policymakers whose jurisdictions interact with climate change and agriculture. The workshops may also break down siloes between policymakers and members of civil society.
- **Establish relationships with Parties to the UNFCCC at Conferences of the Parties and intersessional meetings.** By connecting with Parties, Brighter Green and the Food and Climate Alliance can influence the UNFCCC's decision-makers. Brighter Green and its allies can provide valuable resources, including research, media support, and connections to other constituencies.

CONCLUSION

These findings and recommendations will help Brighter Green more effectively influence the United Nations climate negotiations. They may also guide Brighter Green's engagement with the Food and Climate Alliance and shape its long-term approach to international climate policy.