COALITION ON AGRICULTURAL GREENHOUSE GASES (C-AGG)

PRINCIPLES

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The agricultural sector has significant potential to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store, or "sequester" carbon and to reduce GHG emissions, in many cases at relatively low costs. With proper policies, the agricultural sector, which currently emits an estimated 7% of annual U.S. GHG emissions, can play a significant role in meeting the United States' goal of achieving an 80% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050. In so doing, agricultural climate policy can also make an important contribution to the sustainable incomes of farming communities in the face of climate change.

The agricultural sector has a pivotal role to play in mitigating and helping to adapt to climate change, yet has been largely neglected by climate policy to date. The reasons underlying both the importance of agriculture to climate mitigation and the challenge of integrating it into policy solutions are several. First, agriculture is dependent on many diverse biological processes and a great number of equally diverse actors in managed landscapes, necessitating a complex and interlinked framework of programs and activities to reduce, sequester or avoid GHG emissions in a quantifiable manner. Second, programs and activities in the agricultural sector must address the issue that carbon that is sequestered in soils and biomass is at risk of reversal. Third, GHG emissions from agricultural activities are dispersed and often hard to measure. Thus, careful consideration must be given in designing appropriate federal, state, and regional climate policies for agriculture to balance these complexities and create a program that enables broad sector participation while maintaining environmental integrity. Members of the Coalition on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases propose the following guiding principles for designing policy to enable the agricultural sector to participate effectively in the effort to mitigate climate change.

Science-based. The design of agricultural climate policy must be informed by the best available science and should be adaptable over time to integrate improved science.

Quantifiable, Verifiable, and Results-Based. Only quantifiable and verifiable programs and activities that deliver net reductions of atmospheric GHG concentrations should be rewarded.

> *Larger rewards should be provided to participants that deliver greater results to encourage the private sector to reduce atmospheric GHG concentrations at scale and as quickly as possible.*
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> *Tradeoffs between precision and accuracy of quantification and cost will be necessary, but should diminish over time, as innovation delivers better technology and lowers costs.*
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> *Programs and activities should focus on the result desired (e.g. net reductions or removal of GHGs) rather than the means of achieving the result (what practice was implemented). Although systems based on direct measurements are preferred, certain practices have been proven to deliver results (i.e., net reductions in atmospheric GHG concentrations) with a high degree of precision and accuracy, and certain models have proven accurate in estimating reductions for particular practices when calibrated using appropriate data.*

Leakage of emissions outside of the program or activity boundary that occurs as a result of the program or activity should be accounted for where possible.

Verification of results should occur on a regular basis and be performed by an independent third party.

Innovation. Accelerating innovation is critical to delivering substantial net reductions in atmospheric GHG concentrations.

Many innovators are early actors and the results delivered by their actions should be recognized.

Additionality. Only net reductions of atmospheric GHG concentrations beyond business as usual should be rewarded.

Permanence. Programs and activities should provide for continued storage of sequestered carbon over timeframes that are meaningful in the context of mitigating climate change.

One way to address the issue of permanence is "risk-based" analysis of the likelihood that a reversal of sequestered carbon could occur. Different project activities have different factors that increase or decrease the risk of reversals.

Policy should distinguish between intentional and unintentional reversals.

Comprehensive GHG Accounting. A comprehensive accounting should be made of all GHG's impacted by a program or activity.

Co-benefits. Programs and activities should identify social and non-GHG environmental impacts and take steps to mitigate those impacts where possible.

Contributions to social and community well-being; conservation of biodiversity; and improvements to soil, air and water quality should be encouraged.

Bundling Environmental Benefits. Activities that generate multiple environmental benefits that can be clearly identified should potentially qualify for multiple credits or incentives.

Where multiple benefits are positive and additional, efforts to separately quantify, verify and value them should be encouraged.

Where there are tradeoffs between achieving multiple benefits, the programs and activities should seek to optimize the environmental outcome.

Multiple benefits should be tracked in a standardized accounting system that provides integrity to the programs and activities by preventing multiple payments for the same environmental benefit.

Stakeholder Engagement. Stakeholders should be engaged in a transparent, accountable consultation process with program administrators.

The consultation process should take account of comments and suggestions from stakeholders in the design of technical standards.

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C-AGG Principles have been endorsed by the following organizations:

AgRefresh
Blue Source
Climate Change Central
Delta Institute
EKO Asset Management Partners
Environmental Defense Fund
National Farmers Union
North Dakota Farmers Union
Rodale Institute
The Earth Partners and Applied Ecological Services, Inc.
Voluntary Carbon Standard Association
Winrock International