

SACAU to voice farmers' concerns at COP17

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The concerns of farmers in the southern African region must become a part of the United Nations' climate change agenda. This is what the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), who has been granted observer status at the COP17, would like to see happen.



With agriculture playing an imperative role in Africa, farmers also believe that they too can assist greatly in alleviating climate change and have been making valuable contributions.

The World Bank said investing in agriculture has four times the impact than in other sectors.

When Andrew Steer, the bank's special envoy for climate change, was speaking at an African ministers' meeting in Johannesburg in September, he said this was one of the reasons why the World Bank had invested R29.6 billion a year and will spend R44.3 billion in this sector.

Manyewu Muthamba, a policy analyst at SACAU, told *BuaNews* that farmers have already been helping in the mitigation of climate change with promising agricultural practices.

He said farmers have been using techniques that promote climate-smart agriculture but need help with finance and technology.

More accessibility needed

If the mechanisms from the major world institutions like the UN, World Bank even governments are to benefit the most vulnerable then it needs to become more accessible.

Muthamba said SACAU would like to see the simplification of the financing mechanisms put in place within the framework

of the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), especially the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

"The administration of access to finance needs to become more decentralised. The process of governance of fund needs to become more transparent and accessible," said Muthamba.

He said that farmers need to know what their requirements are to access funding and as it stands processes are complicated.

There are a diverse range of issues facing farmers in their own countries, however SACAU after several meetings have found a common position that will be taken to COP17.

There will be calls for a "secured text on agriculture in the UNFCCC negotiations in the common vision for Long-Term Cooperative Action (LCA)," according to SACAU CEO Ishmael Sunga.

Trade related issues that farmers are challenged by will also be brought up in Durban.

However, countries with specific problems in the agricultural sector have also been encouraged to take it up through their country delegation at COP17.

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