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Agriculture at the COP22: Time to End Deceitful Solutions to Climate Change

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Oakland, CA – The UN’s 22nd Climate Change Conference – COP22 – gets underway in Morocco this week with [a strong focus](#) on agriculture and Africa, a continent [severely impacted](#) by climate change.

“Given agriculture was absent from the COP21’s Agreement, this renewed attention to the sector should come as good news,” said Anuradha Mittal, Executive Director of the Oakland Institute. “Unfortunately, the solutions offered fail to address the key drivers of the climate crisis. Industry-coopted ‘climate smart agriculture,’ which is supposed to help farmers adapt to rising weather shocks, is dependent on fossil fuel-based inputs and fails to uphold small-scale, localized food production. World leaders should stop getting in the way of a radical transformation of our food system, moving away from industrial agriculture to agroecology, which is crucial to tackle climate change.”

Agriculture is a rising contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Crop and livestock intensification, deforestation, and increased use of chemical inputs, particularly synthetic fertilizers – the fastest growing source of agricultural GHG emissions – have doubled the sector’s emissions [over the last 50 years](#). Yet governments, lobbied by [an oligopoly of agrochemical corporations](#), repeatedly fail to address the flaws of industrial agriculture.

“Climate change presents multi-faceted challenges. We need to reduce agricultural emissions, regenerate resources, and sequester more carbon, to increase farmers’ resilience to climate shocks,” said Frederic Mousseau, Policy Director at the Oakland Institute. “Last year, ahead of the COP21, we released a broad set of studies on agroecology, an approach focused on recycling natural resources, reducing external inputs, and promoting socially and economically viable food production. Our findings irrefutably show that it is an incredibly efficient response to the challenges posed by climate change.”

The Oakland Institute’s [33 case agroecology studies](#) focus on Africa and involve over 2 million farming families across the continent. The studies bring forward a large variety of techniques – including plant diversification, intercropping, use of natural fertilizers, etc. – which help farmers resist weather variability, water stress, erosion, and soil degradation, all while increasing productivity, incomes, and food security.

A study from [Zimbabwe](#), for instance, showcases a local innovator’s success in creating water-management structures to increase water storing and limit erosion on his farm. The method utilizes on-farm resources, and has been adopted by thousands of Zimbabwean farmers attracted by its efficiency and profitability. Another project in [Niger’s Keita Valley](#) helped rehabilitate degraded lands through reforestation, construction of water and wind management structures, and a variety of sustainable

agriculture techniques. The initiative restored the Valley's ecological balance, and is credited with sequestering an annual 132,000 tons of CO2.

"Africa is not just a victim of the negative impacts of climate change, it is also the cradle of wonderful solutions and innovations by farmers themselves," added Mittal. "The only way to solve the climate crisis is to reject industry-promoted Band-Aid solutions, and start supporting the smallholder farmers, who are the true stewards of the land, water, and agrobiodiversity."

The Oakland Institute is an independent policy think tank, bringing fresh ideas and bold action to the most pressing social, economic, and environmental issues of our time.