



The Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy for the SICA Region (2018-2030)

MORE THAN ONE CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

The agricultural sector confronts the challenge of producing more food, in an efficient and sustainable manner, in order to respond to increasing demand from markets and, at the same time, to guarantee food and nutritional security for the world population. This represents a challenge but also an opportunity to bring more development and prosperity to rural areas.

The Central American Integration System (SICA in Spanish) is constituted by eight countries: **Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama**. In the coming years, these countries will experience a demographic boom that will leave them with the largest working-age population in their history. In this sense, there is a need to create favorable conditions for the permanence of young people in rural areas and to avoid involuntary migration. In addition, recognizing women's role in agriculture represents an opportunity for promoting sustainable and inclusive food systems.

The biological diversity, water capital and climatic variety of the region provide the option of having a diversified food supply. Meanwhile, family farming has the potential to improve its agricultural productivity, essential for greater food availability and stability as well as for increasing family income. Both climate change and the intensification of climate variability are the main obstacles for a more sustainable food production, although they also represent windows of opportunity. The transformations of the agricultural sector will require coping with adverse climatic conditions, which urgently requires increasing resilience, improving climate change adaptation and reducing disaster risks in a comprehensive manner.

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

SICA countries have converged in joint actions in their aim to achieve sustainable development and under the umbrella of the Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES). Major tasks include eradicating hunger, facing poverty, social inequality, citizen insecurity, climate variability and change, and overcoming territorial gaps.

The countries of SICA have seen in Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) a comprehensive solution to improve income and productivity, increase resilience and capacities for climate change adaptation. At the same time, CSA favors food and nutrition security, in line with the new global framework for Sustainable Development in the 2030 Agenda. The transformation and reorientation required of the agricultural sector as well as the strengthening of family farming, the new value given to rural livelihoods from a territorial perspective, must also represent a source of opportunities for women, rural youth and should generally reduce inequalities.

This challenge was assumed by the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), the body specialized in the agricultural sector at SICA, which approved the Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy for the SICA region: 2018-2030 (EASAC – Spanish acronym) in its extraordinary meeting held on June 28th and 29th, 2017 in San José, Costa Rica; as *“the key instrument to promote a more competitive, inclusive and sustainable agriculture adapted to climate change and climate variability effects, which increases productivity through the conservation and sustainable and efficient use of water, biodiversity, soil and forests, in order to guarantee food and nutrition security”*.

Moreover, the national commitments made by SICA countries to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - under the Paris Agreement - and the goals of the Sendai Framework contribute to unite efforts and harmonize policy instruments. In particular, the EASAC is consistent with the mentioned contributions.



RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
Climate Change,
Agriculture and
Food Security



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE

Climate Smart Agriculture has three pillars that favor food and nutritional security: i) **sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes (food security)**; ii) **adapting and building resilience to climate change (adaptation)**; iii) **reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions from production systems, where possible (mitigation)**.

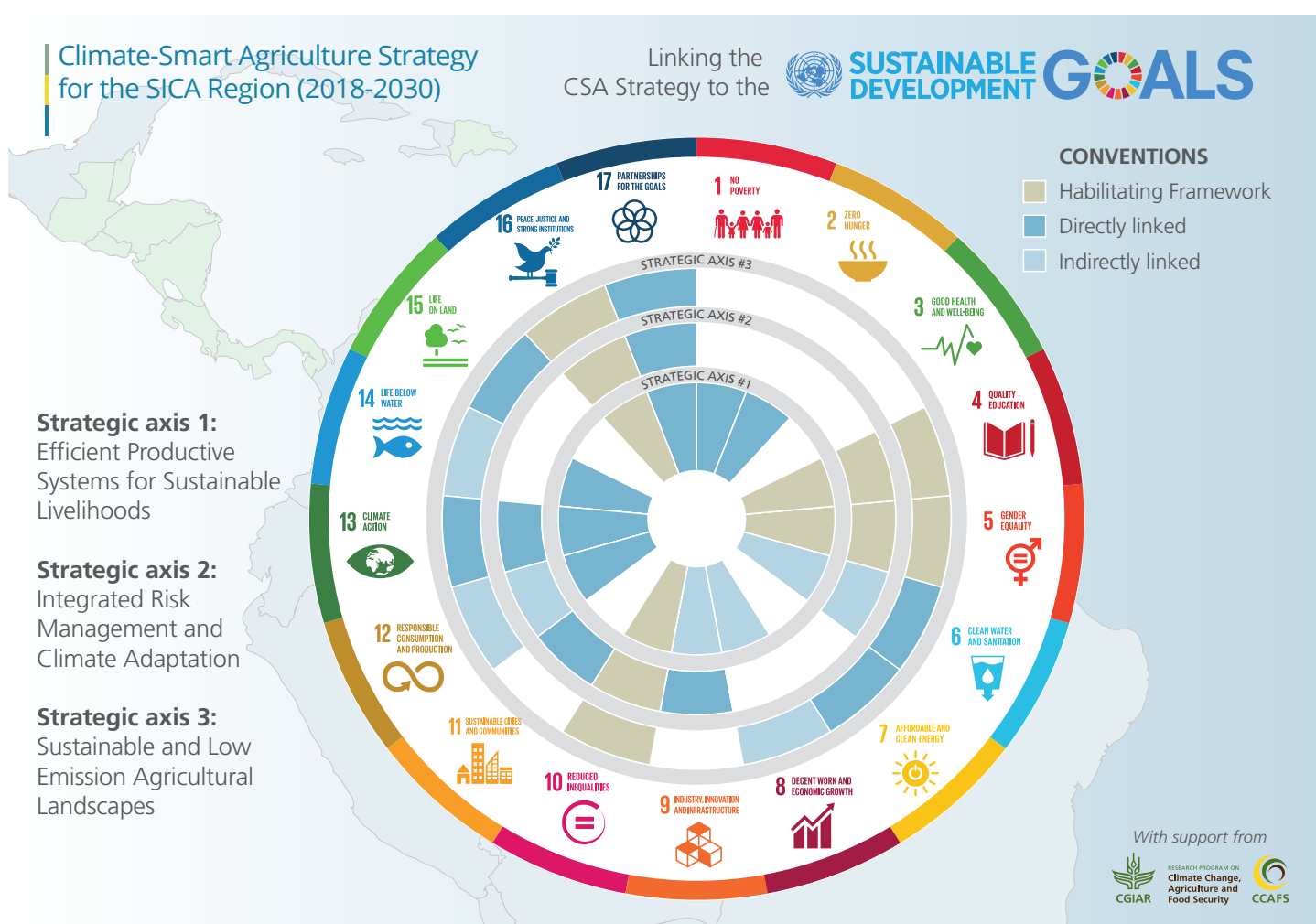
Agriculture is crucial for implementing the 2030 Agenda as food production is related to each of the 17 SDGs to a certain degree. Therefore, the EASAC is interconnected with the SDGs in its **three strategic axes and cross-cutting issues** (enabling framework), presented in the figure below.

STRATEGIC VISION AND STRUCTURE

The EASAC vision is: *“the actors of the agri-food sector of the SICA region manage climate variability and change appropriately, through the intensive use of information and knowledge, in order to minimize losses and damages and to have high levels of productivity that allow achieving regional food security and nutrition, through efficient, better climate-adapted, resilient, sustainable and inclusive agricultural production systems”*.

According to the CSA pillars, the EASAC defines specific measures organized in three strategic axes and fifteen strategic lines. The axes are:

- 1) Efficient productive systems for sustainable livelihoods
- 2) Integral risk management and climate adaptation
- 3) Sustainable and low emission agricultural landscapes



COOPERATION IN ACTION

The strategy was developed through a participatory process that involved representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture of the SICA countries, particularly through the Technical Groups of the CAC and its Regional Technical Committee. As well as other actors from the productive sector, academic sector, specialists in gender and equality issues, regional and international organizations and civil society organizations. The interagency group including the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), as well as the University for International Cooperation (UCI) provided meaningful contributions. In particular, the Research Program in Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) played a special role providing technical and financial support to generate the strategy.

Axis 1. Efficient productive systems for sustainable livelihood

Strategic line	Measures
1. Knowledge management, strengthening capacities, research, transfers and innovation for sustainable and inclusive agriculture production	1.1 To formulate and to implement regional research and technology transfer projects of CSA technologies.
	1.2 To strengthen and support the mainstreaming of CSA research and innovation processes into the public and private extension and technical assistance services.
	1.3. To strengthen the technical capacities in CSA of the research and extension personnel in the agricultural sector in the region.
	1.4 To promote and to support the revision or the design of sectoral development programs incorporating incentives that accelerate technological change towards sustainable production and adapted to climate.
	1.5 To promote knowledge management, regional exchange, and dialogue on scientific, traditional, indigenous and local knowledge.
	1.6 To systematize, to publish and to promote the use of practices, technologies and services for climate smart agriculture.
	1.7 To develop methodologies and tools for assessing practices, technologies and services based on their contribution to the CSA pillars, and support their implementation.
2. Integration of the CSA approach into the agri-food chains	2.1 To facilitate the mainstreaming of CSA technologies, practices and services into associative processes and strengthen business capacities of agrifood chains.
	2.2 To strengthen agri-food chains with an integrated approach to sustainability, inclusion and climate action.
	2.3. To conduct market intelligence studies to identify preferential demands for climate smart small-scale agriculture.
	2.4. To promote the aggregation of value to products in the region and the development of certifications that reward and recognize the application of the CSA approach.
	2.5. To promote more sustainable and inclusive models of consumption and production.
3. Incorporation of CSA focusing on policies and family farming initiatives	3.1. To develop criteria for mainstreaming CSA approaches for family farming and promote its use on policies and related initiatives.
	3.2 To support initiatives for income sources and livelihood diversification in order to increase family farming resilience in the face of climatic crises and food and nutrition insecurity.
	3.3 To promote and support the strengthening of policy instruments and programs which recognize the relationship between production and consumption in order to create sustainable agri-food systems within the sustainable development goals.
4. Promotion of the use of climate-smart productive infrastructure.	4.1. To strengthen capacities for designing and promoting of the use of climate-smart productive infrastructure.

Axis 2. Integral Risk management and climate change adaptation

Strategic line	Measures
5. Knowledge management and capacity building for research, transfer and agricultural innovation oriented to climate adaptation	5.1 To promote technologies, innovative practices and sanitary biosafety measures through actions planned for plant and animal health protection from new pests and diseases outbreaks as result of climate changes.
	5.2 To promote alliances among scientific and technologic communities, academia and the private sector in order to setting-up, to disseminate and to support the implementation of good practices for agricultural risk management.
6. Continuous improvement of the information and knowledge for agriculture risk management and climate change adaptation	6.1 Strengthening and promoting linkages of regional mechanisms for climatic and agro climatic information generation and exchange, including the Regional System of Climate Services "Centro Clima".
	6.2 To generate and systematically communicate information for risk management and climate change adaptation, in a timely manner and appropriate language, strengthening regional mechanisms such as climate forums and regional climate databases.
	6.3 To promote the use of standardized or harmonized methodologies and models to assess risks, vulnerabilities, losses and damages in the agricultural sector, increasing knowledge of the links between production systems and climate.
7. Promotion of risk transfer, distribution and retention mechanisms, and financial protection for CSA investments	7.1 To develop and promote innovative financial and non-financial services to support CSA (i.e. micro-financing, savings, credits, environmental incentives).
	7.2 To develop and promote the use of insurance and innovative risk transfer instruments for CSA.
	7.3 Promoting the design and accompanying the implementation of planning instruments for risk management and climate change adaptation plans in the agricultural sector.
8. Strengthening the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity.	8.1 Preserving and promoting the recognition of biocultural territories that contribute to productive diversification and food and nutrition security (FNS) considering extreme climatic conditions.
	8.2 Promoting programs for diversification (species or ecotypes) as an adaptive strategy and climatic risk management.
	8.3 To facilitate and to promote women, rural youth and ethnic groups training and participation in agricultural productive systems that make use of agrobiodiversity sustainably.

Axis 3. Sustainable and low emission agricultural landscapes

Strategic line	Measure
9. Knowledge management and capacity building for research, transfer and innovation in low carbon agriculture.	9.1 Promoting adaptation pilot experiences with secondary benefits in mitigation, carbon reduction or sequestration, with scaling-up potential, in watersheds management in highly productive agricultural zones (CSA territories)
	9.2 To establish consultation, dialogue and training spaces on carbon measurements for planning, monitoring and evaluating the agricultural sector's contribution to mitigation.
	9.3 To promote exchanging initiatives and support action aimed at recognizing contributions of CSA technologies, practices and services to climate change mitigation.
10. Management of productive landscapes considering the watershed approach	10.1 To support prospective regional agriculture planning according to water resource availability and uses in scenarios of climate variability and change.
	10.2 Promoting sustainable management practices and techniques on soil, water, biodiversity and forestry in agricultural landscapes.
	10.3 To promote and facilitate actions for agricultural ecosystems conservation and protection with public and private sector participation.
11. Promotion of the efficient use and generation of clean energies in agricultural systems	11.1 To develop guidelines and mechanisms that encourage the efficient use of energy and the generation of clean energies in agro-productive systems.
	11.2 To promote the efficient use and generation of clean energy through alternative sources in agricultural systems.
12. Sustainable management of soil resources in agricultural landscapes	12.1 To promote the efficient and sustainable use of inputs for healthy and safety food production with secondary benefits in climate change mitigation.
	12.2 To disseminate and promote the use of practices and technologies that improve carbon sequestration in soils.
	12.3 To stimulate mechanisms to halt desertification and promote conservation, recovery and restoration of degraded soils in agricultural landscapes.

Axis 4. Enabling Framework

Strategic line	Measure
13. Facilitating the integration of the ASAC approach in planning and measuring its impact.	13.1 To promote tools for mainstreaming CSA approach in agricultural sector planning processes.
	13.2 To promote tools for follow-up and impact evaluation for the implementation of technologies, practices and services of the CSA approach.
	13.3 To design and implement a communication strategy for the EASAC.
14. Building a dynamic portfolio of CSA projects and investments and identifying financing mechanisms	14.1 To maintain an updated database of financial sources including climate financing for CSA action implementation.
	14.2 To strengthen capacities in resource and project management, to systematically elaborate and disseminate guidelines and support materials to mainstream CSA approach in programs and projects.
	14.3 To maintain an updated portfolio of CSA projects and manage the establishment of competitive funds for CSA implementation.
	14.4 To promote investment in research, technology and innovation for CSA
15. Facilitating mechanisms for integrating the equity principle and gender equality, as well as the intergenerational and social inclusion approach in CSA actions.	15.1 To develop guidelines for incorporating gender, intergenerational and social inclusion approaches into programs, projects and other CSA initiatives.

ORGANIZATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The strategy is organized on different levels, in coordination with relevant SICA institutions for strategic and operational planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation. The EASAC implementation will be supported by the functional structure of CAC, where the Council of Ministers leads the process as superior body. The Council of Ministers will rely on its 1) Regional Technical Committee as main technical task force, 2) Executive Secretariat and 3) Technical Groups on: i) Climate Change and Integrated Risk Management; ii) Research, Technology, Transfer and Innovation; iii) Family Farming and Food and Nutritional Security; iv) Territorial Rural Development; and v) Competitiveness, Trade and Agro business.

Due to its inter-sectoral nature, coordination will be established with related SICA institutions. The EASAC implementation will be articulated and coordinated with other regional and international organizations that assist the technical groups and other CAC instances, together with the academic sector, regional organizations of the private sector and other actors of civil society.