



74th Plenary Meeting of the INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES SEVENTH OPEN SESSION Climate Change and Cotton

9:00 hr. Thursday, December 10, 2015

Chair by P.D Patodia, Chairman of the Standing Committee of Cotton, Confederation of Indian Textile and Industry (CDRA).

Dr. B. Venkateswarlu (Vice-Chancellor, Vasantnao Naik Marathwada Krishi Vidyapeeth, Parbhani, India) "Impact of Climate Change on Cotton Production in Maharashtra"

Jens Soth (Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Switzerland) "Cotton and climate change"

The CHAIR opened the session by stating that climate change has been changing the global economy by impacting commodities; and in cotton, climate change has affected not only cotton quality but quantity.

Dr. B. Venkateswarlu made a presentation titled "Climate change impacts on Indian agriculture with special reference to cotton". He started his presentation noting that 60% of the cultivable area in India still depends on rainfall, and 80% of the farmers are small producers (1.5 to 2 hectares). He also noted that climate change has manifested in terms of: change in rainfall patterns, temperature increases, rise in sea levels, glacier melt, and extreme weather events. He emphasized that climate change has brought negative impacts in India, such as, rise in sea surface temperatures, leading to changes in breeding seasons and distribution zones in marine fisheries; changes in flowering, pest and diseases on horticulture; significant negative impact on commercial poultry due to heat stress; reduction on milk yield in livestock; changes in the growth, puberty and maturity of crossbreed of cows and buffaloes; and reduction in fish caught in water bodies due to movement of fish into the deeper layers, among others. Dr. Venkateswarlu stated that climate impacts on cotton could be seen in four different categories: phenology, water demand, pests and diseases and yields. He also mentioned that simulation studies indicate marginal changes on cotton production. Simulation studies indicated marginal impact on cotton production due to climate change, but climate variability is already showing a marked impact. Comprehensive adaptation strategies can minimize impacts to a large extent, while efficient use of water was a key for future sustainability.

Jens Soth, Senior Adviser to Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, made a presentation on cotton and climate change. He commented that the topic has been covered several times by ICAC in its plenary meetings, and made a summary of the different tools, studies, and models available for the adaptation and mitigation of climate change in the cotton industry. He stated that soil organic matter is key and that any measures to increase soil organic matter can be seen as a climate change adaptation and mitigation measure. He also mentioned that the avoidance of inefficient irrigation and fertilization practices reduces nitrous oxide emissions. Mr. Soth presented several examples on projects being implemented in different countries, in particular a project implemented in Colombia where the use of soil fertility in cotton production led to the creation of habitats for beneficial insects and weeds regulated by mechanical means. Mr. Soth concluded his presentation by stating that any measures that help to increase soil organic matter can help maintain long-term soil fertility, as well as foster climate change adaption and mitigation. He also mentioned that an isolated view on carbon footprinting or climate change serves neither farmers nor the textile sector and that a broad range of sustainability criteria should be taken into account.

The Executive Director of ICAC stated that the Secretariat had commissioned a special study on climate change and cotton production in modern farming systems. The study would be made in conjunction with CABI (Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International), and will include recommendations for mitigation and adaptation to confront the impacts of climate change.

The CHAIR thanked the speakers and adjourned the session at 10:40 AM