

**Defending Agriculture** 

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Copenhagen and Agriculture – Any Progress?

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With great fanfare President Obama went to Copenhagen and produced nothing related to agriculture.

In fact, one writer who attended the meeting commented, "There was not a single mention of agriculture or its potential to help reduce global greenhouse emissions in the Copenhagen Accord..." You would think a President of the United States from Illinois might have some interest in agriculture since he was a state senator, and for a short time, a U.S. Senator from a state that considers agriculture very important.

The three-page twelve paragraph Copenhagen Accord the President helped negotiate states the parties are interested in deep cuts in global emissions, delivering money to developing countries and reducing emissions from deforestation. The main product from the Copenhagen Accord is a promise in paragraph 8 of the document that developed countries will finance developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation by providing \$30 billion in the period of 2010-2012. If developing countries make sufficient progress, then developed countries commit to another \$100 billion a year by the year 2020 to address the needs of developing countries. The Climate Accord document claims the \$100 billion a year will come from a wide variety of sources including public, private, bilateral, multilateral, and alternative sources of finance.

Worth reading The Copenhagen Accord is worth your reading and can be found at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/cop15/eng/l07.pdf>. You will see it claims that "...climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time." The document states the ultimate objective of the developing nations is to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere that will prevent dangerous manmade interference with the world's climate. It further claims that there is a scientific view that we must hold the increase in global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

Because agriculture has such great potential to help in sequestering CO2 and CO2 equivalent emissions, you would think there would have been at least a reference to agriculture in the final Accord. Clearly agricultural interests had a major presence in Copenhagen. In fact, there was Agriculture and Rural Development Day, Forest Day, and FAO Climate Change and Food Security meetings.

Many in U.S. Ag were unaware the industry was represented in Copenhagen by a wide cross section of farmers, researchers and development experts. In fact, Darrin Ihnen, President of the National Corn Growers Association, was in attendance and was quoted saying the experience was "eye-opening." He was further quoted as saying "...there is a real misunderstanding of how modern agriculture operates."

Ag's position A number of agricultural interests such as The International Federation of Agricultural Producers, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations issued a joint statement on December 14th entitled "Beyond Copenhagen: Agriculture and forestry are part of the solution" (http://www.agricultureday.org/ARDD_Joint-Statement.pdf).

This statement was issued well before the President arrived and clearly states "Forestry and agriculture are where poverty reduction, food security and climate change come together and must be addressed in an integrated fashion..."

This group also said in its joint statement that climate negotiators must establish an agricultural work program; seek agreement on agriculture, forestry and other land uses; and create an accounting system that is favorable to agriculture. None of these recommendations are reflected in the Copenhagen Accord. This is disappointing because there were three separate but closely related meetings that led to the joint statement.

There were some announcements relating to U.S. agriculture in Copenhagen. Secretary Vilsack announced that USDA will increase its spending on farm emissions research by \$90 million over four years to a total of \$130 million. He also indicated that the U.S. will be joining 20 other countries in a research alliance to "...better understand – and prevent – greenhouse-gas emission from farms." The Secretary indicates that the research money will be used to find new ways of tillage and also treating animal manure to reduce their emissions.

As you can see from this short summary, agriculture was shortchanged in Copenhagen! There was more interest by the participants in giving money to developing countries from the developed countries than there was in using the great resources of agriculture to help solve the greenhouse gas issue.

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The Summit on Climate Change did not appear to be interested in agriculture.

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