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POLICY BRIEF

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Implementing the "4 per 1000" initiative: contribution for the establishment of a reference/ normative framework

Pierre-Marie Aubert, Sébastien Treyer (IDDRI), Anne-Laure Sablé (CCFD-Terre Solidaire), Frédéric Apollin & Bertrand Mathieu (AVSF), Laurent Levard (GRET), Patrice Burger (CARI), Sylvain Berton (AgriSud)

Launched in the run-up to COP21 and developed during COP22, the "4 per 1000" initiative seeks to promote the adoption of farming practices in order to improve—at least maintain—soil organic carbon stocks. Its overall aim is to contribute to three complementary goals: the improvement of food security, the adaptation of agriculture to climate change and the mitigation of climate change. To do so, the initiative based on an international voluntary multi-stakeholder coalition intends to enhance the development of a series of projects at different scales (regional, national, sub-national), under the lead of a variety of actors or coalition of actors.

The "4 per 1000" target to increase soil organic matter encompasses agronomic as well as environmental dimensions; however, other dimensions will need to be taken into account if the initiative is to deliver simultaneously on the three above-mentioned objectives (or at least not to overlook one or two to the detriment of the other). Similarly, and without disregarding their potential to deliver substantial benefits, there are possible risks that could be incurred in the implementation of 4 per 1000 projects and that needs to be taken into account.

In this context, this Policy Brief proposes a set of indicators to contribute to the development of an implementation framework for "4 per 1000" projects. It makes three main recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) **Two types of indicators** need to be distinguished by the consortium:
   a) Those that can be considered as safeguards, which will help to assess the possible negative impacts of a project on crucial social and environmental aspects, and that will serve as exclusionary principles.
   b) And those for which projects will be asked to clarify the hypothesis they rely upon regarding the intended changes and the expected impacts they will have on the three objectives of the initiative.
2) **Safeguards indicators** should cover the following issues:
   a) Land tenure.
   b) Human rights.
   c) Ecosystems integrity.
3) **Indicators should help to uncover how 4 per 1000 projects intend to impact** upon:
   a) Soil carbon stocks and global GHG emissions at the project level.
   b) Agrarian structures and the four pillars of food and nutrition security.

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www.iddri.org

Institut du développement durable
et des relations internationales
27, rue Saint-Guillaume
75337 Paris cedex 07 France

SciencesPo

The proposed set of indicators draws on, and is consistent with current decisions at international or multilateral level listed below:

1. Binding agreements: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—including the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement—, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention. (International Labour Organisation Convention No. 169);

2. International declarations, voluntary guidelines and principles internationally agreed upon: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (CFS-VGGT), Principles for Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Fodd Systems (CFS-PRAI), OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, UNIDROIT/FAO/IFAD Legal Guide on Contract Farming, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), UN REDD Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria (including Free, Prior and Informed Consent), FAO-OECD Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report.

3. Other analyses broadly endorsed by international organisations and the international community: the 2012 and 2013 reports of the Committee on World Food Security's High Level Panel of Expert on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) on the topics of food security and climate change and investing in smallholders, FAO 2014 reports on The State of Food Insecurity in the World and on The State of Food and Agriculture, and the Guide to due diligence of agribusiness projects that affect land and property rights.

1. SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS : AVOIDING/LIMITING RISKS ASSOCIATED TO 4 PER 1000 PROJECTS

From a general perspective, 4 per 1000 projects should respect a mitigation hierarchy which will (i) anticipate and avoid risks and impacts, and (ii) where avoidance will not be possible, minimize or reduce risks and impacts to acceptable level. Four main types of impacts are considered here: land tenure, human rights, global emissions, and environmental parameters.

1.1. Impacts on land tenure

Any project that targets soils will necessarily have to take into account tenure issues. Regarding the existing international normative framework, two aspects will need to be monitored carefully:

1. Projects will have to take into account local tenure rights, which means:
   - a. Local tenure rights will be recognized, including customary rights (ICESCR, art. 2.1; CFS-VGGT).
   - b. In case a project intends to displace local populations, the conditions of resettlements and indemnifications will have to be clarified.

2. The negotiation process to allocate land for the development of a "4 per 1000" project should meet the following requirements (FPIC principles, UN REDD guidelines):
   - a. The contract negotiation process through which a land is leased to a project will be transparent.
   - b. Contract management conditions over time will be made explicit.
   - c. A grievance mechanism will be settled for affected communities.

1.2. Impacts on human rights

"4 per 1000" projects will have to respect the exercise of the rights of all stakeholders involved at any stage of the project (ICCPR, ICESR, ILO-Convention 169, Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights). In accordance with the Paris Agreement preamble,[1] no trade-off should occur between climate change mitigation and fundamental rights such as the right to health, the right to an adequate standard of living (including the right to food), the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. A reporting process should be established to monitor *ex-ante* and *ex-post* impacts on human rights that could be based on existing indicators (Global Reporting Initiative (GRI): G4 Guidelines on Reporting Principles and Standard Disclosures; G4 Guidelines on Food Processing Sector Disclosures). Finally, a grievance mechanism needs to be accessible for affected parties.

1.3. Impact on other ecosystem integrity: biodiversity, water and other ecosystem services

"4 per 1000" projects will need to avoid/minimise any adverse effects on other ecosystem services, especially the provision of water and biodiversity and including genetic resources. Ecosystem

1. *"Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity."*

integrity will be preserved to enhance carbon sinks and increase resilience. More generally, "4 per 1000" projects will have to be developed in accordance with the CBD, ICESR (art. 11 and 12), CESR[2] General comment no.15 (2002), UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 (2010), Human Rights Council Resolution 24/18 (2013) and IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, Chapter 3 (2014).

2. IMPACT ON SOIL CARBON STOCKS AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

4 per 1000 projects will have to make explicit how they intend to increase carbon stock in soils but also reduce global GHG emissions, including carbon stocks in vegetation and methane and nitrous oxide emissions.

2.1. Impacts on global emission

The 4 per 1000 initiative is to contribute to climate change mitigation: the global emission balance of a project will have to be assessed *ex-ante* through tools like EX-ACT.[3] Assessment of 4 per 1000 projects will include stocks in the vegetation, as well as methane and nitrous oxide emissions to evaluate the global picture of the agricultural practice in the face of climate change (IPCC AR5, WG2, chapter 11). Besides, as carbon sequestration in agricultural soils is non-permanent and reversible, it should not be used as a compensatory method allowing non-CO_2 GHG agricultural emissions which are, on the contrary, permanent.

2.2. Impacts on agricultural practices and soil carbon stocks

A significant increase of soil carbon stocks implies changes in agricultural practices. However, the direct/short-term incidence of agricultural practices on soil carbon stocks is today difficult to measure, and can vary according to the way in which farmers integrate and adapt those practices. As such, 4 per 1000 projects should make explicit:

1. The types of practices they intend to promote and their known impact on soil carbon stocks in similar agro-ecological conditions (e.g. agroforestry and other agro-ecological practices).

2. The feasibility for/the ease in which farmers are susceptible to adopt or scale up those practices, especially with respect to (i) their expected costs and benefits, (ii) their technical requirements, and (iii) their *a priori* knowledge by farmers.

2. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

3. Bernoux M., Bockel L., Branca G., Colomb V., Gentien A. & Tinlot M., 2011. *EX-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (EX-ACT). Technical Guidelines for Version 4*. Rome, FAO.

3. IMPACT ON AGRARIAN STRUCTURES AND THE FOUR PILLARS OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

3.1. The importance of agrarian structures: impact on landholding and farming system

By agrarian structures, we mean here the structure of the landholding in a given region and the type of farming systems (at the farm level) that have developed over time given the landholding structure and the agro-ecological conditions. Those agrarian structures are to be considered by the 4 per 1000 initiative as they strongly influence the type of practices one may encounter in a given region.

Basically, those are the practices that "4 per 1000" project will have to deal with and intend to maintain or, on the contrary, to change in order to improve (at least maintain) soil organic carbon stocks. As such, any intervention targeting farming practices is likely to interact and impact upon existing farming systems and more broadly agrarian practices and agricultural model. This, in a context where the international community has agreed on the following two key aspects:

1. The need to invest in smallholder and familial agriculture, that together represent nearly 90 % of the global agriculture area and 80 % of the total food production (FAO, 2014; HLPE, 2013).

2. The need to increase the productivity and double incomes of small-scale producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land (see SDGs targets 2.1; 2.2; 2.3).

Therefore, the 4 per 1000 projects should be aligned with those commitments, and require to make explicit the following:

1. Specify what type of farm/farmers they will target: smallholders, familial agriculture, firm agriculture.
   - a. If smallholders are the target of the intervention, the project will have to specify how it intends to connect them to markets: who will be likely to buy their production and under which conditions? Most particularly, if contract farming arrangements are envisioned, the project will have to make explicit the types of contracts with respect to the FAO legal guide on contract farming;
   - b. If the project intends to target large farming/industrial agriculture, the way local farmers/populations are likely to be hired is to be clarified.

2. Make explicit how their intervention is likely to affect landholding/tenure and what are the expected impacts: will the intervention contribute to increase/decrease the size of farms, with which impact on farms' resilience and sustainability (HLPE, 2013)?

3. Make explicit how the intervention is likely to affect the functioning of farming systems, especially with respect to the issues of diversification *vs.* specialization and cash crop cultivation *vs.* subsistence crop cultivation. More particularly:

- a. If the project intends to promote forms of specialization for cash crop cultivation, the issue of price volatility and its possible impact (on both income and food security) will need to be addressed *ex-ante* by the project.
- b. If the project intends to promote diversification, the impacts on producers' incomes, food quality and regularity as well as the adaptation component while facing climate change will need to be taken into account (IPCC AR 5, Chapter 7).

4. Make explicit how the intervention will increase rural employment, incomes per ha and smallholder farmers' incomes.

3.2. Going beyond availability and access: how projects are likely to affect food and nutrition security considered globally?

Improving (at least maintaining) soil organic carbon stocks is deemed to increase soil fertility and thus primary production. This, in turn, could improve either food availability or farmers' income. As such, it is likely to have positive impact on two pillars of food security, namely availability and access. However, food and nutrition security is also a matter of the quality of food and of the regularity with which food is, or not, available (ICESCR, art. 11). Projects will have to clarify how their deployment could affect those two other dimensions, either at the farm level, or more globally, through the way in which they could alter/transform food value chains.

4. CONCLUSION

To reach SDGs and climate targets, initiatives aiming at the transformation of agriculture systems can play a complementary role to ambitious public policies. But for those initiatives to be truly transformative, they need to be endowed with clear governance rules and a well defined reference and evaluation framework. The governance of the 4 per 1000 has been progressively structured and a scientific and technical advisory committee has been appointed in December 2016. The committee is to play a key role in developing such a framework, that would aslo enable experimentation and collective learning over time.

This paper intends to contribute to the definition of the reference and evaluation framework of the 4 per 1000 initiative. It focuses on operational recommendations and makes two types of concrete proposals. It first lists safeguard indicators that must be used in order to exclude projects that would not comply with this framework, as they are likely to lead to negative impacts. Second, it also illustrates that, beyond organic soil carbon storage increase, other simple criteria must be used to assess *ex-ante* and *ex-post* the intended changes and the expected impacts, particularly on food security. The first category is a requirement that needs to be directly implemented. The second category is made up of concrete criteria and indicators that we consider need to be assessed. It notably intends to exemplify that it is feasible to assess impacts on the socio-economic dimension even at the project scale.