



Delivering a just transformation through the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture

**Note No. 6, SRI 31
25 October 2022**

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At COP 27, the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) will present a decision on the integration of agricultural transformation into the UNFCCC. We examined the extent to which KJWA has sought to deliver a socially and environmentally just agricultural transformation. Our findings indicate that there has not yet been sufficient discussion or consensus on how to integrate commitments under the Paris Agreement into agriculture in a way that promotes a just transformation.

The transformation of global agriculture systems to meet the challenges of climate change has risen up UNFCCC agendas. At COP27 a committee established under the Subsidiary Bodies for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and Implementation (SBI) will report on the past five years of dialogue between UN member states, and a wide variety of stakeholders, under the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA).

The KJWA was established at the UNFCCC COP23 to integrate agricultural transformation more fully into the mechanisms of the UNFCCC and in the commitments and actions taken by UN member states under the Paris Agreement. As such, KJWA has had an important role to play in the visioning and implementation of transformative change in the agricultural sector. As SBSTA and SBI consider the next phase of UNFCCC agricultural policy, we

argue that developing and delivering on a shared vision of a just agricultural transformation should be central to this.

Based on 129 written submissions by Parties and Observers to the UNFCCC and reports prepared under the KJWA, as well as 23 recordings of KJWA workshops and meetings (from Dec 2018 to July 2022), we analysed framings of justice within KJWA. This analysis reveals important gaps in the efforts of KJWA to promote a socially and environmentally just transformation of agriculture.

A just agricultural transformation should ensure that historical processes of marginalisation are redressed, that different stakeholders have equal opportunity to shape decisions affecting them, and that the risks and benefits of agricultural change are distributed equitably, including between current and future generations.



Transforming agriculture

Historically, agricultural transformations, such as the Asian Green Revolution (1965-1990), have narrowly focused on technological change and been driven by the agendas of donors and powerful corporate interests. These have resulted in agricultural strategies that are poorly adapted to environmental contexts and unsustainable dependency on expensive technologies for low-income farmers.

Across KJWA our analysis shows that there is evidence of a partial shift away from a technology-centred vision of transformation of agricultural systems. For example, proponents of “climate smart agriculture” within KJWA rarely refer to single or narrowly defined technologies, but rather to principles of knowledge and information sharing, innovation platforms, and participatory resource governance.

We also found there has been a broad consensus around the need to build capacities, establish enabling institutions, and give a greater voice to the most vulnerable. The inclusion and prioritisation of agro-ecology (as a counter to technology centred agriculture and underpinned by a justice philosophy) within KJWA reports has been put forward by a variety of Parties and observer groups, although there has been insufficient consensus for agro-ecology to be explicitly recommended within the outcomes of KJWA.

Key justice gaps in KJWA

As part of our analysis, we identified some key gaps in the KJWA regarding a just agricultural transformation including:

Representational Justice:

- There has been a lot of discussion about whose voices are represented within the KJWA workshops themselves, often highlighting the underrepresentation of farmers’ voices. However there has been little consideration of how different voices will be represented in the implementation and governance of agricultural transformation.

Distributional Justice:

- There has been a focus on sources of greenhouse gas emissions across food supply chains and between production systems, but little explicit recognition of the geographic distribution of responsibility for agricultural emissions (e.g. between the Global North and South).
- Socially unequal access to technologies, information, resources and market opportunities, both within and between countries, are acknowledged, but the risks associated with transformative change and the potential to exacerbate these inequalities needs greater attention.

Historical Justice:

- There has been very little discussion of historical injustices in agriculture and food systems – such as injustices related to dispossession and land grabbing, slavery and workers’ rights, and corporate take-over of intellectual property and markets.
- The language of Article 8 of the Paris Agreement on Loss and Damage has been notably absent from KJWA discussions and outputs.

Recommendation on the next step for Koronivia

COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh will be a key moment in determining the final outcomes of and next steps for the KJWA.

There is a need for outcomes from KJWA to be agreed and for the modalities and mechanisms to be established before the KJWA recommendations are translated into national commitments and action plans on the part of UN member states.

However, the modalities so far discussed and agreed under the KJWA are somewhat vague and have not gone much beyond a recognised need to leverage finance for the scaling up of promising agricultural practices.

The dialogue should not stop here. There is a need for an ongoing process of negotiation by an agriculture working group, constituted under the UNFCCC. Our recommendation is that such a group is tasked to establish a shared and holistic understanding of, and set of principles for, a just agricultural transformation.

Further information

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This research was undertaken by members of the Priestley International Centre for Climate at the University of Leeds and supported by the UK Universities Climate Network’s COP26 fellowship programme

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