



November 17, 2023

Administrator Samantha Power
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20523

Dear Administrator Power:

At the launch of U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Climate Strategy in April 2022, you stated that USAID was “urgently taking up” President Biden’s call for every agency to become a climate agency.¹ Your request to the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) for recommendations to operationalize that ambition has been the focus of significant BIFAD attention since the formation of a dedicated subcommittee in June 2022. On behalf of BIFAD, I am pleased to share recommended actions for USAID to achieve transformative and tangible climate change adaptation and mitigation results across agricultural and food system investments, and to thank the subcommittee for its service. These recommendations are intentionally bold and ambitious, as they must be if USAID is to achieve the transformational change needed to prevent impending climate disaster and to reduce poverty, hunger, and malnutrition—and, in so doing, to be a global climate leader.

These recommendations, the scope and scale of which are unique in the history of BIFAD’s work, reflect over a year of effort from the BIFAD Subcommittee for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Agriculture, Food, and Nutrition Systems (the Subcommittee), a body composed of eleven exceptionally qualified, insightful, and forward-thinking experts representing diverse disciplinary and institutional viewpoints. The Subcommittee’s work culminated in the accompanying report, *Operationalizing USAID’s Climate Strategy to Achieve Transformative Adaptation and Mitigation in Agricultural and Food Systems*. Guided by Subcommittee technical leadership, this report reflects extensive consultation with a broader set of experts (68), peer reviewers, and the public to identify actionable recommendations for USAID programming.

The report proposes three Agency-wide targets for agrifood system investments that link to broader Climate Strategy targets. They are:

¹ [Administrator Samantha Power at the Launch of the New USAID Climate Strategy | April 21, 2022 | U.S. Agency for International Development](#)

- **Mitigation:** Reduce emissions from agrifood systems by 1.2 GtCO₂e per year while supporting initiatives to avoid net conversion of forest, grasslands, or peatlands to agricultural use.
- **Adaptation:** Enable the improved climate resilience of at least 180 million people who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, at least half of whom are women.
- **Climate Finance:** Mobilize \$36 billion in finance for climate change adaptation and mitigation in agrifood systems, with at least 30 percent of direct financing used for gender- and socially inclusive investments.

Collectively, the report's six detailed operational and technical recommendations illuminate a path for Agency-wide transformation to achieve Climate Strategy goals within agrifood systems programming. The recommendations are:

1. **Set, Measure, and Report on Climate Targets.** Require all operating units to define clear and measurable contributions to Climate Strategy targets while standardizing agrifood system-specific climate indicators and introducing new accountability measures to ensure their prioritization.
2. **Integrate Climate Objectives in Program Cycle Strategy, Design, and Implementation.** Better incorporate climate risk, impact, and projections data to mainstream programs that balance long-term climate-resilient agricultural gains with immediate food security needs.
3. **Build Climate Expertise.** Fulfill Climate Strategy commitments with an assessment of staffing needed across all operating units to operationalize the strategy and recruitment of necessary dedicated expert staff, in addition to increased training, technical assistance, opportunities for peer learning, and improved performance incentives for mission and other staff.
4. **Increase Climate Investment.** Increase the level and flexibility of agriculture and food security investments to mainstream climate goals through longer-term or phased funding, stronger collaboration and co-funding with other U.S. federal agencies, including the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, to better leverage finance, and supporting an enabling environment for adaptation finance.
5. **Fund Climate Research.** Strengthen the capacity of local and global research organizations to anticipate and address climate adaptation and mitigation needs, including those pertaining to governance, markets, and behavioral change.
6. **Invest in High-Potential Leverage Points.** Focus technical investments and incentives in high-potential leverage points within agrifood systems to drive emissions reductions and climate-resilient pathways while achieving food security goals. Priority leverage points are:
 - Empower Women, Youth, and Other Underrepresented Groups to Drive Locally Led, Climate-Resilient Agrifood Systems
 - Increase Finance for Climate Adaptation and Mitigation and Expand its Inclusivity
 - Enable the Use and Sustained Provision of Weather and Climate Services
 - Partner with and Strengthen Local Research and Development Systems
 - Expand Integrated Soil and Water Resources Management
 - Expand Integrated Forest and Agricultural Land Management
 - Reduce Livestock Emissions while Increasing Production Efficiency
 - Reduce Food Loss and Waste

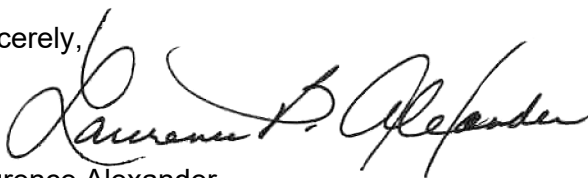
USAID senior leadership on climate change adaptation and mitigation can strongly influence both a) technical outcomes and impacts and b) institutional processes to achieve those impacts more efficiently and systematically at scale and with the urgency you invoked last year. BIFAD encourages USAID to put in place by the end of 2024 a leadership team and policy framework for agriculture, food, and nutrition under the Climate Strategy to generate the organizational and behavior change needed to implement the report's recommendations. To demonstrate concrete progress, BIFAD further encourages USAID to establish in 2024 realistic operating unit-specific agrifood Climate Strategy targets, including targets for methane reduction, and a workplan for significant action on the technical leverage points and USAID institutional reforms.

The agrifood system is a significant contributor to climate change and is also deeply shaped by its impacts. Extreme and intensifying conditions, from protracted heat and drought to heavy precipitation to sea level rise and saltwater intrusion, stress production systems from Guatemala to Bangladesh, undermining both livelihoods and food and nutrition security. Climate-driven humanitarian crises are growing both more frequent and more severe, and many of the people most impacted by them depend on agriculture directly. Without ambitious and comprehensive adaptation and mitigation measures across the agricultural sector, the 1.5°C warming target, the end of extreme poverty, and a sustainable future are out of reach.

USAID has taken up this call to action through the USAID Climate Strategy. Addressing both the causes and consequences of the climate crisis requires bold, transformational changes in both our interconnected agrifood systems and how the Agency itself operates. If USAID can align its agrifood investments with a 1.5°C warming scenario, it will fortify its position as a global climate leader and catalyst for broad-based action. The recommendations provided in this report aim to make the agricultural sector part of the solution.

BIFAD is deeply invested in USAID's transformation into a climate agency and keen to contribute to, and to elevate, Agency successes. On behalf of my fellow BIFAD members, I extend my congratulations and encouragement on an auspicious start to this long journey. We will be pleased to continue supporting your efforts along the way and look forward to your response and guidance on how we might best partner with USAID to accelerate important outcomes that protect the most vulnerable among us from the starkest impacts of a climate-transformed future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laurence Alexander". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L".

Laurence Alexander
Chair, BIFAD
Chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Enclosure:

Operationalizing USAID's Climate Strategy to Achieve Transformative Adaptation and Mitigation in Agricultural and Food Systems