

World Environment Day: Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants and Increase Food Security

Paris, 5 June 2013 – In recognition of this year's World Environment Day and its theme – Think. Eat. Save: Reduce Your Foodprint – the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) called on governments around the world to renew their efforts to reduce short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) for the sake of food security. SLCPs are contaminants that have a relatively short life in the atmosphere but do significant damage to crops as well as health and climate.

Reducing SLCPs, particularly black carbon and methane, can improve crop yields and soil quality, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). If measures suggested by UNEP are fully implemented—measures such as emissions reductions in the transport sector, coal mining, oil and gas production and long-distance natural gas transmission, 32-52 million metric tons of crop losses could be avoided annually from global production of wheat, maize, rice and soy annually after 2030.¹

Black carbon emissions can significantly alter regional climate-energy interactions and affect rainfall patterns, leading to impacts on agriculture. Black carbon not only decreases crop productivity but also causes millions of premature deaths annually. Approximately 20 per cent of black carbon is emitted from burning biofuels, 40 per cent from fossil fuels, and 40 per cent from open biomass burning,² according to Veerabhadran Ramanathan, a noted climate scientist at the University of California, San Diego and member of the CCAC Science Advisory Panel.

Methane is a precursor to tropospheric ozone, which at high concentrations is phytotoxic and can lead to crop losses. Apart from its effect on crop productivity, tropospheric ozone can also impact the occurrence and severity of natural disturbances in agriculture (for example, fire or erosion) by affecting water balance, cold hardiness and tolerance to wind, and by predisposing plants to pests and diseases. Tropospheric ozone can cause a loss of agrobiodiversity as well as decreased ecosystem resilience to both extreme events and natural or human disturbances. By tackling methane emissions, the CCAC addresses the problem of tropospheric ozone at a key source.

Besides black carbon and methane, the CCAC also works to reduce some hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in the atmosphere. HFCs are SLCPs that are used in refrigeration, air conditioning, aerosols and other applications.

World Environment Day is an annual event that is aimed at being the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. World Environment Day activities take place all year round and climax on 5 June every year. Information on how to participate in this year's Think.Eat.Save: Reduce Your Foodprint Campaign, please click on <http://www.unep.org/wed/>.

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short Lived Climate Pollutants is a partnership of governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, the environmental community, and other members of civil society. Launched by six countries and the UN Environment Programme in February 2012, it now consists of 64 partners, including states and key international institutions and organizations. More information about CCAC is at <http://www.unep.org/ccac>.

1 UNEP 2011. Near-Term Climate Protection and Air Benefits: Actions for Controlling Short-Lived Climate Forcers, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi, Kenya, 2011.

2 V. Ramanathan and G. Carmichael, "Global and regional climate changes due to black carbon," 1 Nature Geoscience 221-22 (23 March 2008).

The Climate and Clean Air Coalition is a voluntary global partnership of governments, intergovernmental organizations, businesses, scientific institutions and civil society committed to catalyzing concrete, substantial action to reduce Short Lived Climate Pollutants (including methane, black carbon and many hydrofluorocarbons). The Coalition has [11 initiatives](#) working to raise awareness, mobilize resources and lead transformative actions in key emitting and cross cutting sectors. SLCP reduction must go hand in hand with deep and persistent cuts to carbon dioxide and other long-lived greenhouse gases if we are to stay under a 2 degrees Celsius warming limit.

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