



Summary of the member workshop of the Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change (RTOACC)

10/11th May 2010 at FiBL, Frick/CH

1. Foreword and Document History

The members of the RTOACC convened for the first time after its foundation. During a two-day workshop, the mitigation potential of organic agriculture, related data availability and data gaps, the potential for organic agriculture in the carbon markets and strategies for the role of organic agriculture in climate policy were discussed and conclusions for the further orientation and actions of the RTOACC were drawn. Besides this topical discussion, representatives had the possibility to present ongoing related work in the member organisations. The workshop is the first in a series of topical meetings, to be followed by a workshop on Life Cycle Assessment in September 2010. 16 representatives of RTOACC members, 7 invited experts and 11 researchers from FiBL attended the meeting.

The RTOACC agreed in a feedback session during the Roundtable Workshop (Mai 10-11 at Frick) on the statements. In addition, this workshop report was written by FiBL and a formal round of consultation and feedback on this document among the workshop participants was run from 7th to 21st June 2010.

Participants were not required to reach agreements; all comments however divergent were recorded. All documents and presentations are available on the RTOACC website: www.organicandclimate.org

2. Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the support from FAO for this workshop. This support is part of the engagement of the FAO with RTOACC activities during 2010.

3. Background and objectives of the workshop

Climate change directly influences food production and food security. To address these new challenges, a multi-stakeholder initiative on organic agriculture was



established on December 16, 2009 at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. This initiative, the “Roundtable on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change” – RTOACC brings together stakeholders and partners along the organic food production chain to discuss the potential of organic farming to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

During 2010, the main activity of the RTOACC is the development of a methodology for the carbon market, which includes the synergies with general development goals and the benefit for smallholders in the global South. FiBL coordinates these activities and organized the workshop.

3.1. Objectives of the Workshop in Frick

- In-depth scientific exchange on the available data on GHG emissions and the carbon sequestration potential of organic crop and livestock systems
- Discussions on gaps in the available data and ideas on how these could be filled
- Discussion of the climate change mitigation potential of organic farming systems and the development of methodologies for the carbon market
- Discussions on the co-benefits of carbon trading to enhance farmer income and food security

Besides these topical objectives, the workshop also aimed at:

- Developing further the institutional context for harmonizing and improving the knowledge related to GHG emissions, carbon sequestration and carbon trading systems in the RTOACC community
- In general strengthening and coordinating collaboration, information exchange and research in the RTOACC community
- Strengthening the RTOACC in its expertise to advise the international community on organic agriculture and climate change issues

To achieve this, the workshop was organized in two broad topical blocks, the first addressing the state of knowledge regarding the mitigation potential of organic agriculture and the second addressing the potential of organic agriculture in the carbon market. A concluding plenary session provided space for the discussion on future steps regarding these topics and the organizational goals.

4. Summary of the Workshop and main outcomes

The workshop started with a round of introduction of the attending representatives and experts (Annex 1) and was followed by a short presentation of the aims of the workshop and their discussion (Workshop agenda Annex 2).



4.1. Session on the Reduction of GHG emissions through Organic Agriculture: Facts and Figures and Case Studies

FiBL organized four input presentations to the first topical block addressing the mitigation potential of organic agriculture:

- General information on the mitigation potential of organic agriculture by Adrian Müller, FiBL
- Details of the mitigation potential in plant-soil-systems by Andreas Gattinger, FiBL
- Details on the data availability on soil-carbon in the Mediterranean area by Luis Lasaletta, SEAE
- Details on emissions and mitigation in animal husbandry by Peter Klocke, FiBL

Adrian Müller supported the assumption that, compared to conventional agriculture, organic agriculture emits less N₂O from nitrogen application (due to lower nitrogen input), less N₂O and CH₄ from biomass waste burning (as burning is avoided), and has lower CO₂ emissions, mainly due to zero chemical fertilizer use. This also avoids the N₂O emissions from fertilizer production. However, further research is needed for an improved assessment of various emission factors. At the moment chemical and organic N fertilisers are classified similarly by the IPCC as they were given the same N₂O emission factor.

From Andreas Gattinger's talk, the RTOACC learned that the additional carbon sequestration per hectare in organic crop production systems exists but it is relatively low for Switzerland. But due to the huge areas under agricultural production, soil carbon sequestration has a considerable global potential. There is, however, a high potential to avoid CO₂ emissions from soils in peat lands and black soils by converting from conventional crop production to more extensive crop production or livestock systems and employing adapted soil treatments to prevent further CO₂ release.

These two presentations concluded that in plant production, an additional potential for mitigation is mainly seen in a) compost use, b) synthetic fertilizer avoidance, c) biomass waste and manure storage and handling, d) biogas production, e) avoided biomass burning, f) agro forestry and soil carbon sequestration.

Luis Lasaletta and his colleagues from SEAE showed that there is a lack of scientific information in the Mediterranean context. Only 10 articles include a proper organic treatment. Preliminary results suggest a lower N₂O emission factor for organic fertilizers than for conventional ones and also lower than the factor proposed by IPCC. There is only little information on greenhouse gases under dry land conditions. Preliminary results suggest a higher C sequestration rate for organic treatments. Nonetheless, most of the information is hardly comparable. There is a need for studies on CH₄, indirect emissions and particularly for fully integrated assessments.



Peter Klocke showed that in animal production, the main mitigation potential is seen in improving lifetime performance (i.e. reducing GHG emissions per unit of output) and in the reduction of concentrate feed (due to the land-use impact of feed production).

From these inputs and the ensuing discussion, five key topical areas were identified for in-depth group discussions. Results from those were subsequently presented and discussed in the plenary. The five topics with their respective key results/open questions were:

Co-benefits of carbon trading systems:

- Organic agriculture can offer *sustainable* carbon credits. These credits can finance the transition from conventional to an organic system
- Co-benefits are energy efficiency, improved livelihood, biodiversity, soil organic matter, long time soil fertility, system stability, resilience
- All the listed co-benefits contribute to food security, yield stability, sustainability and adaptation to climate change
- However, a balance between scientific approaches based on detailed empirical data and broader visionary and conceptual approaches is needed

Consistent data / which data is needed:

- Consensus on which variables should be measured is needed
- Combine model, experimental and real farm data
- Which level of sophistication in data collection and evaluation should be aimed at?
- There is a trade-off between very detailed data on the one hand and widespread cheap measurements on the other hand
- Consensus on the basis is needed: which type of organic agriculture is referred to?
- System level: single management practices or techniques versus whole production system assessment (eventually even including beyond farm-gate emissions).
- Mitigation reference scenario: will argumentation be based on average "state of the art" performance in organic agriculture or should the focus lie on the "future potential" of organic agriculture (i. e. one single optimal organic farm proving the viability of a highly productive low carbon management).

Data gaps and data base

- Specific organic climate data are needed in the following contexts:
 - Input related emissions: e.g. of compost or fertilizer preparations (e.g. based on legumes, etc.); these emissions should then be allocated to the crops



- Process related emissions and emissions from various management types (rotations with legumes, reduced tillage, N₂O dynamics of compost application, etc.)
- More data on the emissions of production *systems* is needed and approaches on how to allocate those to crops and techniques should be discussed (e.g. for complex spatially diverse crop rotation systems)
- “Total Carbon in the system” should be quantified
- LCAs are probably not adapted to OA

How to come to consistent data

- Key parameters should be standardized: e.g. emissions factors for CH₄, N₂O, CO₂, Carbon stocks in soils (bulk density needed), comparable soil horizons
- Use of existing long term trials
- Data base
- Define standards for data quality
- Building up a body of knowledge

Boundaries

- Standards of measurement and reporting are needed to establish comparability
- System limits: how to deal with precursor emissions and post farm-gate emissions.
- Mutual interference of different processes and greenhouse gases (e.g. CH₄ and N₂O during manure management, N and C sequestration and release in agricultural soils).
- a decision on which indicators and weights must be used to assess the performance of a certain system against different indicators with respect to mitigation and co-benefits needs to be taken; an option is to avoid aggregation into a one-dimensional indicator but to use multi-dimensional spider diagrams for comparison of systems and to inform decisions.
- OA should not be reduced to a mitigation instrument. There are benefits like animal welfare, biodiversity, soil fertility and also ethical aspects

Conclusions from the first session

Besides these key topics and conclusions addressed in the group discussions, a clarifying discussion was held on the purpose of detailed quantification of climate services in organic agriculture. Four main areas were identified, where detailed and reliable data sets are important:



- In scientific publications (building up a broad peer-reviewed knowledge stock which then allows to be taken into account by the IPCC and other relevant scientific institutions)
- For the national GHG inventories (management-specific information for the agricultural part of inventories)
- For the development of methodologies (enabling approval of organic practices for the regulated and non regulated carbon markets)
- To improve the knowledge of organic agriculture specific inputs/techniques for various data bases that are also used outside the organic community (e.g. for Life Cycle Assessments, matter flux calculations (e.g. REPRO), or soil process models (e.g. CENTURY, RothC, Expert N))

The RTOACC agreed, that in plant production, a potential for mitigation is mainly seen in compost use, biomass waste and manure storage and handling, synthetic fertilizer avoidance, biogas production, avoided biomass burning, and agro forestry.

Due to the huge areas under agricultural production, soil carbon sequestration has a considerable global potential, although the potential per hectare is usually rather low.

In animal production, the main mitigation potential is seen in improving lifetime performance (i.e. reducing GHG emissions per unit of output) and in the reduction of concentrate feed (due to the land-use impact of concentrate feed production).

4.2. Session on carbon trading to enhance income and food security

The second topical block on carbon trading to enhance income and food security” started with five input presentations. They addressed

- Climate change and food security by Alberte Bondeau, PIK;
- Food security and climate change: Southern perspectives by Vice Yu, South Center;
- Specific aspects of carbon markets and carbon finance instruments with a focus on agriculture by Roman Schibli, SouthPole Carbon Asset Management Ltd;
- The potential of organic agriculture in the existing carbon markets and carbon finance instruments and discussion of some alternatives by Adrian Müller, FiBL;
- European farmers and carbon trading with grandfathering – incentive structures and lessons for the South by Gert Tinggaard Svendsen, University of Aarhus and Erik Fog, Danish Agricultural Advisory Service.

Climate change and food security: Alberte Bondeau from PiK presented her model on climate change and food security. Her findings strongly underline the view that the share of animal products in human diets has a strong effect on environmental impact. Any effective measures to reduce the level of consumption of animal products



(including those derived from eggs and milk) are beneficial in terms of environmental impacts, animal welfare, biodiversity and bioenergy potential.

An outcome of her model is also, that organic agriculture can probably feed a world population of 9.2 billion in 2050, if relatively modest diets are adopted and an equality food distribution is established. This conclusion is based on the best currently available data on system-wide yield levels of organic cropland agriculture as compared to intensive crop production systems. PIK therefore recommended directing research and technical development towards agricultural practices that follow organic standards or are otherwise environmentally less destructive and are nevertheless able to achieve high yield levels.

In addition, Alberta concluded, that neither humane livestock rearing systems nor environmental objectives in cropland farming should be discarded based on claims that these practices would jeopardize food security. PIK recommends a continuation of support for organic and other environmentally benign agricultural management practices, while at the same time trying to optimize yields and efficiencies without adopting unsustainable or inhumane technologies and practices.

Food security and climate change: Southern perspectives: Vice Yu focused on the following factors to be considered in the context of climate change:

- Historical responsibility of the developed countries for emissions (the carbon basis of developed countries' development)
- Current and future responsibility for emissions (the carbon basis for future development)
- Widening development gap between North and South (champagne glass model of global income distribution)

Developed countries' responsibility for anthropogenic climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions is both historical and current. But future greenhouse gas emissions from the developing world are expected to exceed those from the developed world by 2015.

For developing countries the best way to be able to contribute to global action on climate change is focusing on:

- low-carbon sustainable development pathways that changes trajectory of emissions reductions away from business as usual; and
- prioritizing adaptation that helps bring about mitigation consistent with sustainable development objective
- South-South technical assistance, cooperation and information exchange on the development of climate-adapted national development plans
- political South-South cooperation in multilateral climate policy negotiations and forums to consistently highlight equity, historical responsibility and common but



differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities as fundamental principles for global climate action

In the context of the upcoming negotiations on the convention, the South Center aims at strengthening mitigation, supporting adaptation actions at all levels, implementation of a financial mechanism of the convention and set up of an effective technology mechanism under the COP and removing obstacles to the development and transfer of technology.

Specific aspects of the carbon markets: Roman Schibli, Project Manager at South Pole, introduced the RTOACC into the mechanisms and needs of the carbon markets. As carbon credits are issued for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, carbon credits can be traded internationally between Annex 1 countries and non Annex 1 countries to reduce their emissions and to comply with the convention.

Carbon credits from CDM go through an approval cycle and a number of factors need to be fulfilled for a project to become viable carbon credit project:

- Additionality, means that the project goes beyond the business as usual situation
- A methodology approved by the UNFCCC contains applicability criteria, a calculation for emission reductions, and a proceeding to monitor emission reductions. Everybody can propose a new methodology. Most agricultural projects need to be large to achieve a critical size. Currently most carbon credit projects are conducted in China and India.

There are three big carbon markets worldwide: Kyoto Market, European Market and the Voluntary Carbon Market VCM (e.g. Gold Standard and VCS). At the end of COP 15, there was a pledge to include forestry & agriculture, but there was no commitment to continue with market mechanisms.

Organic agriculture and carbon markets: Adrian Müller from FiBL pointed out, that regarding the carbon markets and organic agriculture, most important aspects are related to additionality, leakage, quantification (measurement, reporting, verification), "level of services", and the measurement of co-benefits:

"Additionality": a project is additional, if there are financial, institutional or other barriers, that make implementation of the project impossible without the prospect of the additional payments from carbon certificate sales.

From CEDECO experience possible financial barriers could be: Lack of support for capacity building and technology transfer, insufficient funds for initial investment in new alternative technologies (e.g. composting facilities), lacking access to the official credit-market, missing institutional facilities (processing and distribution centre).

"Leakage" addresses the problem of emissions reduced in one context being emitted elsewhere (e.g. forest degradation in one area is stopped, while a hitherto non-used forest on a neighbouring area is being exploited and degraded).



“Quantification” needs to be reliable, comprehensive and replicable. At the same time, quantification should not become excessively costly.

The “level of services” and “co-benefit” debate is particularly crucial for organic agriculture as the carbon markets are largely based on crediting for emission reductions given the same level of services (e.g. yield/ha).

Benefits for European Farmers from Carbon Trading: Up to now, agriculture is not part of the European Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS). Gert Tinggaard Svendsen, University of Aarhus and Erik Fog, Danish Agricultural Advisory Service concluded in their presentation, that European farmers can gain income by participating in the EU ETS and that a system with grandfathering is able to set the correct incentives for mitigation.

Because documentation is complicated and/or expensive, they suggested an adapted emission factor approach (AEFA).

However, farmers in the south will have difficulties to profit from the system due to the fact, that to go for CDM comes with high additional costs for certification.

General Discussion:

From these inputs and the ensuing plenary discussions, key topical areas of agriculture, carbon finance and climate policy were identified in the plenary and addressed in group discussions. Results from those were presented and discussed in the plenary. The main outcomes are compiled in the following paragraph:

Economic profitability/Flow of goods and funds within CDM/VCM

- Detailed data on farm economics is needed to assess which carbon price is necessary for mitigation projects in organic agriculture becoming attractive and relevant to farmers.
- This also affects the additionality of projects.
- Which is the optimal institutional organization to manage payments from carbon finance? Due to the mitigation potential, groups of several hundred to thousands of farms need to be addressed; the organic certification system already in place may offer opportunities for simplified monitoring.
- Due attention has to be given to the incentives stemming from carbon payments: How to deal with the fact that only farms changing their management can apply for these payments while those that already did the same do not receive anything?

Adapted/alternative instruments for carbon offset mechanisms:

- Economically ideal would be the internalization of all external costs in agriculture (Pigouvian tax on GHG emissions, for example) – but this is unpopular.



- a more viable option could thus be based on voluntary agreements, e.g. in a context of local markets based on trust (as opposed to global approaches based on high monitoring requirements).
- another option is the design of more appropriate policy instruments with better chances to be adopted (based on the idea of combined taxes with subsidies) – such as grandfathered emissions payment schemes.
- LCA seems to be a difficult instrument in organic agriculture and needs to be adapted.

Method development/low hanging fruits for carbon offset mechanisms:

- How can organic agriculture become a system of more efficient application of certain techniques?
- There is need to coordinate a complex set of measurement methods and indicators with a complex set of different types of farms.
- An option is to establish an organic agriculture–climate change board (as an alternative to the UNFCCC CDM Methodologies Panel (Meth Panel: <http://cdm.unfccc.int/Panels/meth/index.html>) to plan and coordinate efficient management and application of all this knowledge. This board should not be aiming at the ideal but employing a path of pragmatic learning-by-doing.

Policy issues / organic agriculture in climate policy:

- organic agriculture needs to be addressed from a holistic point of view. The big question is how we, as a society, can push the shift from conventional to organic agriculture.
- the potential of organic agriculture needs to be recognised in the existing carbon finance institutions, but carbon trade is not the best long term solution to support organic agriculture.
- What then is the best approach supportive of organic agriculture? The topic has to be addressed on a more general level: a general change of agricultural policies is needed (regarding incentives, regulatory systems, payments, etc.), and organic agriculture has the potential to play an important role in the newly emerging general approaches in climate policy, such as NAMAs (nationally appropriate mitigation actions) or NAPAs (national adaptation programmes of action).

Besides these topics addressed in greater depth in the group discussions, other topics shortly addressed in the plenary were whether agriculture offers cheaper mitigation options than other sectors and the potential of mitigation measures on peat-lands and black soils.



4.3. Session on progress reports accompanied by poster presentation (optional) on “Organic agriculture and climate change” of RTOACC members

Contributions from the FAO and from CEDECO, Costa Rica, are available on the RTOACC Web site.

5. Concluding workshop plenary

The concluding workshop plenary addressed the role of the RTOACC and the inclusion of agriculture in general and organic agriculture in particular in climate policy and further steps to be taken. It also addressed the institutional organization of the RTOACC (establishment of a steering board (led by FiBL), structures to build task forces for specific topics), in particular in view of an increase in the number of member organizations. The structure and mode of action of the steering board to accelerate the RTOACC activities will be developed by the members in the near future, and regular updates will be made by the steering board at two-weeks-intervals aiming at tighter exchange and collaboration in the RTOACC community.

6. Outcome and Conclusions

The RTOACC agreed on the following points:

- It is necessary to establish a consistent data-base on the mitigation potential of organic agriculture. The main data gaps are related to emissions and sequestration levels from specific inputs, techniques and total cropping systems, where assignment of the mitigation potential to single crops and techniques is difficult.
- The RTOACC decided to establish a task force on strengthening the information exchange on GHG emissions and carbon sequestration in organic agriculture among the members of the RTOACC and also in the wider organic community. This supports the report on data consensus and data gaps on organic agriculture and climate change to be written by December 2010. FiBL takes the lead of this report.
- The available instruments of the regulated carbon offset markets like CDM and JI are not well adapted to agriculture. Nevertheless, there is potential for new or improved methodologies for composting, fertilizer avoidance, avoided biomass burning, agro-forestry and bio-gas production. The RTOACC decided to establish a task force for further development of these methodologies aiming at meeting high standards for the voluntary carbon market, but not necessarily the standards of the CDM.
- The RTOACC established a steering board to coordinate and implement the activities of the RTOACC. As of now, it has the following composition:
 - FiBL, contact person: Andreas Gattinger



- ICEA, contact person: Paolo Foglia
 - SEAE, contact person: Eduardo Aguilera-Fernández
 - Louis Bolk, contact person: Sjef Staps.
 - ICROFS, contact person: Lise Andreasen
- The RTOACC acknowledges the importance to include agriculture in the climate policy negotiations. It agreed that the members of the RTOACC will contribute to the ongoing efforts to include agriculture in the climate negotiations and institutions.

Contact: Dr. Andreas Gattinger, Subject Leader Climate, FiBL (andreas.gattinger@fibl.org)



Annex 1: List of the workshop participants

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Agenda for the meeting of the Round Table on Organic Agriculture and Climate Change (RTOACC)

Time	Session	
11.00-14.00	Arrival of the Participants at the FiBL Room "Sitzungszimmer"	
14.00	Start of the Workshop and Welcome	Eric Wyss, FiBL
14.10	Introduction and Aims of the Meeting	Andreas Gattinger
14.20-16.00	Session 1: Reduction of GHG emissions through Organic Agriculture: Facts and Figures and Case studies	Moderated by Matthias Stolze, FiBL
	Input 1: Mitigation Potential of Organic Farming Systems Questions/Remarks	Adrian Müller, FiBL
	Input 2: Soil Carbon in Plant-Soil-Systems Questions/Remarks	Paul Mäder, FiBL
	Input 3: GHG Emissions and C sequestration in Mediterranean Croplands: Available Information and Gaps Questions/Remarks	Luis Lassaletta, SEAE
	Input 4: GHG Emissions in Animal husbandry Questions/Remarks	Peter Klocke, FiBL
16.15	Break	
16.30	Group discussion to main topics of session 1	Andreas Gattinger
17.30	Conclusions from group discussions and joint discussion	
18.15	Apéro in the FiBL wine cellar and Dinner	
20.00	Session 2: Progress reports accompanied by poster presentation (if applicable) on "Organic agriculture and climate change" of RTOACC members Joint discussion, Implications for RTOACC	Andreas Gattinger
22.00	End of the Meeting	



Round Table on
Organic Agriculture and
Climate Change

Tuesday, Mai 11, 2010		
Time	Session	
09.00	Review of the Outcome of Session 1 and 2 and Agreement on the Outcome Paper <i>(Draft document will be available Monday evening)</i>	Urs Niggli
10.00	Session 3: Carbon trading to enhance income and food security	Andreas Gattinger
	Input 5: Climate Change and food security Questions/Remarks	Alberte Bondeau: PIK Potsdam
	Input 6: The South Centre's Perspective on Climate Change and Food Security Questions/Remarks	Vice Yu, South Centre, Geneva
10.45	Break	
11.00-12.45	Input 7: Introduction in instruments and market mechanisms Questions/Remark	Adrian Müller, FiBL
	Input 8: Potential of Organic Agriculture in the Carbon Markets Questions/Remark	Roman Schibli, South Pole Carbon Ltd.
	Input 9: Benefits for European farmers from carbon trading. Possible models and perspectives for the south Questions/Remarks	G. T. Svendsen, University of Aarhus Erik Fog, Danish Agricultural Advisory Service.
12.45	Lunch and Group Foto	
14.00	Introduction into the group discussions	
14.20	The potential of organic agriculture in the carbon market Four thematic groups: → Economic profitability/Flow of goods and funds within CDM/VCM → Adapted/alternative instruments for carbon offset mechanisms → Method development/low hanging fruits for carbon offset mechanisms	



Round Table on
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Climate Change

	→ Policy issues / organic agriculture in climate policy:	
15.30	Break	
16.00	Reports from the four working group and synthesis	
16.30	Conclusion for the RTOACC	
17.30	End of the Workshop Final get together / transports to the train station etc.	