



United States Department of Agriculture

Climate Hub Concept Workshop

USDA Climate Hub Concept in the Americas Workshop, August 18-19, 2015

Summary Report, October 2, 2015

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Overview

USDA representatives from the Caribbean, Southwestern US, Washington DC, and Central America met with government and non-government delegates from seven countries in Central America to discuss the USDA Regional Climate Hub network. The workshop enabled international participants to examine the USDA Regional Climate Hub model at the US Forest Service International Institute of Tropical Forestry in Puerto Rico. The group explored opportunities for institutions to interact with the USDA Hubs and to establish and support similar networks throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Background

The USDA has established seven Regional Climate Hubs and three Sub Hubs for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change in order to deliver information to US farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners that can help them adapt to climate change and weather variability. Regions include the Pacific Northwest, Southwest, Northern Plains, Southern Plains, Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast Hubs and the Caribbean, Northern Forestry, and California Specialty Crop Sub Hubs. These Hubs assist in building capacity to provide public information and guidance on technologies and risk management practices at regional and local levels. For more information see the Regional Hub website at www.climatehubs.oce.usda.gov/. The Caribbean Climate Sub Hub (CCSH), in partnership with the Southwest Regional Climate Hub and the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), hosted the Climate Hub Concept in the Americas Workshop at the International Institute Tropical Forestry in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The workshop came about as a result of an expressed desire on the part of the Ministry of Agriculture of Mexico (SAGARPA) to learn more about the concept of the climate hubs, how they operate, and to explore how SAGARPA might execute such a concept in Mexico. The workshop was expanded to include delegations from Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Panama, as well as representatives from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the USDA Tropical Agricultural Research Station in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico (TARS), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the US Department of State, The University of Puerto Rico, and the following non-profit cooperators: Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la

Agricultura (IICA), International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), and the Consejo Empresarial Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo Sostenible (CEDES).

The Hub network mission is well-aligned with a growing number of organizations that realize the importance of addressing the threat presented by climate change to global food security. Already the effects of shifting precipitation patterns, sea level rise and increased temperatures are being felt throughout much of the Caribbean and Central America in the form of severe droughts, coastal aquifer salinization, and proliferating pests and diseases that plague crops. In the face of these and other socio-economic challenges, there is a recognized need to improve connections within the agricultural community to ensure producers have access to the best available science and tools needed to adapt and thrive.

The development and implementation of the workshop was a coordinated effort led by the Foreign Agricultural Service's (FAS) Office of Capacity Building and Development (OCBD), Caribbean Climate Sub Hub, Southwest Regional Climate Hub and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF) and included representatives of the FAS Office of Agreements and Scientific Affairs, USDA Climate Hubs national staff, USDA Climate Change Program Office, FAS Posts, and the USDA Forest Service.

Outcomes

The workshop produced several outcomes that were conducive to furthering the mission and goals of both the Climate Hubs and the international participants, including:

Raised awareness of the climate hubs'

- Strategies
- Networks & Partnerships
- Tools
- Challenges

Shared strategies & challenges in

- Network and Communication Management
- Technology Transfer
- Vulnerability Assessment
- Science Translation
- Information Management

New connections among

- USDA/Climate Hub personnel & Central American Government Officials
- Central American Countries
- Government Advisors & Decision Support Services



Workshop participants collaborate on ways to create networks to respond to the climate change vulnerabilities of agriculture and forestry in their regions.

Moving Forward

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants were asked to confer with their respective delegation colleagues and decide on three definitive ‘next steps’ to follow-up on the various outcomes of the workshop. Many expressed an intention to communicate the proceedings with their departments and ministries at home as well as explore the options for creating similar Hub style networks in their own countries. Throughout the workshop it was stressed that what is important is not the creation of new Climate Hubs that mirror those in the US, but rather devising and implementing new ways to improve science delivery to agricultural stakeholders. The Mexican and Central American delegations outlined steps to move ahead with implementing the ‘Hub’ concept and expressed a desire to continue working with the USDA Hubs in a mutual exchange of information and collaboration to assist in this effort.

Other steps included:

- Identifying key collaborators for information dissemination
- Working to coordinate efforts among sectors involved in conservation, environmental management, agriculture, and forestry
- Integrating climate-smart agriculture into national climate change planning
- Identifying and building partnerships with key support services

Overall, the workshop supported the mission and goals of USDA FAS and the Regional Climate Hubs by furthering partnerships to improve global and domestic food security. There is a great deal of effort underway throughout Latin American and the Caribbean region to build climate smart agricultural systems, improve government services for agriculture and forestry, and coordinate efforts internally – by bridging gaps across various agencies and departments, as well as externally – by building international and public-private partnerships. Foreign Agricultural Service and the Climate Hubs have taken an important step in leading the facilitation of these efforts by building international partnerships through workshops such as this and other FAS efforts, as well as by striving to improve communication and coordination across USDA and other federal agencies.

Many regions throughout the Caribbean and Central America are facing shared climate challenges and have similarities in producer demographics and crop systems. There is much to be learned from successes, failures, and case studies within the region. This learning process will more-likely take place with a deliberate, sustained, and coordinated effort on the part of all key partners in the region. Foreign Agricultural Service and the CCSH are committed to devising a strategy and action points for facilitating cooperation between the Caribbean Hub and FAS attachés in Latin America.



Participants



Climate Hubs in the Americas participants in front of the International Institute of Tropical Forestry. **By number:** 1. Caitriana Steele, 2. Isabel Parés, 3. Jerry Bauer, 4. William Gould, 5. Mark Manis, 6. Rhiannon Elms, 7. Roberto Flores Vedejo, 8. Leticia Albarran Mena, 9. Otto Gonzalez, 10. Jill Luxenberg, 11. Laura Scandurra, 12. Grizelle González, 13. Candice Bruce, 14. José R. Pérez-Jiménez, 15. Víctor López Saavedra, 16. Adriana Otero, 17. Althea Austin-Smith, 18. David Wolf, 19. Pablo Imbach, 20. Olivia Gilmore, 21. Randy Johnson, 22. Nery Perez, 23. David Williams, 24. Lashonda McLeod, 25. Ricardo Peña, 26. Ruperto Chaparro, 27. Alejandro Solis, 28. Ariel Lugo, 29. Didio Antonio Batista Moreno, 30. Duamed Colón, 31. Jesus Genaro Arroyo Garcia, 32. Guillermo Ortiz, 33. Roney A. Samaniego, 34. Ramon Rivas, 35. Josh Fain, 36. Guillermo Edo. González Perera, 37. Luis Ortega Reyes, 38. Claudia Barahona, 39. Alvaro Martinez, 40. Juan Marco Alvarez, 41. Tim Porch. **Not pictured:** Edwin Almodovar, Marixa Maldonado, Maya Quiñones, Gary Potts, Kathleen McGinley, Magaly Figueroa, Kasey Jacobs, Ivelisse Perez Rodriguez, Odalys Martínez, and Cédric J. Van Meerbeek.

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