

Fertiliser Companies Dominate Talks on Climate Change and Agriculture, Report

By [Grain](#)

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“Exxons of agriculture” should be kept out of Paris COP21

Fertiliser companies are among the world’s top climate villains, a new report from GRAIN asserts. Their products could be responsible for up to 10% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, not to mention the damage wreaked on waterways, soils and the ozone layer. But policies to transition agriculture out of its current dependence on chemical fertilisers are being undermined by the fertiliser industry’s lobby efforts.

GRAIN’s report shows how fertiliser companies have infiltrated the main policy processes on agriculture and climate to position chemical fertilisers as a solution to climate change and to weaken support for non-chemical farming. Under the banner of “climate smart agriculture”, fertiliser companies work in alliance with other food and agribusiness corporations to lobby for voluntary, company-led programmes that promote the use of fertilisers, such as Wal-Mart’s climate smart agriculture programme or the World Economic Forum’s New Vision for Agriculture.

Fertiliser companies even hold sway within the only intergovernmental initiative to so far have emerged on climate change and agriculture. The founding membership and steering committee of the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture, launched last year at the United Nations Summit on Climate Change, are stacked with fertiliser companies, their front groups and organisations that partner with them.

“Fertiliser companies, like Yara of Norway, are the Exxons of agriculture,” says Henk Hobbelink, the Coordinator of GRAIN. “They fuel a model of agriculture that is destroying the planet and they are doing everything in their power to block action on climate change that would injure their profits.”

According to GRAIN’s report, recent studies show that the overall contribution of chemical fertilisers to climate change has been drastically underestimated. Calculations made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of nitrous oxide emissions from the use of chemical fertilisers are 3-5 times below what these studies suggest. The outdated IPCC figures also do not account for global increases in fertiliser production, the increasing reliance on shale gas as a raw material or the destructive impacts of chemical fertilisers on organic matter, the world’s most important carbon sink.

“We now can say that the use of chemical fertilisers this year will generate more GHG emissions than the total GHG emissions from all of the cars and trucks driven in the US,” says Devlin Kuyek, a researcher with GRAIN. “The good news is that there is a quick fix for

this problem: a worldwide switch to agroecological practices that can achieve the same yields without chemicals.”

Research shows that farmers can stop using chemical fertilisers without reducing yields by adopting agroecological practices. This was also the conclusion supported by the 2008 International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, a three-year intergovernmental process involving over 400 scientists that was sponsored by the World Bank and all of the relevant UN agencies.

“We can easily kick our food system’s toxic fertiliser habit once we remove the fertiliser industry’s chock hold on policy makers,” says Hobbelink. “This should start with shutting down the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture and keeping the fertiliser lobby out of the COP21 talks in Paris.”

GRAIN’s report, “The Exxons of agriculture”, is available online at <https://www.grain.org/e/5270>.

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