

Statement by the Delegation of Canada to the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Climate Change and Agriculture

New York, 5 May 2008

Mr./Madame Chairperson,

Since the endorsement of Agenda 21 at Rio, Canada has been actively contributing to the development of the international sustainable development agenda, and continues to work with and within the U.N. to promote globally sustainable agricultural practices to ensure a healthy environment for future generations.

As concluded by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its 2007 assessment, the risks of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent throughout the world. Canada's actions fall within the two distinct but complementary goals that are mitigation and adaptation. Last April, Canada announced Turning the Corner – an aggressive plan to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To reach this goal, we announced mandatory regulations for big industry to reduce emissions. These will be important drivers in moving Canada to a low emission economy. The development of an Offset System for Greenhouse Gases is a key component of this plan and agriculture will be a key sector.

Canada has also recently committed significant funding for domestic adaptation programs to reduce and help us be prepared to address climate change impacts. To this end, Canada's Agricultural Policy Framework committed the Government of Canada to achieve measurable improvement in agricultural air quality. This framework and its successor Growing Forward will contribute to Canada's overall commitment to a 60 to 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, relative to current emission levels. Canadian programs and research funds focus on means to sequester carbon in agricultural soils and improving the mitigation of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions through beneficial management practices and the generation of biofuels and renewable energy (e.g. biogas from anaerobic digestion of manure).

Water and climate change will be policy priorities for Canada in the next five years. Canada is committed to assisting agricultural producers with programs and tools to help them better manage future business decisions. Because science is essential in providing relevant bio-physical information to decision-makers, producers and stakeholders, Canada will continue to advance the science necessary to support the development of mitigation and adaptation options for the sector and to conduct policy research and analysis based on the science to support the development of the Growing Forward policy framework.

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Natural Resources Canada's Climate Change and Adaptation Program provides funding and undertakes activities that improve knowledge of the risks and opportunities. Domestic reporting on assessments of impacts and adaptation have shown the future vulnerabilities of the agricultural sector to threats brought about from increased drought, extreme weather events and new pests. Promoting engagement and awareness by sharing knowledge through the Canadian Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Research Network has yielded important results.

Mr./Madame Chairperson, adapting to an uncertain and changing climate is important to all countries. Canada is committed to working with the international community to address adaptation and would be pleased to share its expertise on agricultural emissions mitigation, inventory methods and reporting with the international community.