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## Don't ignore agriculture in climate talks, experts warn

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### SCIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

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Leading agriculturalists have warned that failure to include agriculture in next month's climate change summit in Copenhagen will have disastrous consequences on food security.

More than 60 leading agricultural scientists from around the world signed a statement this week (18 November) in response to the almost total absence of agriculture from preliminary discussions leading up to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summit in Copenhagen in December.

Climate change will create unprecedented conditions for farmers, who will have to cope with weather variability, temperature changes, shorter growing seasons, salt stress and new combinations of pests and diseases, said the statement.

Without adaptation, yields will drop, creating food insecurity for billions, say researchers (see [Billions face food shortages this century, warns study](#)). "No credible or effective agreement to address the challenges of climate change can ignore agriculture and the need for crop adaptation to ensure the world's future food supplies," said the statement.

"We urge countries at the Copenhagen conference to give due attention to crop diversity conservation and use it as an essential element of the commitments they will make for climate change adaptation."

Signatories include Colin Chartres, director-general of the [International Water Management Institute](#); William Dar, director-general of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics; M. S. Swaminathan, former minister of agriculture, India; Joachim von Braun, director-general of the International Food Policy Research Institute; and Robert Zeigler, director-general of the International Rice Research Institute.

"Just because [agriculture] has to adapt, does not mean it will," said signatory Gebisa Ejeta, the Ethiopian sorghum scientist who won this year's World Food Prize.

"Adapting crops to unprecedented conditions cannot be taken for granted. It requires rigorous research and complex, painstaking work."

The contents of more than 1,500 seedbanks — including the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (see [Global seed vault opens in Norway](#)) — provide the genetic diversity needed for crop adaptation. However, these are often marred by poor funding, with current resources inadequate to conserve them. Immediate small investments are needed, the statement says.

"Billions of dollars were promised this year for food security. Billions will likely be promised for climate change," said Cary Fowler, executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust.

"We ask the negotiators at Copenhagen to recognise how interwoven these issues are."

For more news: [Science and Development Network - Climate Change & Energy: Clean Technology and Copenhagen](#)

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