

NEWS ALERT: Biochar Included in Draft Copenhagen Text

In the first release of draft negotiating text for the upcoming Copenhagen meetings in December, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has included biochar in a section entitled: "Enhanced Action on Mitigation". The just-released text will serve as the basis for negotiations during the pre-Copenhagen meetings in Bonn from June 1 – 12, 2009, and ultimately, for the 1 – 12, 2009 December meeting in Copenhagen.

The IBI credits its cooperative work with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention on Desertification (UNCCD) for inclusion of the draft text, which reads:

"Agriculture

*134. Parties shall cooperate in R&D of mitigation technologies for the agriculture sector, recognizing the necessity for international cooperative action to enhance and provide incentives for mitigation of GHG emissions from agriculture, in particular in developing countries. Consideration should be given to the role of soils in carbon sequestration, including through the use of **biochar** and enhancing carbon sinks in drylands."*

The text is included in the Negotiating Text for the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action Under the Convention (at UNFCCC link: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2009/awglca6/eng/08.pdf>).

IBI Policy Director Debbie Reed hails the support of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) for working with IBI and UNCCD countries to bring biochar to the attention of the UNFCCC. "The UNCCD Secretariat understands the dual role of biochar in combating climate change and land degradation and desertification, and we commend their efforts in working with us to raise the profile of this issue in such a significant manner. We will continue to work together to ensure that biochar is recognized within the Copenhagen Framework and beyond."

To date, at least 13 countries and Parties to the UNFCCC, as well as the UNCCD Secretariat, have made submissions to the UNFCCC seeking the inclusion of biochar as a high-potential climate mitigation and adaptation tool, including in drylands and developing countries with degraded soils and deserts. They include Belize and a Consortium of African governments, including Swaziland, Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Additionally, several countries, including Argentina, Senegal, and the UNCCD Secretariat, all spoke favorably of the role of biochar in combating climate change and aiding in adaptation efforts at a 4 April, 2009 UNFCCC Agricultural Workshop held in Bonn, Germany. IBI and UNCCD attended the workshop; the summary of the workshop (http://unfccc.int/meetings/ad_hoc_working_groups/lca/items/4815.php) also recognized biochar.

"The significance of this victory is that it will continue to drive recognition of the role of biochar in combating and adapting to climate change, and result in policies to further support additional research and development of biochar production and utilization systems in the developing and developed country context," said Reed. "We know enough about biochar to know that we must strive to produce sustainable, global biochar systems that enhance the earth's soils while removing carbon from the atmosphere in stable sinks that sequester carbon for thousands of years."

The International Biochar Initiative supports biochar systems that are sustainable and that benefit the earth's soils and climate while providing enhanced crop and agricultural productivity, reduced chemical inputs, and effective waste management systems that co-produce renewable energy.

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For more information on IBI's work with the UNFCCC process, go to the IBI website at:
<http://www.biochar-international.org/biocharpolicy.html>.