

☀ Change at the Top

Barack Obama has become the first global elected representative to associate himself, boldly, with climate change. In his [White House statement](#) of August 3, 2015, he targeted the US's greatest source of carbon pollution - power plants - setting a reduction goal of 32% by year 2030. Agriculture is singled out as a sector in need of tailored assistance, in which farmers, ranchers and forest landowners will receive science-based knowledge to help them understand and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Specifically, the USDA has established [seven distinct regional "climate hubs"](#) in which interventions to reach specific goals have been adapted to each hub's particular challenges and expectations.

Three months earlier, in May of this year, Pope Francis published [Laudato si](#), his encyclical on the environment and human ecology. The publication's direct call for a critical examination of the impact of human activity on planet Earth has reverberated far beyond the structures of Christianity, and is regarded as the sole purpose of his address to the United Nations in NYC this week. The [United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015](#) marks the UN's 70th anniversary, and is expected to be a type of sign-up sheet, where "Member States will take major decisions about sustainable development, climate change and the future peace and well-being of humankind."

The 11th session of the UN's Kyoto Protocol (Canada signed in 1998, embarrassingly, withdrew in 2011; USA signed in 1998, but, no reduction commitment to 2020; UK signed in 1998, committed to -20% by 2020) will be hosted in Paris in November. Dubbed the [Paris Climate Change Conference](#), the agenda references "Land Use and Climate Change", a sub-topic of which issues related to agriculture are itemized as: i) classification of early warning systems to prepare for extreme weather events; ii) assessment of risk and vulnerability of agricultural systems, not limited to pests and diseases; iii) identification of adaptation systems, including indigenous knowledge bases, and, iv) enhancement of agricultural productivity and resilience in a sustainable manner.

☀ Hiding in the Bushes

Agriculture. Power plants. Coal plants. Forests. Ranches. Pests. Diseases. Farms. Croplands. Livestock. Gases. Fish-stock flows. Land erosion. Carbon foot print. Lead emissions. Landfill. Climate action. Pesticides. Fertilizers. Recyclable. Fossil fuel.

The food industry has escaped direct reference. Yet, it skirts all these factors.

Green House Ozone layer. depletion. Ice slides. Soil erosion. Drought.

☀ Food Waste

As good a starting point as any. Though rarely discussed at food industry forums, most western nations have tallied their respective country's food waste. In Canada, food waste is valued at \$27B per year, more than the amount Canadians spend at restaurants. The report observes ["few \[...\] resources are invested in making more effective use of the food already produced"](#). The USDA has determined that approximately 31% of the US food supply – equal to 133 billion pounds of food, or \$1,500 per family of four – is wasted, annually. As part of the USA's initiatives, the USDA and EPA have jointly announced several [food waste reduction initiatives](#) including a targeted [50% drop by year 2030](#) and a new section of [Choose My Plate](#), designed to educate consumers about how to lessen food waste. The European Commission has estimated that 100 million tonnes of food are wasted, annually, in the EU. In an appeal to all stakeholders in the value chain, the EC warns that [if nothing is done, food waste could rise to over 120 million tonnes by 2020](#).

☀ Is the food industry attuned?

Of all manufacturing sectors, we have the most to gain from environmental stewardship. We also have the most to lose from environmental negligence. **FF**