Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

MEETING DOCUMENT

Beyond Koronivia and Sharm el-Sheikh – Options to advance climate action in agriculture and food security under the UNFCCC

Prepared for a pre-COP informal expert dialogue on the future of climate action in agriculture and food security under the UNFCCC (Antalya, Türkiye; 6–7 November, 2026)

Executive summary

The Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) and the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Implementation of Climate Action on Agriculture and Food Security (SJWA) have established agriculture and food security as an integral part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agenda, providing a dedicated space for dialogue, knowledge exchange and cooperation among Parties and stakeholders. These processes have helped strengthen the visibility of agriculture and food security within climate negotiations and build a common understanding of the opportunities and challenges at the intersection of climate action and sustainable development.

As the four-year SJWA is expected to report on progress and outcomes at the 31st Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP31), Parties face an important decision regarding the future of agriculture and food security under the Convention. While the process has generated valuable knowledge, raised awareness of key issues and information gaps, including the need for more granular data on climate finance for agriculture and food security – disaggregated by subsector – and fostered collaboration and strengthened linkages with broader climate agendas, persistent challenges remain in translating dialogue into implementation and supporting countries in delivering action on the ground.

This paper examines the evolution, achievements and remaining gaps of agriculture-related work under the UNFCCC and presents four possible options for the future. It also proposes a functional framework to support discussions on implementation modalities, with the aim of helping Parties identify arrangements that strengthen and sustain the role of agriculture and food security under the UNFCCC.

Introduction

Agriculture and food security have become increasingly central to global climate action. Climate change is already affecting food production, rural livelihoods and natural resources across all regions, while agriculture is expected to play a critical role in strengthening resilience, supporting adaptation and contributing to sustainable development. The Paris Agreement recognizes the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, highlighting the close relationship between climate action and the sustainability of food production systems.

Over the past decade, Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have progressively expanded attention to agriculture and food security. The establishment of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA), Decision 4/CP.23, at COP23 in 2017 (UNFCCC, 2018) provided the first dedicated process under the Convention to address the interlinkages between climate change, agriculture and food security. Building on this foundation, Parties adopted the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Implementation of Climate Action on Agriculture and Food Security (SJWA), Decision 3/CP.27, at COP27 (UNFCCC, 2023), reflecting a growing recognition that knowledge exchange and technical dialogue must increasingly support action on the ground.

The KJWA and SJWA have contributed significantly to advancing agriculture and food security within the climate negotiations. They have helped strengthen the evidence base for climate action in agriculture and food security, elevated the profile of these issues across the broader UNFCCC agenda, and fostered greater engagement among governments, international organizations, researchers, farmers and other stakeholders (Burgos *et al.*, 2026). At the same time, they have highlighted persistent challenges related to implementation, access to finance and other means of implementation, policy coherence, and the translation of recommendations into tangible outcomes at country level.

As the four-year SJWA is expected to report on progress and outcomes at the 31st Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP31), Parties face an important decision regarding the future of agriculture and food security under the Convention. While the process has generated valuable knowledge, raised awareness of key issues and information gaps, and fostered collaboration and stronger linkages with broader climate agendas, challenges remain in translating dialogue into implementation and supporting countries in acting on the ground. One key information gap is the lack of granular data on climate finance for agriculture and food security, disaggregated by subsectors. Looking ahead, institutional arrangements and implementation modalities should support climate action on agriculture and food security, recognizing adaptation as a priority for vulnerable groups.

This paper provides a brief overview of the evolution of agriculture-related work under the UNFCCC (SECTION I), examines the key achievements and remaining challenges of the KJWA and SJWA processes (SECTION II), and explores possible pathways for the future. It presents four main scenarios for consideration by Parties (SECTION III) and proposes a functional framework (SECTION IV) to support discussions on how future arrangements could strengthen implementation, enhance coherence across the UNFCCC architecture, and facilitate more effective support for food security, agriculture and the livelihoods of people, while reflecting national and local circumstances.

SECTION I.

From Koronivia to Sharm el-Sheikh: A growing emphasis on implementation

Timeline

2017	COP23 adopts Decision 4/CP.23 establishing the KJWA.
2018	KJWA Roadmap adopted providing guidance for UNFCCC to implement the activities.
2018–2022	Technical workshops, submissions and negotiations under the KJWA roadmap covering six thematic areas and an additional two intersessional workshops.
2022	COP27 adopts Decision 3/CP.27 establishing the SJWA.
2024	SJWA Roadmap adopted providing guidance for UNFCCC to implement the activities.
2024–2026	Implementation-focused work under the SJWA begins, including annual synthesis reports, workshops, submissions and the Sharm el-Sheikh Online Portal.
2026	UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies report to COP31 on progress and outcomes of the SJWA.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Agriculture and food security have progressively gained prominence within the UNFCCC as Parties have sought to address the impacts of climate change on food production, livelihoods and rural communities. A major milestone was the establishment of the KJWA at COP23 in 2017, the first dedicated process under the Convention to address the interlinkages between climate change, agriculture and food security.

The KJWA provided a structured platform for technical exchanges, workshops and submissions covering a range of agriculture-related topics. Over five years, it helped strengthen the evidence base for climate action in agriculture, fostered a shared understanding of key challenges and opportunities, and produced a series of agreed conclusions on issues ranging from soil and water management to adaptation, food security and resilience.

By the conclusion of the KJWA, Parties increasingly recognized that the key challenge was now to support implementation. This shift led to the adoption of Decision 3/CP.27 at COP27, establishing the SJWA.

The SJWA marked an evolution in the approach to agriculture and food security under the UNFCCC. While building on the technical foundations established through the KJWA, the SJWA placed greater emphasis on implementation, including means of implementation, policy coherence and the integration of agriculture and food security across the broader climate agenda resulting in the following outcomes:

- Two annual synthesis reports (UNFCCC, 2025a; UNFCCC, 2026a);
- Two in-session workshops in hybrid format and their reports:
  - First in-session workshop (UNFCCC, 2025b) on systemic and holistic approaches to implementation of climate action on agriculture, food systems and food security, understanding, cooperation and integration into plans and its report (UNFCCC, 2025c);
  - Second in-session workshop (UNFCCC, 2026b) on progress, challenges and opportunities related to identifying needs and accessing means of implementation for climate action in agriculture and food security, including sharing of best practices and its report (UNFCCC, 2026c);
- Over 140 views by Parties and observers related to the objectives of the SJWA and the two in-session workshops available in the Submission and Statement Portal; and
- The Sharm el-Sheikh Online Portal with over 70 submissions on projects, initiatives and policies shared by Parties and observers.

These outcomes (UNFCCC, 2026d) have sought to support the conditions needed to accelerate climate action on the ground. As Parties now review the outcomes of the SJWA at COP31, the next step is to determine which concrete arrangements are required so that implementation becomes effective and Parties have the means to translate ambition into action.

SECTION II.

Achievements, outcomes and remaining gaps of the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work

Visibility and legitimacy

Since its establishment at COP27, the SJWA has played a critical role in maintaining agriculture and food security as a visible and substantive component of the UNFCCC agenda. The process has reinforced the recognition of agriculture and food security as core elements of climate action and sustainable development under the Convention, while increasing the visibility of relevant work undertaken across UNFCCC processes and workstreams.

Contributions from constituted bodies, financial entities and other entities to the KJWA and SJWA workshops, together with the SJWA annual synthesis report, have helped consolidate and highlight this work, providing a more comprehensive overview of activities and contributions related to agriculture and food security across the UNFCCC.

As Parties consider the future of the SJWA, preserving this visibility and legitimacy will remain essential. Any future arrangement should ensure that agriculture and food security continue to benefit from a dedicated platform for dialogue, cooperation and political attention within the UNFCCC architecture.

Knowledge exchange and stakeholder engagement

The SJWA has strengthened knowledge exchange and fostered dialogue among Parties and non-Party stakeholders through workshops, submissions, annual synthesis reports and the Sharm el-Sheikh Online Portal. These mechanisms have contributed to a growing body of evidence on climate action in agriculture and food security and have facilitated collaboration among governments, international organizations, research institutions, farmers' groups and other stakeholders.

Future efforts should build on these achievements by strengthening mechanisms for knowledge sharing, peer learning and stakeholder participation, while ensuring that exchanges are increasingly geared towards informing and supporting implementation at national level.

Policy integration and coherence across the climate agenda

The SJWA has contributed to growing recognition of agriculture and food security across the broader climate policy landscape. Agriculture-related considerations are increasingly reflected in nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans (NAPs) and other national climate planning instruments, while stronger linkages have emerged with a range of UNFCCC processes and bodies (FAO, 2026; Crumpler *et al.*, 2025).

Looking ahead, greater efforts will be needed to further embed agriculture and food security across relevant UNFCCC processes and the implementation mechanisms of the Paris Agreement, helping to move these issues from a specialized agenda item towards a more integrated component of climate action.

The implementation gap

Despite important progress in generating knowledge and fostering dialogue, tangible implementation outcomes remain difficult to demonstrate. Questions persist regarding how implementation should be

understood under the current mandate and how progress should be assessed, and how outcomes can translate into concrete action at the national level, including through national climate change policies, strategies and investment plans.

Addressing this implementation gap should be a central objective of any future work on agriculture and food security. This will require greater clarity regarding expected outcomes, implementation modalities and mechanisms for tracking progress and impact.

Means of implementation

Access to finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building have been identified by several stakeholders as critical challenges. While these issues have featured prominently in SJWA discussions, progress in facilitating access to support has remained limited.

Nevertheless, the process has helped raise awareness of information gaps that affect access to climate finance, including the need for more granular data on finance for agriculture and food security, disaggregated by subsector. The SJWA's requests for reporting by relevant financing entities have also helped advance transparency on support for agriculture and food security, an important step towards identifying gaps and informing efforts to improve access to finance.

Future arrangements should therefore place greater emphasis on strengthening linkages with relevant finance, technology and capacity-building mechanisms under the UNFCCC, including those serving the Paris Agreement, with a view to improving the visibility of available support and enabling countries to access the resources and assistance to implement climate action in agriculture and food security.

Coordination and institutional challenges

Stronger coordination across the UNFCCC, including more effective linkages with related negotiation tracks and implementation processes has been referred to by multiple stakeholders. Challenges also remain regarding policy coherence, intersessional engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and the operationalization of the SJWA objectives.

Strengthening institutional coordination should be a key consideration for the future. Enhanced cooperation across workstreams, constituted bodies and stakeholders could help improve coherence, reduce fragmentation and create a more enabling environment for implementation.

SECTION III.

Looking ahead: From dialogue to delivery

SUBSECTION A. Understanding the four main scenarios and their implications

The future of agriculture and food security under the UNFCCC will depend on the ability of Parties to preserve the political momentum generated over the past decade while shifting decisively from dialogue to delivery.

As Parties consider how best to maintain momentum while strengthening implementation, the options under discussion can be broadly grouped into four pathways that differ in ambition, institutional complexity and potential contribution to implementation: no conclusions reached, conclusion of the process, extension of the joint work, and establishment of a new structured mandate.

Each of these pathways reflects a different level of ambition and institutional engagement. Higher levels of ambition generally require clearer implementation functions, stronger institutional linkages and more developed implementation modalities.

While their implications vary, they share a common objective: supporting climate action that strengthens resilience, safeguards food security and livelihoods, and enhances the contribution of agriculture and food systems to the achievement of global climate goals.

Four main scenarios for consideration

Options	What would happen?	Potential advantages	Potential challenges	Implications for UNFCCC arrangements
1. No Conclusions	The SJWA mandate expires without agreement on outcomes, recommendations or future arrangements. As for any item of the agenda of an ordinary session, consideration of which has not been completed at the session, it shall be included automatically in the agenda of the next session, in application of rule 16 of the UNFCCC draft rules of procedures (UNFCCC, 1996).	Maintains the possibility of future discussions and avoids premature closure of the issue.	Risks loss of political momentum and visibility for agriculture and food security. Creates uncertainty regarding future direction and weakens coordinated action.	SJWA remains under Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)/ Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) with no new mandate. Secretariat not mandated to conduct any further activity such as annual report/ development of the portal/convening workshop to support the work.
2. Concluding	Subsidiary Bodies (SBs) report to COP on the progress and outcomes, taking note of or welcoming the work undertaken under the SJWA, and consider the mandate completed. No successor process is established.	Provides a clear conclusion to the SJWA and recognizes its achievements. Avoids adding a new agenda item to an already crowded UNFCCC agenda and limits the creation of additional institutional arrangements. Encourages the integration of agriculture and food security considerations into existing UNFCCC processes and workstreams.	Agriculture and food security would lose their dedicated negotiating space under the UNFCCC. Future dedicated discussions would require a new mandate and agenda item.	The SJWA agenda item is formally closed. No dedicated institutional arrangements remain under SBI/SBSTA. Future engagement related to agriculture and food security would occur through other UNFCCC processes and external initiatives.
3. Extended Consideration	Parties are not able to agree on all the outcomes but agree to continue considering the issue under the existing agenda item in the next session.	Preserves political space for agriculture and food security. Allows additional time to discuss outcomes and future directions. Avoids abrupt discontinuation.	Does not by itself address implementation gaps. Risks prolonging negotiations without generating concrete outcomes.	SJWA remains as open agenda item under SBI/ SBSTA. Negotiations continue, but no additional mandated outputs, workshops, synthesis reports or activities are foreseen. Secretariat support remains limited.
4. New structured mandate	Parties establish a new post-SJWA mandate that may focus on implementation, with defined objectives, outputs and institutional linkages.	May build on existing achievements and potentially place greater emphasis on implementation. It could strengthen support to countries, including access to finance, technology and capacity-building, and could help enhance coordination across relevant UNFCCC processes.	Would depend on Parties reaching agreement on mandate, scope, governance arrangements and resource implications. Depending on the arrangements agreed, additional reporting and coordination requirements may arise.	Could take the form of a joint work, work programme, or a dedicated constituted body. May include periodic progress reviews, technical guidance, formal links with finance, technology and capacity-building mechanisms, and support for integration into national climate policies and plans.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

SUBSECTION B. Understanding the different modalities and arrangements

Under the UNFCCC, Parties can establish a range of institutional and procedural arrangements through decisions of COP, Conference of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) and, where relevant, Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP), while the Subsidiary Bodies can provide guidance and recommendations through their conclusions. Thes arrangements offer distinct advantages and trade-offs. The options outlined in Subsection B – a constituted body, a work programme, joint work and national thematic focal points – illustrate different approaches to balancing institutional continuity, flexibility, coordination and national coordination and implementation. These options are not mutually exclusive and could be combined or complemented by other modalities, such as annual dialogues, depending on Parties' objectives and the functions they wish to support.

A **constituted body** is a standing institutional entity established by a COP/CMA decision with a defined mandate, functions, membership, modalities and work plan. It would generally have geographically balanced representation of members and designated co-chairs, with its work plan reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Constituted bodies typically meet between UNFCCC sessions to carry out their mandates, provide ongoing technical advice and develop recommendations. Their reports are generally considered under relevant agenda items during sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies or other governing bodies, as appropriate. Constituted bodies may also engage with other constituted bodies, UN agencies, financial institutions and technical organizations to support implementation, in accordance with their respective mandates and work plans. Their meetings are generally accessible to members, while participation by other Parties and non-Party stakeholders may depend on self-funding arrangements and applicable modalities, which can limit full inclusivity.

A constituted body would provide institutional permanence, continuity across COP cycles and sustained attention to agriculture and food security, with a structured platform for developing guidance, methodologies and implementation tools, and strengthening partnerships. However, its establishment would require a dedicated mandate and appropriate arrangements for staffing, meetings and funding. It could also be less flexible in adapting to evolving priorities and would need to ensure complementarity with existing UNFCCC bodies to avoid duplication. Establishing a new constituted body could also set a precedent for creating additional thematic bodies.

A **work programme** is a flexible, usually time-bound arrangement established by a COP/CMA decision, with a defined mandate and activities focused on implementation through technical exchanges, workshops, knowledge-sharing and recommendations. It can involve all Parties and invite contributions and action from relevant UNFCCC bodies, financial institutions, constituted bodies and other stakeholders. Its outputs can be reported to the COP/CMA through the relevant institutional channels, as appropriate, and feed into related processes and workstreams, including the Global Stocktake (GST), nationally determined contributions (NDCs), adaptation-related processes and climate finance discussions.

A work programme may be politically easier to establish, more flexible and adaptive, allowing priorities to evolve in response to implementation needs. It could build on past processes such as the KJWA and SJWA, provide an inclusive platform for technical exchange, and generate recommendations that inform broader UNFCCC processes. Compared with a constituted body with formal membership, a work programme can offer greater opportunities for participation by all Parties and observers. Its time-bound nature could help maintain momentum and avoid process stagnation. While resource requirements would depend on mandate and activities, a work programme may require less permanent administrative capacity than a constituted body, although intersessional workshops and other activities could entail substantial costs. However, participation and engagement may still be challenging for small delegations with limited capacity.

Joint work would provide a collaborative arrangement between the two UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies, drawing on their respective mandates and expertise to address cross-cutting issues, building on precedents such as the KJWA and SJWA while making use of existing institutional arrangements and avoiding the establishment of a new body.

Joint work would not in itself amend the mandates of other constituted bodies or workstreams or require them to address specific issues beyond their existing mandates. A joint decision could invite or encourage coordination and exchange among relevant bodies and work programmes, but each of them would continue to operate within its respective mandate and approved work plan. As with constituted bodies and work programmes, the extent to which a particular issue is taken up would depend on the scope of the relevant mandate, the priorities established by the respective body or work programme, and coordination among Parties. In the case of joint work, reliance on coordination across multiple bodies and workstreams may add complexity and make it more difficult to ensure sustained consideration of a specific thematic issue.

Nominating **national thematic focal points** would create a national-level coordination mechanism for agriculture and food security, linking relevant ministries, institutions and UNFCCC engagement. They could strengthen the connection between UNFCCC outcomes, especially those under KJWA and SJWA, and national implementation, including through national strategies and plans such as NDCs and NAPs, while requiring relatively limited international administrative resources and building on existing national structures.

SUBSECTION C. Shaping the future of agriculture and food security: A functional approach to implementation

While Parties may choose different institutional pathways for the future of agriculture and food security under the UNFCCC, many of the challenges identified under the SJWA relate not only to institutional arrangements, but also to the functions needed to support implementation. Regardless of the option ultimately selected, discussions under the SJWA have highlighted several areas where future work could add value by strengthening support to countries, enhancing coherence across the UNFCCC architecture, facilitating knowledge exchange, and improving access to means of implementation. The functions outlined below are intended to inform consideration of how future arrangements could contribute to more effective and impactful climate action on agriculture and food security.

Functions for more effective and impactful climate action on agriculture and food security

Functional objective	Examples of modalities and arrangements
Institutional recognition	Designation of national focal points to ensure more permanent coordination, support stronger interministerial cooperation, and more systematic engagement with constituted bodies and financial entities.
Implementation support	Development of recommendations, guidance and practical tools to support countries in implementing climate action in agriculture and food security.
Finance linkages	Formal cooperation with the Standing Committee on Finance and operating entities of the Financial Mechanism to improve access to climate finance and strengthen agriculture-related investment.
Technology support	Engagement with the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) to facilitate technology development, transfer and deployment.
Capacity-building	Collaboration with the relevant Constituted Bodies (Adaptation Committee, Paris Committee on Capacity-building) to address agriculture-specific capacity needs.
Knowledge exchange	Workshops, technical exchanges, regional dialogues, submissions, online platforms and communities of practice.
Progress tracking	Voluntary reporting, sharing of experiences, synthesis reports and review of implementation progress.
Policy integration	Support for integrating agriculture and food security into national climate change policies and plans.
Stakeholder engagement	Enhanced participation of farmers, Indigenous Peoples, research institutions, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, agriculture and food security have evolved from a relatively limited area of discussion to an increasingly important component of the UNFCCC agenda. The experience gained through the KJWA and the SJWA demonstrates both the relevance of these issues to climate action and the value of maintaining a dedicated space for dialogue, cooperation and knowledge exchange under the UNFCCC.

As the SJWA reaches the end of its agreed mandate, Parties have an opportunity to consider how the role of agriculture and food security should evolve within the UNFCCC. The options available differ in ambition, scope and institutional implications. While more ambitious approaches may require greater clarity and complexity regarding governance arrangements and implementation modalities, they also offer greater potential to address the challenges and needs already identified throughout the KJWA and SJWA.

In this context, future discussions may benefit from focusing not only on institutional arrangements, but also on the functions that future work should serve and how these can strengthen implementation at the national level. Regardless of the pathway chosen, it will be crucial to consider whether future arrangements can effectively respond to the needs expressed by Parties and stakeholders, including strengthening implementation support, improving access to finance and other means of implementation, enhancing policy coherence, facilitating knowledge exchange, and supporting the translation of global commitments into action at national and local levels.

The knowledge generated through the KJWA and SJWA, together with the existing UNFCCC processes, institutions and mechanisms, provides a strong basis on which to build. The challenge ahead may lie less in creating entirely new structures than in making more effective use of existing arrangements, strengthening connections across processes, and ensuring that support reaches countries and communities where it is most needed.

Ultimately, the future of agriculture and food security under the UNFCCC will be determined not only by the institutional choices made by Parties, but by the collective ambition to ensure that those arrangements deliver meaningful outcomes. The opportunity now is to build on a decade of progress and shape future arrangements around clearly identified needs and functions, helping ensure that global commitments are translated into action at national and local levels where resilience, food security and sustainable development are ultimately achieved.

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Contact: IMP-ACT@fao.org

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