

Path to Paris

Examining challenges to be addressed at the 2015 UN Climate Summit

Issue 3

Climate change threatens food security

In almost every community in every country where Maryknoll missionaries live and work, water and food are urgent concerns. Climate change is already affecting the fragile food security of some communities.

Subsistence farmers who are already vulnerable to food insecurity face immediate risk of increased crop failure, new patterns of pests and diseases and loss of livestock. People living on the coasts and floodplains and in mountains, drylands and the Arctic are most at risk.

In Peru, farmers struggle with diminishing crop yields due to rising temperatures, changing weather patterns and drought. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a UN body, Peru will see the greatest temperature rises due to climate change, despite the fact that the country is responsible for just 0.1% of global greenhouse gas emissions. They predict a dry season average temperature increase of between 0.7°C and 1.8°C by 2020 and between 1°C and 4°C by 2050.

More than 80 percent of food consumed in low-income countries is produced by smallholder “family” farmers. Many smallholder farmers are women. With investment in strategies to deal with unpredictable rains and shifts in suitable crops, and rehabilitation of degraded lands, smallholder farms can feed the majority of the world’s population while at the same time restoring ecosystems and reducing agriculture’s carbon footprint.

One practice gaining more recognition is agroecology. **Agroecology** incorporates traditional knowledge from small farmers, and local inputs that conserve natural resources and ensure communities have the right to nutritious and adequate food sources. With the majority of small farmers being women, agroecological farming practices benefit rural women and families.

The Maryknoll experience



“The accustomed times for planting and cultivating the land have varied greatly. Planting later, awaiting the rains, means a shorter growing season and a diminished harvest. The wells are running dry and it is difficult to find water for the cattle. Lake Titicaca has only risen 11 inches this season when it usually comes up more than a yard. Also many nightly light frosts have affected the normal growth of the crops. So many are discouraged by the climate and soil conditions that the youth are migrating to the cities, looking for jobs. My favorite Saint is Kateri Takakwitha, the patroness of the environment. I have placed a painting of her in our local church and make reference to her as often as I can.”

— Maryknoll Fr. Edmund Cookson
Puno, Peru

Photos: (1) Photo taken by [Graeme Law](#) while delivering water to a poverty-stricken slum near the city of Ica in Peru. / CC BY 2.0
(2) Farmers take a moment to pray beside their cattle on the Altiplano in the Andes Mountains in Peru. Photo courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters.

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Make a personal commitment

Recognizing that smallholder farmers are catalysts for transforming the way the world manages the supply of food and the integrity of creation, we need more mindful ways of consuming.

Prepare your own meals

Cooking at home reduces food waste, and enables you to eat more affordably and know what is in your food.

Eat with Gratitude

Half of the food we produce is thrown away each year. In addition to ethical, social, and economic implications, it also has an ecological footprint. In this season of Thanksgiving, plan carefully to ensure there is enough for all and that leftovers are not wasted.

A Quechua Prayer*

Lord Apu Ausangate, I watch you day and night so that this, my life, travels along the best path.

You, who are so powerful, my Lord, never forget me, and when I am about to fall into misfortune, save me.

With your power everything will be good for me, so I can work, so I can live, Lord Ausangate.

You will never fail to provide me with food, with everything I need.

Without pain or suffering I can make of my life a human work.

O Lord Ausangate, with your blessings, may my human brothers also live in harmony.

Look at me, my Lord, save me, do not forsake me, may suffering never return again for me and my brothers, may worries be no more, with your gift of blessing and bountiful food, may all human wisdom follow the right path, like the good crop of corn, of potatoes, even the well-cultivated wheat gives abundant production, thanks to your blessings, thus human beings can live in peace, together sharing what they have.

That way, my Lord Ausangate, they will all live together forever at your feet.

Raise your voice

Without action, climate change will devastate smallholder farmers, who will be affected by greater risks, from rising sea levels to more frequent storms and droughts.

Learn how food systems impact climate

Learn how the agroindustrial food system causes half of all greenhouse gas emissions and what alternatives exist. Watch this video by La Vía Campesina:

<http://bit.ly/CoolthePlanet>



Learn more at <http://bit.ly/AgroClimateInfographic>

Take action for smallholder farmers

Sign this petition to negotiators attending the UN Climate Summit in Paris urging them to include smallholder farmers in their plans. Go to: <http://bit.ly/AdaptNow>

* The Quechua people are a predominately Catholic indigenous group in South America, especially in Peru. A video of Demetrio Roca Wallparimachi reciting this traditional prayer in Quechua, his native language, was produced for the exhibition "The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire" on view at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., through June 1, 2018, and is online at <http://bit.ly/QuechuaPrayer>