

Dozens of Nations Back Regenerative Farming Initiative That Can Help Solve Global Warming

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Written by [Katherine Paul](#), [Ronnie Cummins](#)

France, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the U.K., Germany and Mexico are among more than two dozen countries that have signed on to an agreement that one day may be recognized as the most significant climate initiative in history.

France's [4/1000 Initiative: Soils for Food Security and Climate](#) puts regenerative food and farming front and center in the climate solutions conversation. This is why the Organic Consumers Association, its Mexico affiliate Via Organica, IFOAM Organics International and more than 50 other activist allies across the globe have signed on in support of the Initiative.

Unfortunately, the U.S. government is not yet on board with the plan, even though our country's toxic, fossil fuel-based, [heavily subsidized](#) (with taxpayer money), degenerative industrial agriculture system is a primary driver of global warming.

Global Problem, Global Solution

Leaders from 190 countries convened in Paris on November 30 for the 14-day [COP21](#) Paris Climate Conference. This year, for the first time in over 20 years of United Nations climate negotiations, the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC) set out to achieve something [concrete](#): "a legally binding and universal agreement to make sure the Earth doesn't get warmer than 2°C above pre-industrial levels."

To meet that goal, the French government launched the 4/1000 Initiative which, distilled to simplest terms, says this: If, on a global scale, we increase the soil carbon content of the soil by .04 percent each year for the next 25 years, we can draw down a critical mass of excess carbon from the atmosphere and begin to reverse global warming.

Is the French initiative realistic? Yes, even by conservative estimates.

Industrial, degenerative farming practices, which include tilling, deforestation, wetlands destruction and the use of massive amounts of synthetic and toxic fertilizers and pesticides, have stripped 136 billion tons of carbon out of the soil and sent it up into the atmosphere. Using the French government's modest estimates, we can transfer, via enhanced plant photosynthesis, 150 billion tons of this carbon back into the soil in the next 25 years.

How do we achieve those numbers? All we have to do is help just 10 percent of the world's farmers and ranchers adopt regenerative organic agriculture, holistic grazing and land management practices — and by help, we mean direct a portion of the billions of dollars earmarked for climate solution projects to farmers who regenerate the world's soils.

That's a game changer—but only if enough players get in the game.

The Plan Is Here

According to a December 1 [press release](#) from the French agriculture minister's office: This initiative intends to show that a small increase of 4/1000 per year of the soil carbon stock (agricultural soils, notably grasslands and pastures, and forest soils) is a major leverage in order to improve soil fertility, resilience of farmers and contribute to the long-term objective of keeping the global average temperature increase below 2 degrees.

France's agriculture minister, Stéphane Le Foll, said that [Initiative partners](#), which so far include the UN, developed and developing states, international organizations, private foundations, international funds, NGOs, consumer, and farmers' organizations, have committed to implementing appropriate soil management practices, and to recognizing the importance of soil health for the transition toward productive, highly resilient agriculture.

Le Foll told the French media that the 4/1000 has become a global initiative, but it's just the beginning: "We need to keep going and mobilize even more stakeholders in a transition to achieve both food security and climate mitigation [thanks to agriculture](#)."

Will the U.S. become one of those stakeholders? Or will our leaders side with the Monsantos and [Bill Gates](#) of the world, and continue to promote an agricultural system that directly and indirectly contributes [50 percent](#) (or more) of the greenhouse gas emissions that are burning up the planet? A system that has failed to feed the world, failed to reduce the use of toxic poisons, failed to bring prosperity to the world's small farmers, failed to produce healthy, nutritious food—a system whose successes can only be counted in terms of gross profits, shareholder value and political clout.

Whatever It Takes

President Obama, who attended COP21, hasn't been shy about linking global warming to national security. The President recently told PoliticPro:

“If we let the world keep warming as fast as it is, and sea-levels rising as fast as they are and weather patterns keep shifting in unexpected ways, then before long we are going to have to devote more and more and more of our economic and military resources not to growing opportunity for our people, but to adapting to the various consequences of a changing planet. This is an economic and security imperative that we have to tackle now.”

If focusing on the economy and national security is what it takes to motivate Obama to tackle climate change, we're all for it. After all, global warming threatens to [displace millions of people](#), many of who already are in a struggle just to survive.

We're also all for cutting greenhouse gas emissions, which is why we support the Obama administration's [Clean Power Plan](#), which requires states to cut carbon emissions by 32 percent by 2030. Let's transition from an extractive, fossil fuel-intensive energy system to a clean, renewable alternative. That transition should be a vital part of any global strategy to mitigate climate change.

But reducing emissions solves only half of the problem. We also have to draw down the billions of tons of CO2 currently heating up the atmosphere. Unless we address the climate change [elephant](#) in the room — Big Ag — we will fail to solve the climate crisis.

Scientists estimate the world's soils have [lost 50-70% of their carbon stocks](#) and fertility. Modern chemical-intensive, factory-farm, GMO-based industrial agriculture is largely responsible for that loss. Left unchecked, Monsanto and corporate agribusiness will continue to abuse farm animals, pollute our bodies and eventually take the whole planet down with them.

The French initiative is the most direct, most practical, and only shovel-ready plan for reversing climate change.

We don't have time to wait for expensive, [unproven techno-fixes](#), some of which haven't even made it to the prototype stage and many of which could come with unintended consequences. We don't need a corporate-focused “[Climate-Smart Agriculture](#)” scheme that promotes business as usual. And we definitely shouldn't put our faith in Monsanto's “carbon-neutral” but “poison-positive” [plan](#).

We need to pressure President Obama to [pledge](#) U.S. support for France's 4/1000 Initiative, now. If we're going to subsidize any form of agriculture, it should be the regenerative, climate-friendly, healthy, farmer-friendly type.
