

# The French Water Partnership's water & climate news digest



*A quarterly update on water and climate by Solène Fabrèges, program officer and coordinator of the climate working group at the French Water Partnership*

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF US WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PARIS AGREEMENT: WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

Following the dramatic announcement that the United States is withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, concerns regarding the future of international negotiations and our capacity to combat climate change are greater than ever.

Although a number of reassuring speeches have indicated that such a decision could both encourage nations to take action and stimulate momentum in civil society, the negative consequences could be numerous:

- From a symbolic point of view, the withdrawal from the agreement of the world's second biggest producer of greenhouse gases gives out a very negative signal. Since Donald Trump's election, the United States had already announced multiple measures that go against sustainable development and a low-carbon economy (e.g. drastic cuts in environmental credits, re-examination of the Clean Power Act, etc.). Now, however, the US President clearly intends to let the world know that he no longer wants to contribute to a joint effort that is nevertheless indispensable to respect international targets.
- By undoing the efforts made by Barack Obama's administration to limit the USA's production of greenhouse gases, the federal state is extinguishing the last hope of remaining under the 2°C threshold. As a reminder, the sum of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) submitted by nations for the Paris agreement currently corresponds to an estimated average temperature rise of between 2.7°C and 3.5°C by 2100. A significant revision and stepping up of nations' ambitions is therefore crucial, rather than the opposite.  
In its latest note, the Comité 21 (network for all French actors working for sustainability) states "The impacts of this decision will really be felt after 2020 with a rise in emissions from coal, and a slow-down in the production of renewable energy due to a lack of incentives from the EPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency)".
- The issue of funding is also crucial. Climate funds (adaptation funds, green funds, etc.) are vital tools to help countries initiate processes for energy transition and adapt to climate change. Although the USA's promise to contribute 3 billion dollars to the Green Climate Fund may not seem like much, the withdrawal of this financing would have the effect of weakening a financial tool that already struggles to find resources. In addition to multilateral funding, we can also apprehend a drop in development aid from the United States, bearing in mind that numerous funded development projects also play a part in combating climate change and reducing vulnerabilities.

The stance taken by the American president is particularly striking in light of the numerous studies which show the impacts of climate change on the different economic sectors of the USA. According to an article released in the Nature review ([Consistent negative response of US crops to high temperatures in observations and crops models, Nature Communication, 19 January 2017](#)) increasing exposure to temperatures in the range from 30 °C to 36 °C could imply yield losses of 49% for maize, 40% for soybean and 22% for wheat in the USA before the end of the century. The study shows that this decline would be essentially linked to water stress caused by the increase in temperatures. Yield losses will therefore be felt first hand on non-irrigated crops. However, given the decrease in the availability of the water resource

and ever growing needs linked to global changes (climate change, population growth, evolution of lifestyles, etc), irrigation may not be an accessible solution for now and for the future.

On a legal level, the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement should only become effective following the next US presidential elections; the climate issue could therefore influence the results.

**RALLYING TOGETHER FOR COP23**

Given the situation, it is particularly important to continue acting and rallying together. The conference in Bonn last month gave negotiators an opportunity to make progress on preparing the texts for implementing the Paris Agreement, in particular concerning the mechanisms for revising national commitments, and the transparency framework. Although the challenges and schedule of COP23 are still unclear, we can nevertheless expect it to have a high political profile following the withdrawal of the USA and hope for strong mobilization from nations and civil society.

The Fiji Islands, which will take over COP presidency next November, recently presented their **vision** for the forthcoming COP, with a clear emphasis on the role of civil society, scientists, companies and public authorities at all levels, including local. In the circumstances, we might therefore expect the GCA (Global Climate Action) to have an important place. A water day has been confirmed.

The Fiji Islands also insist on the importance of developing the resilience of countries, especially the most vulnerable, with a particular focus on climate risks and rising sea levels, adaptation funding, renewable energy, drinking water and sustainable farming.

Water should therefore continue to feature on the agenda. In the run-up to the COP, several international events on water and climate challenges will be organized, in particular in Agadir (11-13 September), and Rome (23-28 October). Hopefully, these events will bring opportunities to reinforce the messages, visibility and cohesion of water stakeholders in view of COP23. France and the EU are already working on making ambitions stronger.

**ABOUT FWP**

The French Water Partnership, presided by former French deputy Jean Launay, is a public and private platform gathering 140 internationally active members into 6 groups: the state and public bodies, NGOs, associations and foundations, local and parliamentary authorities, economic actors, training research institutes and qualified personalities. For a decade, it has been lobbying at international level to make water a policy priority and promoting French expertise in the field.

<http://www.partenariat-francais-eau.fr>



**THEY ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE FWP**



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