



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES 15 MAY 2019

A public statement from the Associated Country Women of the World, marking this year's theme: Families and Climate Action

The Associated Country Women of the World was instrumental in the conception, implementation, and promotion of the International Year of the Family in 1994. Then, we focused on the problem of global warming, and the uneven burden carried by rural women. As we mark the International Day of Families, we highlight the fact that since 1994, this burden has not been lightened or adequately addressed. In fact, rural communities are the most likely to suffer the consequences of climate change, despite contributing least to global emissions. Families all over the world are feeli

Rural areas are home to around 80% of the world's populations living in poverty. This poverty, and the lack of access that comes with rural living, means that rural populations are more vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change. Whilst living in a non-urban area increases the challenges and susceptibility to climate-related risk, the impacts aren't limited to developing countries.

Highlighting some examples, the United States Census Bureau shows that 97% of land area is considered rural, and provides a home for 19.3% of the population. These rural communities rely on natural resources and climate patterns, which are inherently more vulnerable to climate change. Not only do rural communities rely on these at-risk resources, but urban and suburban areas rely on the productivity and health of these rural areas for food, energy, and water. This chain limits national resilience and puts all those in poverty at risk for catastrophic life change. To put this in context, a 2017 report from the United States Federal Reserve showed that 44% of adults could not cover an unexpected \$400 emergency expense or would rely on borrowing or selling something to do so. Combined, these precarious conditions illustrate just how global a problem this is.

Whilst initiatives to limit single-use plastic, reduce food waste, limit air travel, and take actions like switching from cars to bikes all help, the responsibility for large-scale, genuine action on climate change rests with national governments and big businesses. Corporate entities, fuel suppliers, and those that sell us food, are responsible for significant amounts of pollution, and are far more likely to take mitigating actions if pressured by their customers. Governments set national policies, and can incentivise corporate action through tax processes and legislation. As citizens, we each have a role in holding our governments to account, and can hold our service and goods providers to a higher standard of environmental responsibility.

Supporting local farmers and small businesses with lower carbon-footprints will do more to increase our resilience to climate change. We welcome the forthcoming Decade of Family Farming, and will be working to support ACWW's agricultural members with lobbying resources throughout this period. The Paris Agreement on climate change makes clear that vast amounts of mitigation and adaptation by existing communities is necessary, but cannot be the only solution. Whilst we all realise that change is slow, we must also realise that change is critically necessary. We must do all we can and, crucially, force those industries who rely on our custom, to do more, and do it quickly.

Magdie de Kock
ACWW World President

NOTES

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>

<https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/shed.htm>

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>

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