International River Basin Agreement to Mitigate Climate Risk by Achieving Food and Water Security
General Statement:
More than 35 percent of the world’s traditional cropland is located within major river basins comprising 525 million hectares across five continents; producing the vast majority of the world’s food supply. In conjunction, less than 1 percent of the world’s stock of freshwater resources is accessible by people; of that less than 1 percent, rivers sustain the most withdraws, and yet, rivers account for 0.006 percent of the world’s freshwater. These two ecosystem services provided by rivers make them essential to life on Earth.

Intact rivers, streams, and lake ecosystems deliver drinking water, resilience to floods and drought, and absorb human and natural pollutants.

Rivers, lakes and aquifers are a direct indicator of the sustainability of urban planning, industrial development, and food production. Unsustainable practices in these fields (such as the excessive use of phytosanitary substances and nutrient inputs) results in pollution that is often drained into surface water and groundwater.

Therefore, it is imperative that national and local governments as well as organizations and private entities develop capacity and approaches to implementing integrated management of both agricultural production and protection of aquatic ecosystems. Such initiatives should be undertaken beyond the river channel and its floodplain, at the scale of the basin in order to include drainage areas of the rivers. Parties to this agreement concur to pursue the following:

Protect surface and ground waters to ensure food security and access to drinking water:
• Develop a water quantity, quality, and pollutant alert program to sustain adequate environmental flows and reduce the loading of contaminants and nutrients into rivers, streams, and lakes from industry, municipalities, and agriculture.

• A water quality and quantity program may be comprised of:
  - a robust water monitoring strategy that tracks flows and the pollutant and nutrient loading from both point and non-point sources across the basin;
  - the expansion of water treatment facilities to increase capacity and reduce the use of systems that combine runoff and municipal effluent to maximize the quality of municipal and industrial discharges;

• We will report on our actions and share the progress made pursuant to section 4 of the INBO Paris Pact.

Signatories


Organizing partners of this International River Basin Agreement (IRBA) include: the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI), the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Society for River Science (ISRS), and ecoAmerica.