UN Climate Change News, 16 March 2018- According to a new report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), between 2005 and 2015 natural disasters cost the agricultural sectors of developing country economies USD 96 billion in damaged or lost crop and livestock production. Almost all of these disasters have been directly caused or exacerbated by climate change.

Half of that damage – USD 48 billion worth – occurred in Asia, says the report, “The impacts of disaster and crisis on agriculture and food security 2017”, which was presented at a conference in Hanoi convened by Viet Nam’s government in collaboration with FAO.

FAO Director-General, José Graziano da Silva said the impacts of climate change had become the “new normal” and because of this, protecting agriculture from extreme weather and climate change must become a priority.

“Disaster risk reduction and management must therefore become an integral part of modern agriculture. Building a more holistic and ambitious disaster-resilience framework for agriculture
is crucial to ensuring sustainable development – which is a cornerstone for peace and the basis for adaptation to climate change,” he said.

Over the past 4 decades, disaster losses in Asia and the Pacific increased 16 times in terms of financial damage. Agriculture in Asia is particularly vulnerable as it is heavily dependent on climate and natural resources, therefore climate change only intensifies these risks. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) calls for substantial reduction of disaster risk. Adapting to climate change is critical to reduce disaster losses, prevent and reduce risk.

Also for Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, drought is the costliest type of disaster -- causing crop and livestock losses of $10.7 and $13 billion in those regions, respectively, between 2005 and 2015.

Crop pests and animal diseases were also among the most expense-inducing disasters for African farmers, notching up $6+ billion in losses in that same period.

And across the globe, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, in particular tsunamis, earthquakes, storms and floods. Economic losses in SIDS stemming from disasters jumped from $8.8 billion for the period 2000–2007 to over $14 billion between 2008 and 2015, the report shows.

“We must take actions to revert this trend. With 2.5 billion people on the planet relying on agriculture for livelihoods, this level of damage and loss jeopardizes our efforts to end hunger and poverty,” said Kundhavi Kadiresan, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative.
FAO works with countries to enhance access of vulnerable smallholder farmers to climate information and disaster risk warning, using this information to adjust their production, diversify livelihoods and take early actions to be better prepared when emergencies happen.