

Speech draft
for the Minister responsible for agrarian sector and environment
for the conference „Adapt wisely!” February 2018. Karcag



Dear audience, dear friends!

Our climate is changing, as it has always been changing during the history of our planet. The problem is that now it is changing at such pace what is obviously not only the outcome of natural processes but also the impacts of human activities. Human activities that may have serious effects.

We, humans share 1,8 hectares of terrestrial land, but in Hungary the average ecological footprint is 3,7 hectares. It means that we use double area than available. Hungary is not special in that, but it is hardly tranquillizing.

Climate change is not only environmental issue. Some years ago, when the first serious heat waves broke into the Carpathian Basin, we faced problems that nobody had expected. We expected that elderly, sick people might have difficulties. But nobody thought that when people arrived home after work, and had a refreshing shower, their gas water-heater did not air as usually – ambulance had dozens of faints on that day. And nobody expected that ambulance had to take into hospitals children who touched the hot monkey bars at the playgrounds.

And these are only few examples. If climate changes, everything changes.

Climate change affects all sectors, including the governmental sectors. Thus it is important that the **National Climate Change Strategy** that embraces all sectors should be adapted as soon as possible.

Mr János Áder, president of Hungary has signed the **Paris Climate Agreement** in the autumn of 2015. The main goal of that Agreement is to keep global warming below 2 C°. But this is a global average. The effects of climate change dos not appear equally all around the planet: at some areas the impacts are stronger, while at other places are weaker or not even sensible. Due to measured data and forecasts **in the Carpathian Basin the warming is higher than the global average.** This affects health sector first, but **agrarian sector** is the second. Agriculture is impacted directly and indirectly: higher temperature and dryer summers affect directly, but new weeds and diseases, not have been known before, appear in high numbers.

Experts say that since 1990 Hungary has one million hectare less **arable land**, and the fertility of the soil is also deteriorating. The arable land, similar to water bases, is national asset, what deserves special protection.

Climate is a global issue but **all of us are responsible** and can do something.

For example it also matters how we heat our homes. Our campaign titled “Heat wisely!” highlights that by improper firing or burning waste may seriously endanger our health.

It also counts what do we eat. If we buy food what arrives from distant countries, we also pay the shipping, the transportation. When we purchase Spanish fruit, we also pay the truck chugging through Europe and thus accelerate climate warming. By preferring fruit and vegetable produced in the vicinity the environmental load of transportation is minimalized. In the same time it offers job and livelihood for our fellow countrymen. Organizing farmers’ markets is one measure for enhancing the way of domestic vegetables and fruits. While in 2012 we had 117 farmers’ market, in August of 2016 one could buy fresh products at 273 markets around the country.

Climate change, especially the hot and dry summer, affects negatively our forests too. Indigenous tree species like oak and beech are especially endangered. It is important to give priority for adulterants stem from the southern Serbia, which easily tolerates dryer and warmer climate. In the same time we have to get prepared for tackling of possible wildfires.

Due to weather anomalies of the last years, number and intensity of Hungarian wildfires have risen; drastic growing is monitored in the number of fires over 50 hectares, and fires over 1000 hectares also appeared as well (Kunfehértó, Bugac). The communication project titled “Wildfire prevention awareness in Hungary” aiming this issue obtained the support demanded.

Our settlements must be prepared for climate change. New buildings must not hinder ventilation through the settlements, and it also counts if we cover our black streets by grey or white pavement instead. We should have water-wells and trees giving shade. All settlements should elaborate local climate strategy. Good examples and adaptable methods can be found at the homepage of Alliance of Climatefriendly Settlements (Klímabarát Települések Szövetsége).

It is important to foster environmental awareness and ownership. For that purpose our Ministry published a call for almost 200 million forints for NGOs, local governments and churches in the issue of information dissemination on waste management. Our regular call titled “Green resource” (Zöld Forrás) also supports environment-, and nature conserving organizations.

One of the best modes for spurring environmental awareness is to establish schoolgardens. Here children, and their parents, can directly experience the interdependence of environmental systems. In these kinds of kitchen gardens in the yard of the schools notable part of the curricula becomes tangible, and as a result, plants and animals around us will be loved and respected.

