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NEWS RELEASE

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New Soil Carbon Methodology Approved

World Bank and partners help smallholder farmers increase productivity and revenue

Washington, January 30, 2012 –A new methodology to encourage smallholder farmers in Kenya – and potentially worldwide -- to adopt improved farming techniques, boost productivity, increase their resilience to climate change, and earn carbon credits, has been given international approval.

The Verified Carbon Standard approved this first methodology on soil carbon, a new approach for sustainable agricultural land management (SALM) practices. The methodology was developed by the World Bank for the Smallholder Agriculture Carbon Finance Project run by the non-governmental organization Vi Agroforestry in western Kenya. The pilot, involving more than 60,000 smallholders who are farming 45,000 hectares of land, is run together with smallholder farmers and supported by the World Bank's BioCarbon Fund.

Farmers in western Kenya experience the dire effects of climate change first hand every day, through drought and the decline of soil fertility that can be so severe as to seriously threaten their livelihoods.

"*Our aim is to combat erosion and enrich degraded soil,*" said **Bo Lager, Programme Director, Vi Agroforestry.** "*The project farmers are increasing soil carbon and organic matter through mulching, cover crops, manure and plant waste management.*"

These measures improve soil water infiltration and holding capacity, as well as nutrient supply and soil biodiversity. Better soils raise farm yields and incomes, improving food security, and should make agriculture more resilient to climate change. Further SALM techniques such as less plowing also reduce the release of carbon dioxide. "*Smallholders can earn carbon credits for that,*" added Lager. "*Carbon finance helps make the project financially sustainable.*"

"Given the limited leverage of carbon finance for the agricultural sector to date, this is an important step in promoting linkages between agricultural productivity, adaptation and climate change mitigation," said ***Joëlle Chassard, Manager of the World Bank's Carbon Finance Unit.***

"*The SALM methodology is a major step forward*", said **Professor Pete Smith**, **a Convening Lead Author for the IPCC**, based at Aberdeen University, UK. "*Most importantly, it extends carbon finance to smallholders. It also enables cost-effective monitoring of soil productivity improvements, which can be particularly difficult across remote farms in developing countries*."

"*Carbon solutions need to be easily scalable, which requires broadly applicable methodologies and robust finance mechanisms*", pointed out **Mike Robinson, Chief Science Advisor** at the **Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture,** a contributor to the World Bank's BioCarbon Fund. "*We see considerable potential for SALM replication across Africa and beyond*."

"The validation of this new methodology by the VCS is an important achievement and a first step to demonstrate the potential of carbon finance for rural development. Soil carbon is of fundamental importance not only to soil fertility, sustainable agriculture and the development of rural populations, particularly in Africa, but it is also strategic for climate chage mitigation," said **Jean-Luc François, Manager of the agriculture, rural development and biodiversity division at the Agence française de développement.**

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Further information:

The World Bank's BioCarbon Fund responded to the need to support poor farming communities in Africa by developing the first approved methodology for agricultural soil practices generating carbon credits. The World Bank has developed 38 approved methodologies to date, all of which are freely available to project designers. SALM is simple, yet robust and cost-effective. It enables developers to design projects that enhance agricultural productivity and create incentives for carbon storage in soils worldwide.

For the Sustainable Agricultural Land Management (SALM) methodology, please see: http://www.v-c-s.org/methodologies/VM0017

The World Bank's Carbon Finance Unit: www.carbonfinance.org

Verified Carbon Standard: www.v-c-s.org

Vi Agroforestry: http://www.viskogen.se/English/Organisation.aspx