International Research Network for Low Carbon Societies: LCS-RNet

LCS-RNet in Brief:

What is LCS-RNet?

The International Research network for Low Carbon Society (LCS-RNet) is an open community of researchers and research organisations contributing directly to policymaking and implementing processes, as well as like-minded relevant stakeholders, such as national and local policymakers, international organisations, business and financial entities, and civil society. Together, the community facilitates the formulation and implementation of science-based policies for low carbon development around the world.

Who has been participating?

Currently, 16 research institutes in Japan, Germany, France, Italy and the U.K., in cooperation with researchers from Brazil, China, India, and Korea, play a core steering role in the network, promoting cooperation and activities with research communities in developed and developing countries.

How did it come about?

The LCS-RNet began with a proposal from Japan at the Kobe G8 Environmental Ministers' Meeting (EMM) in 2008. The 2016 G7 EMM in Toyama then reaffirmed the growing importance of the role of the science community and research network to support the Paris Agreement.

Features & added value of LCS-RNet

As a platform linking science with policy towards decarbonised societies, LCS-RNet offers additional value that distinguishes LCS-RNet from other networks.

- Comprehensive research ability to promote the transition to decarbonised societies: LCS-RNet is a network of research institutes promoting solution-oriented, multilateral, and cross-cutting research.
- Close cooperation with policymaking and implementation: LCS-RNet member researchers and research institutes have worked in close collaboration with government agencies in charge of national climate policies, and have the connections to translate inputs into policies.
- Collaboration with international activities: LCS-RNet member institutes have worked with international organisations such as the IPCC, UNFCCC and UNEP, and have conducted substantial international joint research, including the DDPP. The LCS-RNet has strong ties with international society.
- Knowledge accumulation for the transition to decarbonised societies: While operating as a community of like-minded researchers, LCS-RNet also shares important research directions by promoting close cooperation, collaboration and knowledge exchange, leads researchers and experts, takes initiatives for joint research, and accumulates knowledge for joint policy recommendations.

LCS-RNet Footprints:

First phase of the network since 2009

LCS-RNet has been promoting knowledge exchange of climate policies amongst developed countries through annual meetings, conducting research on common agendas, deploying outputs, making policy proposals, and reflecting those into policies in each country. Discussions at annual meetings are compiled into synthesis reports, and special issues of LCS-RNet reports are disseminated in each country and at related international parties (including UNFCCC/COP, academia, and policy communities), as well as reflected in policies via researchers in each country.

Second phase from 2014 towards Paris

To generate concrete policy proposals after COP21 and to be in alignment with such drastic changes in global climate policies, annual meetings focused on critical agendas such as energy systems, cities and land use, international cooperation with developing countries, and, importantly, climate finance, which has bridged the previous three topics. Then, at the 7th annual meeting in Paris, we coalesced our discussions from past annual meetings in the LCS-RNet position statement entitled, "COP21: A moment of truth for climate and sustainable development," which was published prior to COP21. While members of the LCS-RNet have provided their expertise for international climate negotiations since the network's establishment in 2008, this statement represented an especially significant contribution.

What was the core to the network's position statement at COP21?

The core assertions of our network's position statement, "COP21: A moment of truth for climate and sustainable development", are as follows: the policy shift toward the 2 degree target of the Cancun Agreements represents a major global and historical turning point; "carbon pricing" to promote investment in the future must be a common policy and is required to lead the world in this direction, considering the fact that the key to transition lies both in energy conservation and conversion to non-fossil fuel energy systems, as well as the low-carbon development of cities and developing countries (where over 70% of the population will be concentrated); and, regarding financing cooperation between developing countries, we must break free from the "common but differentiated responsibilities" debate where responsibilities are shifted back and forth, and move on to a sharing of responsibilities at the actual policy implementation stage. Moreover, the statement proposes the huge investment of funds required for the transition to low-carbon societies be used as leverage to boost the stagnating global economy.

What was the impact of the position statement?

Based on forward-looking integrated research on shifting to low-carbon societies carried out via the cooperation of researchers and research institutes deeply involved in the policies of their respective countries, this position statement garnered support in the form of signatures of 213 experts and scientists (amongst them, 71 authors, chairs and co-chairs of the IPCC reports/working groups, top level senior development economists including a Nobel Laureate and five former ministers) from 47 countries who demanded proactive climate policies underpinned by strong instruments. The objective was to demonstrate the possibility of scientists from different disciplines, cultures, and countries at different development stages coming to a common consensus on the conditions for triggering climate action in the current economic context. The statement was submitted to the Government of France and received and discussed by wide audiences at COP21 side events held at both the EU and France pavilions. The statement highlighted key points including the need for "conversion of economies based on 'carbon-pricing' with added social, economic and environmental value", "effective utilisation of 'climate finance' in developing countries based on proactive administration of the 'common but differentiated responsibilities' principle", and "strengthened capacity development in developing countries and the orientation of international finance to advance technology transfer". In addition, it advocated for the use of the enormous investments in urban systems and energy systems required for major social change as a trigger to bring about a "new industrial revolution", as well as the necessity of linking measures with new economic growth based on actual economies.

After Paris: inciting "Action" for transformation to a decarbonised future

With the remarkable success of COP21, the world took a great leap forward toward "action" for realising decarbonised societies. This has been reflected by the discussions in LCS-RNet annual meetings, such as "how to achieve long-term transitions towards full decarbonisation" (8th annual meeting in Wuppertal, 2016); "clean growth and innovation" (9th annual meeting in Warwick, 2017); and "time for action towards an ambitious decarbonised world" (10th annual meeting in Yokohama, 2018). Key issues in the discussions were: a) to tackle any future anticipated non-linearities and disruptive interferences with decarbonisation policies, b) to match strategies for economic and wealth development with the global investment programme of energy transition, climate mitigation, and adaptation, c) to align these strategies with the overall sustainable development goals with foci on cities as well as basic industries as major arenas, and d) the increasingly important role science has to play in providing well-founded solutions and sound strategies for action.

New role of research community to accelerate low carbon transition

As there is a sense of urgency to complete this transition within half a century, researchers are expected to step into the very frontline of transition and find solutions by promptly reflecting research results into policy processes and implementation actions taken by stakeholders. Therefore, cooperation between researchers/scientists and other stakeholders should be further promoted in a collaborative, unified, systematic, and stepwise manner, which includes sharing science-based knowledge, good will, and motivation; planning roadmaps; exploring effective policies; and making the transition happen. Here, "action research" is the key term.

In this regard, LCS-RNet made a decision to expand its community, and now aims to boost its impacts in policymaking as well as its support for the related stakeholders to take action, by introducing a "common agenda approach" as a platform. The platform provides a space where like-minded researchers, policymakers and other concerned parties around the world can gather, discuss issues, and link science with actions and implementations. Various agendas have already been proposed and instigated as common activities.

Based on our network established on the occasion of the Kobe G8 Environmental Ministers' Meeting (EMM) in 2008, LCS-RNet will strengthen and renew our network as a "research network for net-zero societies in 2050," inviting researchers not only from the G7 nations, but also from G20 and developing countries at COP26 in London in 2020.

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