

Supporting a Global Agreement for Sustainable Food and Farming

The United Nations has warned that humanity is not on track to achieve key environmental goals, including on climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, excess nutrient run-off and land degradationⁱ. It is calling for urgent action at an unprecedented scale to arrest and reverse the situation.

Food and farming are cross-cutting issues that connect many of the world's most serious environmental sustainability and health challenges. Nearly two thirds of threatened species are imperilled by the expansion and intensification of agricultureⁱⁱ and failure to tackle food demand could make 1.5C limit unachievableⁱⁱⁱ.

In this age of climate and biodiversity emergency, a whole food system approach is needed to tackle the multi-dimensional challenges of producing sufficient nutritious food and making it available and affordable for everyone, everywhere, whilst keeping within the safe operating space of all nine planetary boundaries^{iv} and protecting and restoring soils, water, forests, biodiversity and fisheries.

Consequently, we support the call for a new global deal for food, farming and fisheries to strengthen the international community's ability to meet existing Agreements and commitments in number of key areas and to encourage cohesive and integrated policy development by governments and business.

Whilst the content of any new deal must be developed collaboratively involving all stakeholders, it must align with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 signed by all 193 Member States of the United Nations and the Paris Climate Agreement that calls on all nations to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

We, the undersigned, are keen to participate in the development of such an agreement and in exploring how it might:

- Promote public health through integrated policies aimed at incentivising consumption of healthy diets from sustainably-produced food
- Advance fair livelihoods and the wellbeing of all producers and workers in the food supply chain, including indigenous communities.
- Regenerate and protect ecosystems and biodiversity through measures including the promotion of sustainable farming and land-use practices that meet global climate targets.

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- Ensure a regulatory and financial environment that facilitates food system change.
- Support all stakeholders involved in food production to transition towards systems designed to produce healthy diets, accessible and affordable food for all, produced from sustainable, regenerative and humane farming practices.
- Provide for animal agriculture to operate in ways that are respectful of animals as sentient beings and promote high standards of welfare.

Signature

For and on behalf of Organisation/Institution/Company/Individual

Date.....

Why transforming the food system is essential

Scientific research indicates that fundamental changes in the way we produce and consume food are essential if we are to meet the targets of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieve the objectives of a wide range of international Conventions and Agreements including the Paris Climate Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Currently, the food system is increasing pressure on the environment and the global climate. Agriculture is the largest consumer of water and food production, when not sustainably managed, is a major driver of biodiversity loss and polluter of air, fresh water and oceans, as well as a leading source of soil degradation and greenhouse gas emissions.^v

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) advises that despite environmental policy efforts across all countries and regions, populations of species are declining, and species extinction rates are increasing.^{vi} At present, 42 per cent of terrestrial invertebrates, 34 per cent of freshwater invertebrates and 25 per cent of marine invertebrates are considered at risk of extinction. Between 1970 and 2014, global vertebrate species population abundances declined by on average 60 per cent. In response the World Wildlife Fund is campaigning for a New Deal for Nature and People to be agreed during 2020 to protect species and their habitats^{vii}.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that the livestock industry is currently responsible for 14.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions,^{viii} but by 2030, this is projected to rise to half of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.^{ix}

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The UN advises that meeting the Zero Hunger target of Sustainable Development Goal 2 will require profound changes to the global food and agriculture system.^x Currently, more than 820 million people do not have enough to eat whilst the world wastes more than 1 billion tonnes of food every year. At the same time 2 billion men, women and children are overweight or obese^{xi} and poor diets are responsible for more deaths than any other risk factor.^{xii}

The World Health Organisation and other health agencies are advising populations to reduce meat consumption as part of an overall healthy diet. There is good evidence that a higher average consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is more beneficial to human and planetary health than diets heavy on meat and fish^{xiii}. Yet, a recent study has demonstrated that globally we do not grow enough fruit, vegetables and beans to reach recommended consumption levels^{xiv}.

The above reasons and many others have led to increasing concern about food systems, many of which have been explored during the Food Systems Dialogues process^{xv}. In 2019 concerns culminated in the Secretary General of the UN announcing that transformation of food systems will be discussed at a global Food System Summit in 2021 as part of the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals^{xvi}.

ⁱ United Nations Environment Programme, 6th Global Environmental Outlook, 2019

ⁱⁱ Sean L Maxwell et al. 2016, The ravages of guns, nets and bulldozers, *Nature* 536:143-145

ⁱⁱⁱ Tim Benton and Bojana Bajželj, 2016, failure to tackle food demand could make 1.5C limit unachievable, Guest post 23 March 2006, Carbon Brief, <https://www.carbonbrief.org/guest-post-failure-to-tackle-food-demand-could-make-1-5-point-5-c-limit-unachievable>

^{iv} Rockström, J., Steffen, W., Noone, K. *et al.* A safe operating space for humanity. *Nature* **461**, 472–475 (2009) doi:10.1038/461472a

^v UNEP Global Environmental Outlook 2019 op.cit.

^{vi} *ibid* [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(19\)30095-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(19)30095-6/fulltext)

^{vii} World Wildlife Fund: <https://explore.panda.org/newdeal>

^{viii} [Tackling Climate Change through Livestock: A Global Assessment of Emissions and Mitigation Opportunities](#), Rome: UN FAO. 2013

^{ix} [Global Food Systems are Failing Humanity and Speeding up Climate Change](#) The Interacademy Partnership (IAP), 28 Nov 2018.

^x <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

^{xi} Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. "More than 2 billion people overweight or obese, new study finds: Massive global research project reveals 30 percent of the world's population affected by weight problems." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 12 June 2017.

^{xii} GBD 2017 Diet Collaborators, Health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries, 1990–2017: a systemic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017, *The Lancet* 393(10184), April 2019. [https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736\(19\)30041-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(19)30041-8/fulltext)

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^{xiii} Willett et al. (2019) Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems. *The Lancet* 393 (10170), 447-492.

^{xiv} Mason-D'Croz, Daniel & Bogard, Jessica & Sulser, Timothy & Cenacchi, Nicola & Dunston, Shahnila & Herrero, Mario & Wiebe, Keith. (2019). Gaps between fruit and vegetable production, demand, and recommended consumption at global and national levels: an integrated modelling study. *The Lancet*, Volume 3, ISSUE 7, Pe318-e329, July 01, 2019 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(19\)30095-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(19)30095-6/fulltext)

^{xv} Food Systems Dialogues; <https://foodsystemsdialogues.org/>

^{xvi} <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2019-10-16/secretary-generals-message-world-food-day-scroll-down-for-french-version>

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