



## TRANSFORMATIVE CLIMATE-RESILIENT PATHWAYS FOR SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS, DIETS AND LANDSCAPES

Side Event at COP25 on Monday Dec. 2nd, 16:45-18:15, Room 5, co-organized by Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Brighter Green, Global Forest Coalition and ProVeg International

Current food systems account for up to 30% of total GHG emissions.<sup>1</sup> Diets with high intakes of meat and animal fats pose a major risk to health, leading to increased mortality from diet related non-communicable diseases such as diabetes type II, coronary heart disease, and some cancers. The alarming pace of climate and environmental changes and consequent impacts on food systems and health, coupled with the rising epidemic of non-communicable diseases, requires a major transformation on how food is produced and consumed.

Current dietary patterns in most high-income countries with increasing consumption of meat are not sustainable and will be environmentally detrimental if continued and expanded globally.<sup>2</sup> Changing dietary preferences towards less meat, more plant-based protein, and avoiding food waste is essential for a 1.5 °C world. Transforming food systems by limiting the demand for GHG-intensive animal foods, and limiting food waste at the consumption level can have significant co-benefits to health and needs to be a critical component in climate policies.<sup>3</sup>

Globally, it is estimated that transitioning to more plant-based diets, in line with the WHO recommendations on healthy eating, could reduce global mortality by 6–10% and food-related greenhouse gas emissions by 29–70%.<sup>4</sup> A transformation to healthy diets by 2050 will require substantial dietary shifts (which differ regionally), including a greater than 50% reduction in global consumption of foods, such as red meat and sugar, and a greater than 100% increase in consumption of healthy foods, such as nuts, fruits, vegetables, and legumes.<sup>5</sup> This could prevent up to 11.1 million deaths per year in 2030, a 19.9% reduction of all premature mortality due to prevention of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer, among other diseases.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (IPCC ROCC, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> (Nelson et al. 2016; Springmann et al. 2018a)

<sup>3</sup> (Hedenus et al. 2014; Ripple et al. 2014; Tirado et al 2017; Springmann et al. 2018; IPCC RS1.5, 2018)

<sup>4</sup> (Springmann et al. 2016b)

<sup>5</sup> (Willett et al. 2019)

<sup>6</sup> (Willett et al. 2019)

# KEY MESSAGES

---

**A transition to more plant-based diets is critical to meet climate goals, achieve the 2030 Agenda and reduce diet-related non-communicable diseases.** This requires the promotion of demand-side climate mitigation for agriculture, such as changes in dietary patterns towards less GHG-intensive, healthier, more plant-based diets containing more fruit, vegetables, whole grains and pulses.

**Transformative approaches to sustainable and healthy diets are crucial for a sustainable future.** This may involve providing economic incentives for the production and consumption of more fruits, vegetables and pulses, inclusion of sustainability criteria in dietary guidelines, taxing excessive meat consumption, conducting public education campaigns and educational programs in schools, labelling, promoting collaboration and shared agreements among others.

**Adopting food-based dietary guidelines that include sustainability criteria is crucial to change dietary patterns towards more sustainable and healthier diets.** Transitioning towards more plant-based diets, in line with the WHO and other international dietary guidelines, could decrease global mortality, shrink the global food gap and substantially reduce diet-related GHG emissions.

**Nutrition-sensitive climate actions are critical to supporting sustainable and healthy food systems and diets.** Nutrition-sensitive approaches to climate adaptation/mitigation, nutrition-smart investments, social protection, education, and community-based disaster risk reduction can contribute to promote nutrition under a changing climate, particularly in low-income countries.

**Integrate sustainable and healthy food systems in climate adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development.** Sustainable and healthy food systems and diets, sustainable food procurement and nutrition-sensitive climate adaptation/mitigation/risk reduction need to be addressed by the IPCC and SBSTA, and should be considered in national climate-action processes under the UNFCCC, such as NAPs, NDCs, and NAMAs.

**Policy coherence of public policies from production to consumption across relevant sectors.** Policy coherence needs to be ensured through better food system governance and institutional and cross-sectoral collaboration. The SDGs, the UN Decades of Nutrition and the Biodiversity Targets offer a time-bound window for joint action on human health and the environment health through translation and implementation into national policies and integration in climate actions. Agreement on shared principles of sustainability in promoting healthy diets is needed.

**Investment in research is essential to obtain the data and evidence needed to develop sustainable and healthy diets in different socioeconomic and cultural environments** and to measure their contribution to health and climate goals. This is crucial to providing food related data for Greenhouse Gas Inventories and evidence of the co-benefits to climate and health of sustainable and healthy diets to scientific bodies, such as the IPCC and the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). The UNFCCC could facilitate the establishment of SBI/SBSTA Technical expert meeting on Mitigation to guide the mechanisms to address demand side solutions related to sustainable dietary patterns and food procurement in the NDCs and/or through other mechanisms.

**Acknowledgements:** This policy brief has been written by Cristina Tirado-von der Pahlen, as background information for the side event on Transformative Climate-Resilient Pathways for Sustainable and Healthy Food Systems, Diets and Landscapes at COP25. The contributions of Jimmy Yang (Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation) and Raphael Podselver (ProVeg International) are gratefully acknowledged.

