A top-down view of a dark-colored bowl filled with fresh, vibrant green vegetables. The bowl contains several heads of broccoli, a large green bell pepper, a bunch of spinach leaves, several stalks of asparagus, and a half of an avocado with its pit. The background is a light, neutral-toned surface.

THE MISSING INGREDIENT: A FOOD SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR A 1.5°C WORLD

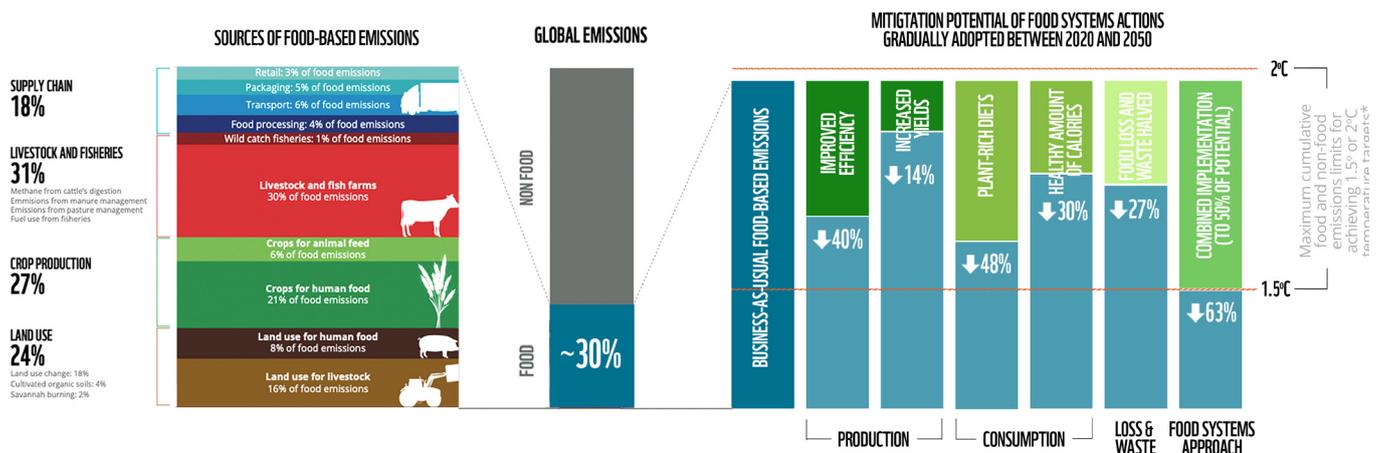
A WWF FOOD MANIFESTO FOR COP26
OCTOBER 2021

Rapid decarbonization of all sectors is needed to achieve the 1.5°C target set in the Paris Agreement, yet certain parts of the food system are still not included in climate negotiations and policy. This failure to take a “food systems approach” to account for all greenhouse gas emissions from the production, consumption and disposal of food, will preclude our chances of achieving the Paris Agreement.

Food systems produce around 29% of all GHG emissions. We can't phase out food in the same way we can fossil fuels, but we can transform food systems so that they have net-zero emissions. With systemic transformation, the food system can become a major part of the solution to the climate crisis.

Currently, however, not enough is being done to realize this potential. No country has yet committed to a food systems approach in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Most have committed to climate action on agriculture and land-use, including supporting innovative methods such as nature-positive or regenerative farming. Yet even radically different modes of farming will drive a rising demand for land, and other resources, if they are not accompanied by more sustainable food consumption patterns and significant reductions in food loss and waste.

Dietary change and reductions in food loss and waste are global enablers necessary to allow widespread adoption of nature-positive farming practices, without increasing the pressure to convert more land and use more of nature's resources to produce more food. Integrated action across food systems is required to achieve the climate mitigation potential of action on agriculture and land use.



Adapted from *Bending the Curve: The Restorative Power of Planet-Based Diets* (WWF) and *Global food system emissions could preclude achieving the 1.5° and 2°C climate change targets* (Clark et. al.)

For illustrative purposes only

* Assumes linear reduction to decarbonisation in 2050 in all other sectors

Taking a food systems approach, that accounts for all food-based emissions, from farm to fork, unlocks two additional critical pathways for climate mitigation: rapid reductions in consumption-based emissions, predominantly of short-lived pollutants such as methane, and increases in carbon sequestration, both of which are prerequisites for achieving the Paris Agreement. The critical importance of both pathways was outlined in the latest IPCC report, with methane being called the wild card in our fight against climate change. Taking a food systems approach is no longer optional, it is a prerequisite for a 1.5°C world.

WWF is calling on public and private sector stakeholders to adopt a food systems approach in all climate action. The principles of inclusiveness, respect for human rights, and improvement of the livelihoods of the world's poorest populations lie at the heart of each commitment and should be used in all decision-making. Governments, businesses and civil society must work together to deliver these commitments. Action plans must be drawn up. Funding must be secured. Ambition and urgency must be displayed. And most importantly, people must be at the heart of all decisions. Adopting a food systems approach is needed to unleash the climate mitigation potential of food, and to achieve a 1.5°C world.

ESSENTIAL FOOD-BASED CLIMATE COMMITMENTS THAT MUST BE ADVANCED AT COP26

1

INCLUDE A FOOD SYSTEMS APPROACH IN NDCs

Although a food systems approach is required to realise the climate mitigation potential of food, and to achieve a 1.5°C world, systemic thinking is missing from current plans. Several mitigation commitments, including on agriculture, land use and natural ecosystems, are clearly connected to food systems but are treated in a siloed and disconnected manner. At the same time there is insufficient attention on other underlying issues like food loss and waste, and unhealthy, unsustainable diets. Unless all relevant mitigation strategies are included, and food actions coordinated through integrated target setting, NDCs will not be ambitious enough to achieve the Paris Agreement.

2

INCLUDE A FOOD SYSTEMS APPROACH IN THE KORONIVIA PROCESS

Negotiations on the future of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) present an important opportunity to expand its scope to include demand-side interventions, such as the promotion of more healthy and sustainable diets, and reductions in food loss and waste. The KJWA already addresses six interrelated topics; on soil, livestock, and nutrient and water management; as well as the food security and socio-economic impacts of climate change across agriculture, and methods for assessing climate change. By adopting a food systems approach, KJWA could help translate food systems thinking into on the ground action, provide technical capacity building, and promote enhanced collaboration and alignment of existing climate processes that address components of food systems.

3

HALT CONVERSION OF NATURAL HABITATS FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

Halting conversion of nature for food production will require optimizing food production on all existing farmlands. Doing so will require investment in soil health, which has the triple benefit of supporting yields (easing pressures to convert more nature to meet food demand), restoring biodiversity, and sequestering carbon. In fact, carbon sequestration in soils is an important nature-based solution and better management can significantly increase the amount of carbon stored on agricultural lands. In addition, combining rehabilitation of farmlands, half of which are degraded, with other actions has the potential to even release some agricultural lands for implementation of additional nature-based solutions, such as reforestation.

4

COMMIT TO TURNING FOOD SYSTEMS FROM A NET GHG EMITTER TO A NET GHG EMISSIONS SINK

Agricultural lands offer tremendous potential for storing carbon. Recent studies have shown that agricultural lands could store up to half of the carbon necessary for achieving the Paris Agreement. Achieving this will require that we adopt nature-positive production, reduce food loss and waste, and transition to healthy and sustainable diets. These actions will enable wide scale implementation of nature-based solutions. However, implementation of any nature-based solution, including reforestation, must not come at the expense of natural habitats such as grasslands and savannahs. Natural grasslands and savannahs can sequester large amounts of carbon, are important reservoirs of biodiversity, and support the livelihoods of millions of people globally - services which would be impacted if they were to be afforested. We must not solve one problem and create another.

5

REPURPOSING FOOD AND AGRICULTURE SUBSIDIES TO REWARD ACTIONS THAT ARE GOOD FOR CLIMATE, NATURE AND PEOPLE

Current public financial support to food and agriculture has helped to rapidly increase production but has failed to address growing environmental and climate challenges, such as soil degradation and water pollution, biodiversity loss, food insecurity and pandemic risks. Nor have they effectively addressed world hunger. Only a fraction of subsidies support production practices that are good for climate and nature. Actions to repurpose harmful subsidies and reward food producers for sustainable practices must be accelerated if we are to achieve the Paris Agreement. This will require holistic approaches to policy-making and aligning agriculture with national climate, nature and health goals. True Cost Accounting, which measures the full economic, environmental and social costs of food production, should be applied and used to guide public spending.



WE MUST REALISE THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT TO A HEALTHY AND NUTRITIOUS DIET FOR ALL, WITHIN PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

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