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The below International Plant-Based Foods Groups call on the international community and national governments to make plant-based diets a central part of global and national strategies for developing more sustainable, healthy, and equitable food systems, and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

There is an urgent need for global food system transformation that includes a shift to predominantly plant-based diets. National and international actors must decide on ambitious actions to realize the potential of a food system based on plants for direct human consumption to have a positive impact on:

Environmental Sustainability

The plant-based transformation of food systems is vital to environmental sustainability and to all global citizens. Analysis from the international policy institute Chatham House concluded this year that in order to sustain human populations "... global dietary patterns need to converge around diets based more on plants, owing to the disproportionate impact of animal farming on biodiversity, land use, and the environment. Such a shift would also benefit the dietary health of populations around the world and help reduce the risk of pandemics."¹

Currently, global food systems are responsible for over a third of all man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.² Increasing scientific evidence links overconsumption of dairy and meat products, especially in Western diets, to high use of natural resources: two-thirds of global agricultural land is used to raise livestock³ – a major emitter of GHGs – while one-third of freshwater is used to produce animal products.

In an effort to meet the agreed-upon Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050, we must reconsider our current dependence on animal agriculture. In order to reduce GHGs, a **global** shift to plant-based diets is essential.

Predominantly plant-based food systems are the only sustainable option to achieve the following SDG goals:

- SDG 12 "Responsible production and consumption"
- SDG 13 "Climate action"
- SDG 14 "Life under water"
- SDG 15 "Life on land"

¹ Benton, T. et al., *Food System Impacts on Biodiversity Loss*, Chatham House (2021), available at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/02/food-system-impacts-biodiversity-loss>

² Crippa, M. et al., Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions. *Nat Food* 2, 198–209 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00225-9>

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Livestock and Landscapes* (2012), available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ar591e/ar591e.pdf>

Human Health

Plant-based foods are central to healthy and nutritious diets and can play a role in preventing many non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and type-2 diabetes. Because of their lower environmental footprint, predominantly plant-based diets would help reduce the health impacts of climate change, air pollution, water contamination, and other environmental events, which are associated with a higher risk of developing illnesses, such as inflammatory diseases and allergies. Increased consumption of plant-based foods – and a consequent reduction of animal-based products – is also crucial to prevent future disease outbreaks of zoonotic nature, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. Predominantly plant-based food systems are thus crucial for the achievement of SDG 3, “Good health and well-being.”

Social Justice

With the global population expected to exceed 9.5 billion in 2050, social and economic inequalities across the globe are likely to deepen: resources will become scarcer and population growth will result in increasing pressure on global ecosystems. Opting for sustainable development that moves away from eating patterns largely ingrained in animal-based diets is essential to combat these outcomes. This sustainable development infrastructure would require action and cooperation from all countries worldwide. Given their environmental and health benefits, a food system based on plants for direct human consumption has the potential for a fairer distribution of resources both socially and economically. For example, plant-based diets are the most efficient way to feed the world: For every 100 calories of human-edible crops that we feed to animals, we only get 17-30 calories back in the form of meat or milk.⁴ Using arable land to grow sustainable crops for human consumption rather than animal feed will be a significant step towards addressing food security.

Moreover, the development of the plant-based food sector has the potential to open growth and employment opportunities across the global food production chain, supporting farmers in moving towards more sustainable agricultural practices.

Thus, predominantly plant-based food systems directly support the achievement of the SDG goals:

- SDG 1 “Eradicate Poverty”
- SDG 2 “Zero Hunger”
- SDG 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation”
- SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”

⁴ United Nations Environment Programme, *The environmental food crisis: The environment's role in averting future food crises - A UNEP rapid response assessment* (Arendal: UNEP, GRID-Arendal, 2009), available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/651334>

Recommendations

There is urgency in transforming our food systems and making them fit for current and future challenges. The UN Food Systems Summit provides the stage to turn ideas into concrete actions to build a more sustainable, healthy, and just world.

The signatory organisations recommend the international community and national governments take the following actions for an effective shift towards predominantly plant-based food systems globally:

- Integrating plant-based foods into public procurement (e.g. plant-based options available in schools, hospitals, etc.), as well as in national dietary guidelines;
- Educating citizens about plant-based foods via public campaigns;
- Ensuring that labeling requirements for plant-based foods products empower consumers to make more sustainable food choices;
- Using economic incentives to facilitate access to plant-based products;
- Developing food environments where plant-based foods are presented as the sustainable choice (e.g. in retail stores);
- Supporting farmers in moving towards more sustainable agricultural practices and crops (e.g. plant protein crops) by providing and/or redirecting financial incentives to reduce the quantity of arable land used for animal feed and animal production, instead utilizing the land for crops for direct human consumption; and
- Allocating funds for targeted research and innovation on plant-based foods, and to explore and support diversified climate-friendly crops and plant aquaculture both on land and under the sea.

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