

# Placing Plant-rich Diets at the Heart of the Fight against Climate Change

29 October 2021

The European Alliance for Plant-based Foods (EAPF) calls on the international community and national governments to make predominantly plant-based diets a central part of global and national strategies to address the current, urgent climate crisis.

The 26<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP26) on climate change taking place in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November is an historical opportunity for global leaders to take stock of the progress made towards achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and to define a bold, concrete action plan to tackle the current climate crisis.

**Climate change is among the most urgent challenges of our time**, responsible for many extreme events around the world, which are inevitably linked to human activities<sup>1</sup>. In order to limit additional catastrophic consequences and to stay within the 1.5-degrees Celsius target, we will need to substantially decrease our emissions in the coming decades and reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Food plays a big role in this context. We are all involved in food production and consumption activities, regardless of our origin, gender, age, economic or social status. It is not surprising then that **our current food systems are responsible for about one-third of all man-made GHG emissions**<sup>2</sup>. Food systems are not evolving at the speed required to address climate change: current consumption patterns are still heavily based on resource-intensive foods – such as animal-based products – whose production is a driving cause of GHG emissions, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

The recent UN Food Systems Summit 2021 further highlighted the tight link between our food production and consumption patterns and climate change, and the need for sustainable food systems to be aligned with and contribute to global climate commitments<sup>3</sup>. At EU level, the Farm to Fork Strategy<sup>4</sup> has set the path to build more sustainable food systems, and

---

<sup>1</sup> [AR6 Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis](#), IPCC, 2021

<sup>2</sup> [Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions](#), Crippa, M., Solazzo, E., Guizzardi, D. et al., Nat Food 2, 198–209 (2021).

<sup>3</sup> [Secretary-General's Chair Summary and Statement of Action on the UN Food Systems Summit](#)

<sup>4</sup>



acknowledges the environmental benefits of moving towards more plant-based diets. **Succeeding in staying within the 1.5-degree Celsius climate change target thus requires a global shift in dietary patterns towards less carbon-intensive products, such as plant-based foods.**

EAPF and its members recommend that national governments include a shift towards predominantly plant-based diets as a pillar of their emission reduction strategies – their Nationally Determined Contributions – to address climate change, via the following actions:

- Support 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;
- Allocate 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;
- Use economic incentives to facilitate access to plant-based products;
- Integrate plant-based foods into public procurement (e.g. plant-based options available in schools, hospitals, etc.), as well as in national dietary guidelines;
- Develop food environments where plant-based foods are presented as the sustainable choice (e.g. in retail stores);
- Educate citizens about plant-based foods via public campaigns; and
- Ensure that labelling requirements for plant-based foods products empower consumers to make more sustainable food choices, by ensuring clear food denominations (e.g. the use of terms such as “plant-based burger” and “alternative to yoghurt”).

*The European Alliance for Plant-Based Foods (EAPF) brings together like-minded organisations in the plant-based value chain around a unique mission: To put plant-based foods at the heart of the transition towards more sustainable and healthy food systems. The Alliance represents the entire plant-based value chain: Food producers and manufacturers, NGOs, nutritionists, research & academia, and consumers.*