

**SUBMISSION TO THE KORONIVIA JOINT WORK ON AGRICULTURE (KJWA)**

**November 2020**



**SHIFT TOWARDS PLANT-RICH DIETS AND AWAY FROM INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK  
PRODUCTION TO REDUCE GLOBAL GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND PREVENT THE  
NEXT PANDEMIC.**

A growing body of scientific research shows how essential it is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food and agriculture if the Paris target of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius has any chance of being achieved. We submit this set of recommendations to the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture process to inform deliberations, including during the November 2020 workshop on livestock management.

In 2020, billions of people's lives have been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. UN Environment's recent joint report, *Preventing the next pandemic*<sup>1</sup>, linked the incidence of new, devastating zoonoses to the massive industrialization of food production and, specifically, to excessive meat consumption. With zoonotic disease outbreaks increasingly recognized as the result of unsustainable human activities, international action is urgently needed to transform global

food systems, and particularly the livestock and feed sectors. Unfortunately, these issues have been largely absent from past international climate negotiations and commitments. As a result, awareness and proactive policy measures are both still limited. This is a gap the KJWA is well-placed to fill.

The 2019 IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land affirmed what a growing body of evidence-based research has concluded: Food and agriculture must be addressed as key drivers of land-use change and the climate crisis<sup>ii</sup>. The same year, the international community witnessed tens of thousands of fires destroy more than two million acres of irreplaceable Amazon rainforest for livestock and feed production, worsening both the climate and extinction emergencies<sup>iii iv</sup>. In 2020, too, numerous fires have been set in the Amazon and in the Latin American Pantanal, the world's largest existing tropical wetland, mainly to expand cattle and production of soybeans, a major feedcrop.

The livestock sector alone accounts for at least 14.5% of global GHG emissions<sup>v</sup> and the food system overall contributes nearly one-third of emissions. At the same time, with population growth, urbanization, and increasing per-capita consumption of animal products (associated with rising incomes), demand for livestock products could increase by 70% by 2050<sup>vi</sup>.

A growing number of studies indicate that we cannot meet the Paris Agreement target of keeping global warming to 2 degrees Celsius, much less the higher ambition target of 1.5 degrees, unless we rein in agricultural emissions<sup>vii viii ix</sup>. Reducing consumption of food from animal sources, compared to current global trends, and making plant-based diets a major facet of climate policy, are crucial for meeting the Paris targets while also allowing for emissions from other sectors<sup>x xi</sup>.

A multi-pronged approach by governments, cooperating with researchers, civil society organizations, educational institutions and other stakeholders is necessary.

*We call on the KJWA to support the following actions:*

**Acknowledge meat, dairy, and feedcrops as the largest contributors to GHGs in food and agricultural systems and provide technical assistance** for parties to integrate food and

agriculture into ambitious NDCs<sup>xii</sup>, with a focus on sustainable food production and consumption, including reductions in food loss and waste and promotion of planetary health diets (i.e., plant-based).

**Reflect these priorities in UNFCCC conference food service** and minimize the UNFCCC's own contribution to the climate crisis by instituting plant-forward menus along with a commitment to zero food waste. Despite some improvements at COP25 in Madrid, the conference catering menus still remained too meat intensive, and plant-based options were often more expensive. COP26 is a unique opportunity to demonstrate increased ambition by adopting a plant-rich menu, and make it broadly available through lower prices.

**Align global climate and development policies and implementation to promote sustainable diets and systems of food production** to achieve accelerated emissions reductions and the SDGs, specifically Goals 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and wellbeing), 12 (responsible production and consumption), 13 (combat climate change and its impacts), and 15 (life on land). This should include creating national guidelines for sustainable and healthful diets that recognize the links among dietary patterns, climate and environmental impacts and food security, and encourage individuals and institutions to shift towards diets higher in plant-based foods and lower in animal-based foods.

**Assist governments (parties) to take bold steps to internalize the costs of livestock production**, including to the global climate, and end tax and other incentives. Governments should identify and remove or redirect subsidies and fiscal policies that threaten achievement of the Paris Agreement and that have negative impacts on forests, other ecosystems, soils, water and overall resilience to the effects of global warming. Shifting financial incentives from livestock production to more sustainable agriculture also means investment in development of alternatives to animal-based protein, including plant-based proteins and cellular meat and creating a regulatory environment to support such innovation.

**Support governments at national and international levels to host dialogues across relevant governmental departments** (including Agriculture, Environment, Climate, Forests and

Health/Nutrition, Finance) to ensure policies are aligned and not being jeopardized by measures or regulations taken in other departments. In addition, departments should agree on joint messaging for public education campaigns to raise awareness of the climate consequences of meat and other animal-based foods production and consumption and to inform people about the health and other co-benefits of plant-centered diets.

**Encourage governments to shift procurement and adopt low GHG policies and pathways.**

Governments are often the largest buyers of food products, for example for schools, state institutions like hospitals and government ministries, and militaries. They should put priority on purchasing low GHG foods (mainly vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains) and by doing so, help transform national and global food supply chains and priorities.

**Support governments, industry, workers across food supply and delivery chains, and civil society to initiate a just transition** away from climate-warming livestock and feedcrop production and to more climate-compatible, equitable, and resilient food systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the fragility and brittleness of the global and national food systems, and real risks they pose for incubation of future pandemics. New pathways are urgent. The KJWA can identify promising examples based on research, experience and dialogue, and illuminate the policy requirements for a just transition that accelerates progress towards the Paris targets and the SDGs.

**Foster and support sustainable food innovations** like plant-based meat replacement products and monitor closely the encouraging developments in cellular agriculture to facilitate the needed transition towards less meat-intensive diets.

Policy coherence at all levels (local, national, regional, and global) is the only way to achieve the Paris Agreement targets and the SDGs. Policies working across the food system — including shifting dietary choices and reducing food loss and waste — can also improve land-use management, food security and the ability to reduce emissions. Sustainable food policies can also increase climate resilience, help eradicate poverty, protect biodiversity and improve public health.

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<sup>i</sup> UN Environment, ILRI, CGIAR, “Preventing the next pandemic - Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission”, 2020, Retrieved from: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32860/ZPKMEN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>ii</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2019). IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse gas fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srcl/>

<sup>iii</sup> Mackintosh, Eliza. “The Amazon is burning because the world eats so much meat.” CNN. August 23, 2019. <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/08/23/americas/brazil-beef-amazon-rainforest-fire-intl/index.html>

<sup>iv</sup> “Brazil’s Bolsonaro says he will accept aid to fight Amazon fires.” CBS News. August 27, 2019. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/amazon-wildfires-brazil-spurns-20-million-aid-offer-from-g-7-nations-today-2019-08-27/>

<sup>v</sup> Gerber, P. J., Steinfeld, H., Henderson, B., Mottet, A., Opio, C., Dijkman, J., ... & Tempio, G. (2013). Tackling climate change through livestock: a global assessment of emissions and mitigation opportunities. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

<sup>vi</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). “World livestock 2011–Livestock in food security.” (2011): 40.

<sup>vii</sup> Brent Kim et al. (2015): The Importance of Reducing Animal Product Consumption and Wasted Food in Mitigating Catastrophic Climate Change. John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future.

<sup>viii</sup> Springmann, M., Clark, M., Mason-D’Croz, D., Weibe, K., Bodirsky, B., Lassaletta, L., ... Willet, W. (2018) Options for keeping the food system within environmental limits. Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-018-0594-0>

<sup>ix</sup> Hedenus, F., S. Wirsenius & D. J. A. Johansson (2014): The importance of reduced meat and dairy consumption for meeting stringent climate change targets. Climatic Change. 124, p.79–91.

<sup>x</sup> Bajželj, B., Richards, K. S., Allwood, J. M., Smith, P., Dennis, J. S., Curmi, E., & Gilligan, C. A. (2014). Importance of food demand management for climate mitigation. Nature Climate Change, 4(10), 924-929.

<sup>xi</sup> Clark, M., et. al (2020). Global food system emissions could preclude achieving the 1.5° and 2°C climate change targets. Science, Vol. 370, Issue 6517, 705-708.

<sup>xiii</sup> WWF, UN Environment, Eat, Climate Focus, Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for Food Systems, 2020, retrieved from: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/33598/ndcfS.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>