

Global youth call for climate-friendly food at COP28

22 April 2023

H.E. Dr. Al Jaber, H.E. Al Mazrui,

We write to you on behalf of the official youth constituency to UNFCCC (YOUNGO) and over 140 youth and civil society organisations, calling on the COP28 Presidency to set an example in climate leadership by serving sustainable food at this year's climate change conference in Dubai.

To achieve this goal, we strongly encourage that at COP28:

- At least $\frac{3}{4}$ of all food options on the menu are plant-based;¹
- All food options—especially plant-based items—are affordable, nutritious, regionally sourced (where feasible), and culturally inclusive;
- A clear emissions label is displayed for all food options, as implemented at COP26.

Progress on climate-friendly catering has already been made at previous COPs and major climate events in Bonn, Glasgow, and Stockholm. Yet, despite persistent demands from attendees, especially youth, the food on offer at these events has been out of step with the climate emergency.

The science is clear: the food we produce and consume has a significant impact on the triple planetary crisis. Global food systems account for approximately one third of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and are on course to jeopardise the 1.5°C target even if we immediately phased out all fossil fuel production.^{2,3}

A majority of these emissions come from animal agriculture, with animal products having a significantly larger environmental footprint on average than plant-based foods.^{4,5} Leading IPCC climate scientists consistently recommend that shifting to more plant-based diets is one of the most effective ways to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change.⁶

We therefore applaud the UAE for including the promotion of plant-based diets and reduction of food waste as part of the 2023 Year of Sustainability. As the first country in the region to sign the Paris Agreement and announce its Net Zero Strategy, the UAE has already shown climate action leadership.



Now, the UAE has a unique opportunity to set another milestone and become the first presidency to make catering at COP truly sustainable and predominantly plant-based. This step would also allow the UAE to highlight the importance of food systems in climate action, showcase its rich local cuisine, and cement its status as a pioneer in the use of innovative food and agriculture technologies.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to further communication on this matter as soon as possible. We would be delighted to have the opportunity to meet with representatives of the UAE presidency at the AIM for Climate Summit in Washington D.C. in May or at SB58 in Bonn in June to discuss how we can best advance our joint goal of sustainable food systems transformation at COP28.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hemavathi S. Shekhar".

Hemavathi S. Shekhar
Global South Focal Point

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zihan Xuan".

Zihan Xuan
Global North Focal Point

This letter was initiated by the YOUNGO Food & Agriculture Working Group and the Food@COP campaign, with support from ProVeg International.

Endnotes

- 1 Plant-based foods consist of fruits, vegetables, pulses, legumes, grains, nuts, seeds, and their derivatives.
- 2 Crippa, M., E. Solazzo, D. Guizzardi, et al. (2021): Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions. *Nature Food* 2(3), 198–209.
- 3 Clark, M. A., N. G. G. Domingo, K. Colgan, et al. (2020): Global food system emissions could preclude achieving the 1.5° and 2°C climate change targets. *Science* 370(6517), 705–708.
- 4 Xu, X., P. Sharma, S. Shu, et al. (2021): Global greenhouse gas emissions from animal-based foods are twice those of plant-based foods. *Nature Food* 2(9), 724–732.
- 5 Poore, J. & T. Nemecek (2018): Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science* 360(6392), 987–992.
- 6 IPCC, Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FullReport.pdf.



Endorsing Coalitions:

Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)
CAN Latin America (CANLA)
Fridays for Future Most Affected People and Areas (MAPA)
International Association of students in Agricultural and related Sciences (IAAS)
International Student Environmental Coalition
Loss and Damage Youth Coalition
Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
MENA Youth Network
Physicians Association for Nutrition (PAN) International
US Climate Action Network (USCAN)
World Food Forum
YOUNGO

Endorsing Organisations:

A Well-Fed World
Aalem for Orphan and Vulnerable Children
Abibinsroma Foundation
Action et Education Pour Tous (AEPT)
African Youth Environment Assembly-DRC
Alianza Alimentaria y Acción Climática A.C.
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Anasi Farmers Association
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Think Tank
Aquatic Life Institute
Association Globale pour l'Environnement et le Climat - AGECE
Ayllu Vegano
Brighter Green
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
Care About Climate
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Earth Ethics
Center for Grassroots Sustainability and Sovereignty
Center for International Cooperation and Project Implementation
Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment & Management (CECIC)
Centre for Human Rights and Climate
Change Research Young Researchers Forum
Changing Markets Foundation
Clim-Eat
ClimaTalk
Climate 2025
Climate Save Movement
Climate Words
Comité de Dialogue et de Cohabitation Pacifique
Community And Family Aid Foundation - Ghana
Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) International
Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) USA
Congo Basin Youth for Climate

CSBE-MSAP Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE)
Earth Action, Inc.
Earth Safety Valve
Earthjustice
EAT
Eat for the Earth
ECB Sustainable Youth Foundation
Enable the Disable Action (EDA)
Essere Animali
Fair Farm Project
Feedback Global
Flemish Youth Council (Vlaamse Jeugdraad)
Food Tank
Food@COP
ForestCom
Foundation for Upholding Agricultural Practice (FUAP)
Fridays for Future Digital
Fridays for Future Goma
Fridays for Future Sierra Leone
Fridays for Future Ukraine
G.R.E.E.N. Dreams
Gallifrey Foundation
Germanwatch
Global Environmental and Climate Conservation Initiative (GECCI)
Go Green Sudan
Grandmothers Advocacy Network
Great Youth Owerri Municipal Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative Society
Green Life Family
Green REV Institute
GreenFaith
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Green Fund
Health Care Without Harm
Horn of Africa Welfare Development Organization (HAWDO)
Humane Society International
Ianna Mallayka Environmental Organization
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)
International Consortium on Climate and Biodiversity (ICCB)
International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA) KAFCOL
International Helping for Young
International Human Rights & Social Justice Council (IHR - SJC)
Jeremy Collier Foundation
Jewish Initiative for Animals
Kenya Environmental Action Network (KEAN)
Kisumu Environmental Champions
Klima-Allianz Deutschland
Klimadelegation
Latinas for Climate
MAI Foundation
Malaysian Youth Delegation (MYD) Climate
Marafiki United Green Youths Initiative
Mercy For Animals

Mifali
Mighty Earth
Morya Samajik Pratishthan
National Coordinating Organization for Farmers Associations The Gambia (NACOFAG)
New Hope for the Poor
ObbyPress Foundation
ODD TV
Omar Niode Foundation
ONG-ASHAD
Our Kids' Climate
Pan African Youth Network for a Culture of Peace (PAYNCoP)
Parents For Future Global
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
Peoples Federation for National Peace and Development (PEFENAP)
Physicians Against Red Meat (PhARM)
Plant Based Foods Institute
Plant Based Treaty
Plant-Based Advocates
Planting Change Foundation
Plataforma ALTO
Powering Young Initiatives
ProVeg International
Rainforest Alliance
RAPAD Maroc
Real Food Systems
Réseau des Jeunes pour le Développement Communautaire
Seva Bharati
SHE Changes Climate
Sinergia Animal
SPIRIT Cultural NGO
Sustory
Switch4Good
Teal Climate
The Humane League
The Movements Trust
Think Green
UN1FY Nepal
United Nations Association (UNA) of Chad
United Youth Initiative for Africa
Vegetarianos Hoy
VegFest Fiji
We The World Botswana Chapter
World and Peoples in Transformation (WOPT)
World Animal Protection
YMCA Ndola
YMCA of Lagos
Young Africans Network for Global Goals (YANGG) - Kenya
Youth Council in Action for Nation (YOUTH CAN)
Youth Diplomats
Youth Foundation of Bangladesh
Youth Love Egypt Foundation
Youth4Nature
Zero Hour









