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Dear Co-Chairs of the UNFCCC Mitigation Work Programme,

On behalf of the [Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition \(GAIN\)](#) and the [RUAF Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems](#) this submission proposes **urban food systems** as a key topic under the 2024 MWP global dialogues. This submission comes under the mandate of Decision 4/CMA.4, para 14 FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.16, para 9.

Background:

The importance of the selected MWP theme of *Cities: buildings and urban systems* is clear. Cities, in all their diversity, are expanding areas of built environments which already house more than half of the world's population, rising to almost 70% by 2050. Buildings alone already account for approximately 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Many countries and regions are experiencing rapid urbanisation, including in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South Asia, where population growth rates are especially fast. Cities and peri-urban areas of human settlement are concentrated nodes of energy use, resource consumption, human development, and local governance.

Worldwide, more than 70% of the food produced is consumed in cities. Globally, food systems account for 21-37% of global greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, they are failing to provide essential sustenance and good nutrition for all people. 735m people suffer from hunger. As many as 3-4bn are affected by at least one micronutrient deficiency. Over 3bn are overweight or living with obesity. The burden of diet-related non-communicable diseases continues to rise. Healthy diets are unaffordable for over 3bn people worldwide. In urban and peri-urban contexts, specifically, healthy diets are often unaffordable, and health inequalities are widening. Urban food systems are therefore a key entry point for climate mitigation, with significant co-benefits for improved health outcomes.

Furthermore, cities are not islands. Urban food environments affect and are affected by the rural food systems around them. 40% of the world's cropland is found within 20km of cities. Urban-rural food system dynamics within and across regions determine outcomes across climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience, and health and socioeconomic factors.

Cities have the potential to unlock multiple co-benefits by transforming food systems within their administrative boundaries and beyond, at scale, to be just, climate-smart, locally owned, and more conducive to good nutrition. They have the capacity to provide an enabling environment in which diverse, safe, nutritious food from just, sustainable food systems is available, accessible, affordable, and desirable for all people, influencing prosperity, planetary well-being, and health outcomes for billions of people.

Urban residents are largely dependent on food purchases making them vulnerable to "unhealthy" and unsustainable food environment and food system challenges. As poly-crises and societal "business as usual" practices amplify communities' climate vulnerabilities, it is critical that cities become climate resilient in a way that is good for cities, peri-urban, and rural communities, while also affecting global outcomes through their role in emissions mitigation.

Climate resilient cities are fundamental to the vision of just and sustainable food systems that advance livelihoods and access to healthy diets. A "whole of society" approach where multiple actors from individuals to city and local governments actively, inclusively, and more systemically engage to mitigate negative environmental impacts because of food supply,

demand, and waste, is a key perspective. Importantly, different sized urban settlements from small rural towns to intermediary/secondary cities to mega-cities are networked through food from production to consumption and waste. This presents multiple opportunities for shifts towards climate resilience within cities and towns and production landscapes, with potential for mitigation co-benefits. Evidence, learnings, best practices and innovations that are widely accessible and disseminated within and beyond cities are needed to support mitigation. Additionally, city to city and local community networks, as well as coherent, coordinated multi-level governance, are cornerstones to systemic mitigation that can be sustained. Taken together, these approaches benefit communities' quality of life, the health of the planet, and economic prosperity.

The inclusion of urban food systems in the MWP global dialogues would accelerate action in this critical area through the exchanges of views, information and ideas described under the decision establishing the work of the MWP – supporting essential capacity building, research and evidence sharing, learning from best practices, improved governance, and stakeholder engagement.

Intended outcomes:

The key strategic objectives of an urban food systems dialogue under the MWP would be to support cities to:

1. Access and use best available evidence, learnings and best practices in decision-making that systemically connects climate and health outcomes through food to achieve 'win-wins' and co-benefits;
2. Create an enabling environment for climate and nature positive (e.g. regenerative, sustainable or agro-ecological) food production, consumption and waste management that simultaneously advances access to a diversity of safe, nutritious diets;
3. Adopt approaches that more inclusively facilitate the activation of "One City" or "whole of society" in justly transforming food systems, enhancing climate resilience, accelerating emissions mitigation, and providing prosperous livelihood opportunities.
4. Better coordinate and engage with multiple actors including national and local governments, urban leaders, neighbouring rural community governance structures, the private sector (formal and informal), development organisations, philanthropists, and financial organisations to increase engagement on food systems transformation across supply and demand for nutritious, safe, sustainable diets, foregrounding climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.
5. Connect the climate, health, nutrition, and food systems actors at international, regional, national and sub-national levels to enhance coherence towards a common set of goals

Alignment to the ambition of the MWP:

Similarly, the MWP has recognised Cities, Buildings and Urban Environments as key drivers of change and as enablers to the objective *“to urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade in a manner that complements the global stocktake”*. Food systems transformation has the potential to achieve mitigation outcomes before 2030. Building on the outcomes of the GST, the 2024 MWP global dialogues can support Member States and other actors with technical expertise around key opportunities for climate action.

Climate change is not constrained by government or administrative boundaries, human settlement, or economic activities. Climate impacts driven by cities affect urban environments and spill over to peri-urban and rural areas. A city-centred food systems approach seeks to improve enabling environments in which all communities have access to and consume a diversity of nutritious, safe foods from sustainable food systems, while also transforming value chains to be climate and nature positive.

As concentrated centres of human settlement, economic activity, and resource consumption, cities have a sizeable effect on climate and health outcomes. They can therefore play a catalytic role in accelerating mitigation and adaptation action, with health co-benefits, thanks to positive spillover effects and feedback loops through the wider food systems network across other cities, towns, and rural landscapes.

Increased climate finance for cities in general, and urban food systems specifically, will be essential if cities are to play this catalytic role – especially where deployed to enhance adaptation and resilience, invest in technologies that support emissions reduction from food production and value chains, shifts diets to favour foods associated with lower negative environmental impacts (the IPCC has clearly articulated the potential of shifting towards sustainable and healthy diets to achieve global greenhouse gas mitigation targets and to achieve other benefits across public health and the environment (AR6 WGIII Chapter 7), and improve governance and capacity for long-term sustainability.

Addendum:

This submission is aligned to the ambitions of the Urban Food Systems Programme created as a result of the UN Food Systems Summit, including RUAF and GAIN as co-leads, and the member organisations of the Transforming Urban-Rural Food Systems (TURFS) Consortium. Examples of related work can be found at www.foodactioncities.org.