**Submission for the Fifth Global Dialogue of the Mitigation Work Programme**
*March 2025*

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we welcome the opportunity to provide views on the announced topic of the fifth global dialogue—*enabling mitigation solutions in the forest sector, drawing on national and regional experience*.

The fifth global dialogue should have a central focus on the key role of **food systems including sustainable food consumption** to the forest sector.

**In line with this, we request that the fifth global dialogue include:**

1. A scene-setting presentation on food systems and forests
2. A sub-topic on food systems that includes guiding questions on sustainable food production, sustainable food consumption, and sustainable value chains, and co-benefits and trade-offs
3. Invited food systems experts

Below, we discuss the importance of food systems to forests, key topics and related solutions relevant to the dialogue, and propose potential expert invitees.

***The central importance of food systems to addressing deforestation***

**Deforestation is primarily about food systems.** According to the FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment, **agricultural expansion is responsible for almost 90 percent of global deforestation**.[1] The expansion of pasture and feed crops into forests is a key driver.

With the dialogue and first Climate Week 2025 to be hosted in Panama and the upcoming COP to be hosted in the Amazon, examining this is even more appropriate. In Brazil, between 1990 and 2005, more than 80% of deforestation was associated with conversion to pasture land.[2] In Latin America and the Caribbean, one third of emissions from beef are from expansion of pasture into forests.[3] Concerningly, efforts to address this have been inadequate, leading to the trend in deforestation continuing.[4]

A food systems approach, focusing on all stages of the value chain from production through waste (rather than a sole focus on agriculture or place-based interventions), is recognized as

[1] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], FRA 2020 Remote Sensing Survey, FAO Forestry Paper, No. 186, p. 47 (2022).
[2] FAO, "State of the World's Forests 2016: Forests and Agriculture: Land-Use Challenges and Opportunities," 20 (2016).
[3] P. J. Gerber, et al. "Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock: A Global Assessment of Emissions and Mitigation Opportunities," FAO, (2013), 26. https://www.fao.org/3/i3437e/i3437e00.htm.
[4] O. Dwyer & Y. Quiroz, "Cropped 18 December 2024: No UN Deal for Drought; Brazil Beef Investigations; New IPBES Reports," Carbon Brief (Dec. 18, 2024), https://www.carbonbrief.org/cropped-18-december-2024-no-un-deal-for-drought-brazil-beef-investigations-new-ipbes-reports/.

necessary by expert bodies, including the IPCC,[5] and would align with existing commitments and work such as the UAE COP28 Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action and the UN Food Systems Summit Process. The first global stocktake (Decision 1/CMA.5) also recognizes the need for "integrated, multi-sectoral solutions, such as land-use management, sustainable agriculture, resilient food systems, nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches, and protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems, including forests."[6]

Addressing all stages of the food system is necessary for reducing deforestation, realizing the mitigation potential of food systems, and achieving co-benefits while avoiding trade-offs. A food systems lens can also help ensure that interventions do not negatively impact food security. Additionally, addressing food consumption is critical from an equity perspective as developed countries with consumption patterns that drive deforestation in developing countries bear responsibility for reducing these pressures.

***Key topics and related solutions***

Food production: **Transitioning to more sustainable practices can reduce deforestation while delivering social and economic co-benefits**. According to IPCC's Special Report on Climate Change and Land, sustainable food production systems—such as agroecology, agroforestry, and improved crop and livestock management—can help reduce pressure on forests by increasing productivity on existing agricultural land and reducing the need for expansion into forested areas.

Similarly, the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services highlights that unsustainable agricultural expansion is a major driver of deforestation and biodiversity loss, but that promoting sustainable agricultural practices, such as diversified farming and agroecological methods, can significantly reduce negative impacts on forests and ecosystems.[7]

A Just Transition towards equitable, humane and sustainable food systems can also advance the conditions and livelihoods of smallholders farmers, pastoralists, small-scale fishers, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and peasants, including industrial farm workers, by adopting agroecology, high welfare practices and recognizing and strengthening traditional land rights of smallholders and marginalised groups, particularly women, people of colour and Indigenous Peoples. Transitioning to agroecology, by its nature, would provide a sustainable livelihood for smallholder farmers and small-scale fishers in the Global North and South and would safeguard food and nutrition security by protecting the pollinators, soil, water and other natural resources

[5] "Climate Change and Land, an IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems," IPCC, 5.1.1.1 (2019), https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl [IPCC SRCCL].
[6] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, First Global Stocktake, 1/CMA.5, para. 55 (Dec.13, 2023), https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_L17_adv.pdf.
[7] Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services), Ch. 2 (2019), https://ipbes.net/global-assessment.

on which agriculture itself relies.[8] These necessary production-side transformations should be supported by just transition principles to allow farmers to shift away from producing deforestation commodities. A just transition can only be achieved with the active involvement of women, youth, smallholder farmers, peasants, pastoralists, small-scale fishers, industrial farmers and workers, food workers, Indigenous Peoples and people of colour.

While addressing the food system, it is critical to avoid false solutions that risk further degrading forests or resulting in harms to the environment and sustainable development. Concepts such as 'carbon farming', 'sustainable intensification' and 'regenerative agriculture' have significant trade-offs or limitations[9], are poorly defined[10] or are not feasible at scale[11] and delay the deep transformation required in the way we produce and consume food to reduce deforestation and meet the targets of the Paris Agreement.

Food value chains: **Sustainable food value chains are critical to enabling improved downstream incentives to reduce deforestation.** Traceability initiatives (including certification systems, environmental labeling, and digital monitoring tools) can play a key role in improving transparency, supporting accountability, and strengthening data availability across food systems. These tools provide critical information to guide mitigation planning and implementation under Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), particularly in identifying emissions hotspots, improving resource efficiency, and addressing food loss and waste. By shedding light on the differentiated environmental footprints of food products, traceability systems can also support the development of context-specific strategies that enable sustainable consumption patterns. Moreover, it aligns with ongoing discussions under the Mitigation Work Programme highlighting the importance of integrated, data-informed approaches to enhance ambition and implementation.

Food consumption: **In the consumption and waste stages of the food system, shifts towards sustainable, plant-rich diets and overall reductions in food waste can decrease pressures to expand pasture and feed crops into forests.** According to the IPCC, "a transition towards more plant-based consumption and reduced consumption of animal-based foods, particularly from ruminant animals, could reduce pressure on forests and land used for feed, support the preservation of biodiversity and planetary health."[12] The importance of this is emphasized in the second Global Land Outlook which notes "Food systems must continue to provide sustenance but can be redesigned and redeployed to ensure positive outcomes for nature and climate as well. A transition to plant-based diets, where appropriate, would be a

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[8] International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food systems (IPES-Food), "From Uniformity to Diversity: A Paradigm Shift from Industrial Agriculture to Diversified Agroecological Systems," (2016), https://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/UniformityToDiversity_FULL.pdf.
[9] G. Monbiot, The Myth of "Regenerative Ranching," The New Republic (Oct. 22, 2021), https://newrepublic.com/article/163735/myth-regenerative-ranching.
[10] M. Reed et al., A Social-ecological Systems Approach to Navigating Trade-offs in Land Management, 47 Global Envtl. Change 102219 (2020), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211912420300584.
[11] T. Garnett et al., "Grazed and confused?: ruminating on cattle, grazing systems, methane, nitrous oxide, the soil carbon sequestration question-and what it all means for greenhouse gas emissions" Food Climate Research Network (2017), https://edepot.wur.nl/427016.
[12] *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change,* IPCC, 7.4.5.1 (2022), https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FullReport.pdf.

logical first step as nearly 80% of total agricultural land is dedicated to feed and livestock production while providing less than 20% of the world's food calories."[13]

***Suggested Invitees***

We suggest the following invitees to enrich the dialogue.

Individual Experts

- Augusto Castro-Nunez, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT
- Funmilola Oluwafemi, National Space Research and Development Agency, Nigeria
- Tasso Rezende de Azevedo, MapBiomas
- Rasmus Prehn, former minister of agriculture, Denmark
- Matthew Hayek, New York University Department of Environmental Studies
- Jessica Fanzo, Columbia University, Food for Humanity Initiative
- Daniel Moss, Agroecology Fund

Institutional experts

- One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme
- EAT Forum
- Food Systems Economic Commission
- Forests, People, Climate

**Endorsing organizations**

Africa Centre for Sustainable and Inclusive Development (Africa CSID)
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
CGIAR
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
Global Youth Coalition
Mercy For Animals
ProVeg International
Real Food Systems Youth Network
Village Farmers Initiative (VFI)
World Animal Protection

[13] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Global Land Outlook, 2d ed. 5 (2022), https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-04/UNCCD_GLO2_low-res_2.pdf.