



## **Submission for the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme - views relevant to the topic of the third dialogue**

### *Summary*

The signing organizations welcome the opportunity to contribute views to the third dialogue of the UAE Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP). This submission emphasizes the critical importance of **integrating agrifood systems into just transition planning**, given their central role in both emissions and vulnerability to climate change.

Agri-food systems must be addressed in a way that is **inclusive, equitable, and grounded in national circumstances**, particularly for smallholder farmers, Indigenous Peoples, women, pastoralist, fisherfolk, youth, and other marginalized groups. Structured around four key opportunity areas, this submission highlights tested approaches and presents practical solutions to inform a just and climate-resilient transformation of food systems that address - and not exacerbate – inequalities.

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The signing organizations welcome the opportunity to contribute their views to the third dialogue of the UAE Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP), focused on approaches to enhancing adaptation and climate resilience in the context of just transitions. They reaffirm the critical importance of placing agrifood systems at the center of just transition planning and urge upcoming JTWP discussions to explicitly integrate agrifood systems into their scope and strategies.

Agriculture is both highly vulnerable to climate impacts and a key sector for delivering inclusive, equitable, and resilient development. Additionally, the majority of the world's vulnerable populations depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. While the sector holds mitigation potential through the adoption of sustainable practices, agrifood systems contribute significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions and are the largest consumer of freshwater resources. This reflects the deep complexity of designing sustainable systems that also safeguard the well-being of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk and food systems workers, further emphasizing the importance of positioning JTWP discussions around agriculture and food systems.

As climate action efforts accelerate across other sectors, the agrifood sector is increasingly expected to deliver mitigation outcomes and adapt to worsening climate risks. However, without tailored support, some mitigation approaches may place disproportionate burdens on smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk. This presents a critical opportunity to design more inclusive, context-specific approaches that reduce emissions while protecting livelihoods. This must be based on a just transition towards globally equitable and climate-safe food systems that respect the rights of smallholder farmers, Indigenous Peoples, pastoralists and fisherfolk. Countries and regions that account for the largest emissions should take the lead in shifting production and consumption, whereas countries facing nutrition insecurity are supported in ensuring their food security and nutritional needs are met. A just transition framework inclusive of agrifood systems, and mindful of national contexts, is essential for ensuring that mitigation and adaptation efforts are both equitable and effective.

JTWP provides a vital platform to reshape how global climate policy supports transformation in agrifood systems. Integration of agrifood systems into the Work Programme would help ensure that mitigation and adaptation measures are not only technically sound, but also socially just. It presents an opportunity to:

- Prioritize worker protections and safety nets,
- Enhance capacity building for producers and institutions,
- Address long-term socioeconomic transitions and stranded assets,
- Expand equitable access to finance and technology, and
- Align production systems with broader food system goals.

By centering agrifood systems in just transition planning, policymakers can bridge the gap between climate ambition and social justice—laying the groundwork for systems that are both climate-resilient and people-centered.

The signing organizations outline below the key opportunities for meaningful progress, best practices to empower communities, actionable solutions that deliver tangible results, and critical challenges to address in shaping agrifood-focused just transition pathways.

### **A. Opportunities**

A just transition in agrifood and water systems presents significant potential opportunities to enable equitable, climate-resilient development, particularly when structured around five foundational pillars:

**(1) Greater research and development (R&D) support for low-emissions innovation:** Many existing mitigation technologies carry yield and income penalties that would

disproportionately affect smallholder farmers. There is a clear opportunity to invest in the development of affordable, scalable, and context-appropriate technologies that reduce emissions while maintaining or enhancing productivity and resilience.

**(2) Interim transition and safety net support for vulnerable producers, farm workers and communities:** The socioeconomic vulnerability of small-scale producers underscores the need for social protection, insurance, stranded asset analysis and compensation schemes that help buffer short-term risks and ensure that transitions do not deepen inequality.

**(3) Strong policy coherence and inclusive governance mechanisms:** Fragmented policy landscapes across agriculture, environment, and labor sectors hinder coordination. A just transition offers an opportunity to strengthen institutional alignment, improve land and resource governance, and ensure that planning processes reflect the voices and priorities of those most affected by climate change.

**(4) A food systems lens that considers the impacts of interventions from production through consumption:** A systemic view of food systems enables interventions that enhance resilience and sustainability throughout the value chain. For example, just transition efforts should also consider nutrition-sensitive strategies and food consumption patterns, not only production-side changes.

**(5) Put back pride into farming and land stewardship, with youth increasingly seeking out farming employment:** It is essential to keep youth interested and incentivized to take up farming, in the face of increasing urbanization and the critical narratives of environmental degradation from the current food system. This can ensure that just transition is anchored in inter-generational farming dialogues.

These pillars represent high-impact entry points to reduce climate risk while simultaneously strengthening food and nutrition security, dignified livelihoods, and social equity.

## **B. Best practices**

Best practices from the field showcase the benefits of integrated, community-centered approaches:

- Programs combining adaptive social protection with climate risk tools (e.g., early warning systems) have supported communities in preparing for and responding to climate shocks.
- Gender-transformative and youth-responsive initiatives have been key to addressing systemic inequities and empowering leadership among marginalized groups.

- Renewable energy technologies, such as solar irrigation and sustainable cold storage, are improving productivity while lowering emissions and increasing resilience.
- Enabling inter-ministrial collaboration, ensuring that shifting agrifood policies are integrates across ministries of agriculture, climate and finance, ensuring alignment and maximizing repurposing of funding within government budgets.
- Participatory governance mechanisms and multi-stakeholder dialogues ensure national and sub-national climate strategies are informed by diverse, often underrepresented voices.

### **C. Actionable solutions**

**Actionable solutions** are needed to strengthen the role of adaptation and resilience in just transitions. Investment in climate-resilient infrastructure and services—particularly for small-scale farmers—can reduce vulnerabilities and enhance adaptive capacity. In support of R&D for low-emissions innovation, national and international stakeholders should prioritize investments in climate-smart agriculture technologies, water-use efficiency, energy-use efficiency, digital advisory tools, and agroecological approaches. Public–private partnerships, international research collaborations, and innovation funding mechanisms can accelerate the development and deployment of such technologies and approaches, with attention to affordability and accessibility for smallholders.

To enable effective and equitable transition support, governments and development partners should design and scale up mechanisms that compensate early adopters of sustainable practices, such as through results-based payments or insurance schemes. These should be complemented by expanded access to adaptive social protection, decent rural employment guarantees, and alternative livelihood support where needed. Integrating these tools into existing climate and rural development policies will help reduce costs and risks for vulnerable populations.

Policy coherence and inclusive governance should be pursued through interministerial coordination platforms that align climate, agriculture, labor, and social development goals. Participatory decision-making should be institutionalized across national and sub-national levels, supported by capacity-building for local governments and community-based organizations. Land tenure reform, decentralization of planning, and formal recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems are key enablers in this regard.

A food systems lens can be promoted by assessing the impacts of just transition measures across the supply chains. In many regions, just transition presents an opportunity for transformative adaptation by reorienting production both to be more resilient and to address nutritional shortfalls (such as fruit and vegetable availability).

Public procurement and incentives for institutions such as schools, universities, corporate offices, administration and workplaces could play a role in a meaningful transition towards better purchasing decisions. Institutions should shift their supply chains towards sourcing products from small-scale farmers and localized food sovereignty-based productions.

These coordinated actions can help catalyze inclusive adaptation pathways in agrifood systems, while advancing broader goals for equitable and sustainable development.

#### **D. Expected Outcomes**

To enable just transition in agrifood systems, the following outcomes are expected as a result of coordinated national and international efforts:

- **Integration of agrifood systems** into national just transition frameworks and international climate finance mechanisms, ensuring these systems are central to resilience, mitigation, and equity agendas.
- **Reduction of structural inequalities** through targeted measures that expand access to land, finance, markets, and participation for smallholder farmers, women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples.
- **Improved governance and institutional capacity** to support cross-sectoral coordination and inclusive planning at national and sub-national levels.
- **Inclusion of just transition principles in multilateral frameworks**, NDCs and NAPs, reinforcing their role in global collaboration on food systems and commodity trade.
- **Robust accountability and monitoring mechanisms**, designed to ensure transparency, address power imbalances, and close implementation gaps.

#### **Signing organizations:**

CGIAR

African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES)

International Livestock Research Institute

United Nations Foundation

Mercy For Animals

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)