

# THE BELÉM DECLARATION ON PLANT-RICH DIETS

**This Declaration by leaders of city and regional governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders calls on national governments to promote healthy and sustainable diets through the drafting and implementation of Action Plans for Plant-Based Foods.**

Acknowledging the multiple<sup>1 2</sup> roles that plant-rich diets play in mitigating the climate crisis, the Belém Declaration calls for national governments to draw up and implement comprehensive and ambitious action plans for promoting plant-rich foods throughout society.

Action plans should introduce concrete measures to encourage the production and consumption of plant-based foods<sup>3</sup> through initiatives supported by national governments and involving cities and regional governments.

As signatories of this letter, we commit to strengthening collaborative and inclusive efforts to accelerate a transition to more plant-rich diets through the development of National Action Plans For Plant-Based Foods by all UN member states.

## Climate-change mitigation

*Considering* that almost all countries identify agrifood systems as a priority for climate-change adaptation (94%) and mitigation (91%) in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and *taking into account* the tremendous potential of agrifood systems as climate solutions, especially as countries submit their third round of NDCs in 2025,<sup>4</sup>

*Acknowledging* that more than 150 nations have signed the COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action to shift from higher greenhouse-gas-emitting practices to more sustainable production and consumption approaches,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Benton, T.G., C. Bieg, H. Harwatt et al. (2021): Food system impacts on biodiversity loss. Three levers for food system transformation in support of nature. Available at: [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021-02-03-food-system-biodiversity-loss-benton-et-al\\_0.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021-02-03-food-system-biodiversity-loss-benton-et-al_0.pdf) [Accessed: 22.03.2025]

<sup>2</sup> 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. doi:[10.1038/s43016-021-00358-x](https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00358-x)

<sup>3</sup> Plant-based foods could range from fresh fruits, vegetables, whole-grains, legumes, nuts, edible fungi, tofu, tempeh, as well as plant-based alternatives to animal-sourced products that are nutrient-rich and compatible with WHO guidelines on salt, sugar and fat content.

<sup>4</sup> FAO (2024): COP29: New FAO analysis maps Nationally Determined Contributions, identifies opportunities, gaps and risks related to agrifood climate solutions. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/cop29-new-fao-analysis-maps-nationally-determined-contributions-identifies-opportunities-gaps-and-risks-related-to-agrifood-climate-solutions/en> [Accessed: 22.03.2025]

<sup>5</sup> FAO (2023): COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action. Available at: [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/cop28-uae-declaration-sustainable-agriculture-resilient-food-systems-climate-action\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/cop28-uae-declaration-sustainable-agriculture-resilient-food-systems-climate-action_en) [Accessed: 22.03.2024]

*Recognising* that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2022 climate-change mitigation report highlights shifts towards plant-rich diets as important mitigation mechanisms,<sup>6</sup>

*Noting* also that the IPCC finds that plant-rich diets can lead to a significant reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, compared to current dietary patterns in most industrialised countries,<sup>7 8</sup>

### **Public health benefits**

*Acknowledging* that plant-rich diets are widely associated with a lower risk of premature mortality and offer protection against non-communicable diseases,<sup>9</sup>

*Noting* that the IPCC 2022 climate-change mitigation report states that ‘balanced diets’ are those that feature coarse grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables, and nuts and seeds,<sup>10</sup>

*Noting* that the UN Environment Programme<sup>11</sup> states that plant-based protein sources such as beans, peas and lentils can meet the nutritional needs of most healthy adults and reduce individual carbon footprints,

### **Biodiversity protection**

*Recognising* that an independent report backed by the UN Environment Programme identifies a shift to more plant-rich diets as one of three key levers for reducing pressures on land use, reducing biodiversity loss, and creating a more sustainable food system,<sup>12</sup>

*Acknowledging* that a shift to plant-based foods in high-income countries produces a ‘double dividend’ of a 61% reduction in GHG emissions from agriculture in those countries and sequestered carbon equivalent to 14 years of global agriculture emissions from re-naturalised freed-up land,<sup>13 14</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGIII\\_FullReport.pdf](https://ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FullReport.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> IPCC (2019): Figure 5.12 from the Special Report on Climate Change and Land. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/chapter/chapter-5/5-5-mitigation-options-challenges-and-opportunities/5-5-2-demand-side-mitigation-options/5-5-2-1-mitigation-potential-of-different-diets/figure-5-12/> [Accessed: 22.03.2025]

<sup>8</sup> IPCC (2022): Summary for Policymakers. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA. Doi: 10.1017/9781009157926.001

<sup>9</sup> WHO Regional Office for Europe (2021): Plant-based diets and their impact on health, sustainability and the environment. A review of the evidence. Available at: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/349086/WHO-EURO-2021-4007-43766-61591-eng.pdf> [Accessed: 22.03.2025]

<sup>10</sup> [ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGIII\\_FullReport.pdf](https://ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FullReport.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> UNEP (2022): Enabling Sustainable Lifestyles in a Climate Emergency. Available at: [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39972/Lifestyles\\_climate.pdf](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39972/Lifestyles_climate.pdf) [Accessed: 22.03.2025]

<sup>12</sup> Benton, T.G., C. Bieg, H. Harwatt et al. (2021): Food system impacts on biodiversity loss. Three levers for food system transformation in support of nature. Available at: [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021-02-03-food-system-biodiversity-loss-benton-et-al\\_0.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/2021-02-03-food-system-biodiversity-loss-benton-et-al_0.pdf) [Accessed: 22.03.2025]

<sup>13</sup> Sun, Z., L. Scherer, et al. (2022): Dietary change in high-income nations alone can lead to substantial double climate dividend. *Nature Food* 3(1), 29–37. Doi: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37118487/>

<sup>14</sup> Poore, J. & T. Nemecek (2018): Reducing food’s environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science* 360(6392), 987–992. doi: [10.1126/science.aag0216](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aag0216)

### Food security and resilience:

*Recognising* that many countries in the Global South have plant-rich dietary traditions that need preserving in order to maintain food security, cultural heritage, and indigenous knowledge,<sup>15</sup>

*Noting* that localised food production on small-island developing states, where traditional diets have long emphasised fibre-rich, plant-based foods, can help to reclaim and restore healthy and climate-resilient food systems in those countries,<sup>16</sup>

*Recognising* that growing more food for direct human consumption, rather than as animal feed, could increase the availability of food for direct human consumption,<sup>17 18 19 20</sup>

### Economic benefits:

*Noting* that adopting plant-based foods grown using sustainable farming methods could generate new employment opportunities around the world, particularly for smallholders and small family farms.<sup>21 22</sup>

**We, the undersigned, in view of the approaching UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Brazil, call upon UN member states to:**

- A. Establish National Action Plans For Plant-Based Foods** to promote healthy sustainable diets – from farm to fork – in order to increase food security and resilience, improve public health, mitigate climate change, protect and restore biodiversity, provide economic benefits, and ensure policy coherence.
- B. Commit to a deadline for the publication of National Action Plans For Plant-Based Foods** in time for them to be tabled for discussion at COP32 in 2027.
- C. Commit to financial support for the implementation of National Action Plans For Plant-Based Foods** from agrifood promotion budgets.

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<sup>15</sup> Mburu, S. W., G. Koskey, J. M. Kimiti, et al. (2016): Agrobiodiversity conservation enhances food security in subsistence-based farming systems of Eastern Kenya. *Agriculture & Food Security* 5(1), 19. Doi:[10.1186/s40066-016-0068-2](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40066-016-0068-2)

<sup>16</sup> Marrero, A. & J. Mattei (2022): Reclaiming traditional, plant-based, climate-resilient food systems in small islands. *The Lancet Planetary Health* 6(2), e171–e179. doi:[10.1016/S2542-5196\(21\)00322-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(21)00322-3)

<sup>17</sup> Cassidy, E. S., P. C. West, J. S. Gerber, et al. (2013): Redefining agricultural yields: from tonnes to people nourished per hectare. *Environmental Research Letters* 8(3), 034015. Doi:[10.1088/1748-9326/8/3/034015](https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/8/3/034015)

<sup>18</sup> Chatzimpiros, P. & S. Harchaoui (2023): Sevenfold variation in global feeding capacity depends on diets, land use and nitrogen management. *Nature Food*. Doi:[10.1038/s43016-023-00741-w](https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-023-00741-w)

<sup>19</sup> Erb, K.-H., C. Lauk, T. Kastner, et al. (2016): Exploring the biophysical option space for feeding the world without deforestation. *Nature Communications* 7 11382. doi:[10.1038/ncomms11382](https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms11382)

<sup>20</sup> Gerten, D., V. Heck, J. Jägermeyr, et al. (2020): Feeding ten billion people is possible within four terrestrial planetary boundaries. *Nature Sustainability* 3(3), 200–208. doi:[10.1038/s41893-019-0465-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0465-1)

<sup>21</sup> [Kitchen-of-the-Future -The-economic-and-environmental-benefits-of-protein-diversification-in-Thailand\\_compressed.pdf](#)

<sup>22</sup> Saget, C., A. Vogt-Schilb & T. Luu (2020). *Jobs in a Net-Zero Emissions Future in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Inter-American Development Bank and International Labour Organization, Washington D.C. and Geneva.

## List of signatories

### Civil society organisations

- A Well-Fed World
- ACIA (Asociația de Conștientizare a Industriei Agricole)
- ACTAsia
- Alliances of Nurses for Healthy Environments
- Amis de l'Afrique Francophone-Bénin (AMAF-BENIN)
- Animal Alliance Network
- Animal Friends Jogja (AFJ)
- Animal Liberation Wave
- Animal People, Inc.
- Animal Rising
- Animal Save & Care Portugal
- Animals Asia Foundation
- Aquatic Life Institute
- Asociația Freedom and Respect for Every Earthling (F.R.E.E.)
- ATRAHDOM
- AVF - Association Végétarienne de France
- Association of Young Leaders United for Sustainable Development
- Better Food Foundation
- BigWave
- Brighter Green
- Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
- Cambridge Climate Society
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Centre for Human-Animal Studies (CfHAS)
- Cercle des Grands Pionniers CGP
- Changing Markets Foundation
- Chilis on Wheels
- Climate Group
- Coalition for Healthy School Food
- Community Action for Food Security
- Community And Family Aid Foundation
- Compassion in World Farming International

- Conscious Planet Save Soil
- Creats International
- DC Voters for Animals
- DMUN Foundation
- Doctors for Nutrition
- EAT
- Ecota
- Emonyo Yefwe International
- Environmental and Animal Rights Consultants Pakistan
- Eurogroup for Animals
- European Vegetarian Union
- Femmes Autochtones pour le Développement et l'Environnement (FADE)
- Fern
- FoodRise
- Forum des Amis de Développement et la Protection de l'Environnement (FADPE) asbl
- Fundación Veg
- Global Youth Coalition
- Good Food Institute Brazil
- Green REV Institute
- Green Up African Forum for Environmental Action and Development (GAFEAD)
- Grønn Framtid
- Humane World for Animals
- Indian Youth Climate Network
- Initiative for Progress and Environmental Protection IPPE Asbl
- International Centre for Animal Rights and Ethics (ICARE)
- International Vegetarian Union (IVU)
- Madre Brava
- Mercy For Animals
- Mighty Earth
- NC Animal Advocates United (NCAAU)
- négyosz
- NeverEndingFood Permaculture
- Nevidimi zivotni
- New Roots Institute
- Notre Voix

- Nutrient Density Alliance
- Omar Niode Foundation - Culture & Culinary Arts
- Observatoire National des Alimentations Végétales (ONAV)
- Pan African Health Professionals Organisation (PAHPO)
- Phase2.earth
- Physicians Association for Nutrition International (PAN International)
- Plant-Based Canada
- Plant-Based Health Professionals UK
- Plant-Based Treaty
- ProVeg International
- RADDEV
- Real Food Systems Youth Network
- Sea Shepherd Brasil
- SHE Foundation
- Sinergia Animal
- Sociedad Española de Nutrición y Medicina Responsables (SENUMER)
- Solutions for Our Climate
- Somali Environmental Development Organization SEDO
- Step Up Youth Initiative
- Sustainable Pet Food Foundation
- Tailored Food
- The Alliance for Sustainable Schools
- The Conservation Conversation
- The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy
- The Humane League
- The Vegetarian Society of Denmark
- True Animal Protein Price Coalition (TAPP Coalition)
- Türetim - Prosumer Economy Society
- UNASCAD-Haiti
- Unión Vegetariana Española
- Universal Versatile Society
- Viral Vegans
- WateryNation (Yayasan Tirta Artha Asri)
- World Animal Protection
- Yaşamdan Yana Derneği (Stant with Life Org)

- Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) e.V.
- Youth Climate Save Canada

## **Cities and officials**

### ***Cities***

- City of West Hollywood, California, United States

### ***Officials***

- Ian Middleton, Green Group Leader, Oxfordshire County Council
- Chelsea Byers, Mayor, West Hollywood, United States
- Jacob Sanders, Councillor and Leader of the Labour Group,  
Forest of Dean District
- Jackie Dale, Councillor, Forest of Dean District
- Bolli ismail Serunjogi, Administrative Director, Kabalagala parish Council
- Doug Maskell, Councillor, Caledon, Canada

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