

JOINT STATEMENT LETTER ON SUSTAINABLE CATERING AT COP27

Drafted by the 50by40 UNFCCC Action Group, signed by 165 civil society organizations

12 September 2022

Dear Ambassador Ayman, dear COP27 Presidency,

(A copy of this letter has been sent to Mr Ambassador Mohamed Nasr, Dr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, Dr Omnia El Omrani, and Ms. Menna Moustafa)

We write to you on behalf of the members of the 50by40 UNFCCC Action Group and more than 160 leading civil society partners who have been advocating for global food system change at the UNFCCC level for many years.

We applaud the Egyptian Presidency for including an Adaptation and Agriculture Day to address food systems in this year's program at COP. Given that current world affairs and climatic occurrences have revealed gaps in our food supply chain, food systems and security are finally taking centre stage. As you will know, the IPCC has acknowledged that shifting to more plant-based diets is central to more sustainable, healthy, and secure food systems. However, despite accounting for approximately one third of total global greenhouse gas emissions,¹ food systems have not been tackled seriously at previous COPs. We believe the Adaptation and Agriculture Day represents a significant opportunity to advance the much-needed discussions surrounding food and climate change.

Moreover, we congratulate the Presidency on the FAST initiative. We believe funding and financial incentives will be critical to accelerate and facilitate a just transition to more resilient and sustainable food systems. In addition, COP27 will be the first COP to feature several food-related pavilions in the Blue Zone, including the "Food4Climate Pavilion" spearheaded by members of the 50by40 UNFCCC Action Group as well as the "Food Systems Pavilion", the "Food and Agriculture Pavilion" and the "Agrifood Systems of the Americas Pavilion".

While we welcome engagement and commitments to action around agriculture and food at the highest level, we believe COP27 also presents a unique opportunity to implement those actions at the practical level. **We therefore respectfully encourage you to ensure that nutritious, locally sourced and sustainable plant-based foods are a leading feature on the catering menu at this year's COP27 across all conference venues.**

Traditional Egyptian, Mediterranean and African cuisine is renowned for its wealth of healthy, high-quality plant-based dishes that represent local taste, culinary customs and heritage. Egypt is ideally positioned to show real climate leadership in action by showcasing a breadth of delicious, nutritious and innovative plant-based foods to international delegates. This would not

¹ IPCC AR6, WGIII, available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

only demonstrate that more sustainable, affordable and healthy diets that support local farmers are achievable and effective, but also highlight the co-benefits of predominantly plant-based diets on human and planetary health. This could be illustrated by providing user-friendly information on the GHG emissions and water use of all items and dishes served at the cafeterias to enable delegates to make more sustainable choices.

At COP24 in Katowice, the topic of serving less resource-intensive and more plant-based foods was raised by many participants as they struggled to find healthy and diversified plant-based meals in the cafeterias. An analysis² of the menu showed that it could have been significantly more climate-friendly by increasing the plant-based options and reducing the amount of animal-derived items.

Some progress on plant-based catering has already been made during the climate and environment discussions in Madrid, Glasgow and Stockholm and at the recent G7 leaders summit in Elmau. **In this context, COP27 offers the opportunity to demonstrate that hosts and caterers facilitating climate negotiations at the highest level are walking the talk and offering predominantly plant-based options for delegates at restaurants and reducing the amount of animal-sourced proteins.**

We would be honoured to have the opportunity to support your office and the catering service at COP27 to develop healthy, inclusive and affordable options that will showcase the diversity of local cuisine while simultaneously reducing the catering services' environmental impact.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to your Presidency making COP27 a historic moment in shaping the future of our global food systems.

Yours truly,

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² Farm Forward, Center for Biological Diversity, Brighter Green (2018): The Climate Cost of Food at COP24. Available at: https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/population_and_sustainability/sustainability/pdfs/COP24-menu-analysis-fact-sheet.pdf.

This joint letter has been initiated and drafted by the following organizations from the 50by40 UNFCCC Action Group:



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