Global youth call for climate-friendly food at COP28

22 April 2023

H.E. Dr. Al Jaber, H.E. Al Mazrui,

We write to you on behalf of the official youth constituency to UNFCCC (YOUNGO) and over 140 youth and civil society organisations, calling on the COP28 Presidency to set an example in climate leadership by serving sustainable food at this year’s climate change conference in Dubai.

To achieve this goal, we strongly encourage that at COP28:

• At least ¾ of all food options on the menu are plant-based;¹

• All food options—especially plant-based items—are affordable, nutritious, regionally sourced (where feasible), and culturally inclusive;

• A clear emissions label is displayed for all food options, as implemented at COP26.

Progress on climate-friendly catering has already been made at previous COPs and major climate events in Bonn, Glasgow, and Stockholm. Yet, despite persistent demands from attendees, especially youth, the food on offer at these events has been out of step with the climate emergency.

The science is clear: the food we produce and consume has a significant impact on the triple planetary crisis. Global food systems account for approximately one third of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and are on course to jeopardise the 1.5°C target even if we immediately phased out all fossil fuel production.²³

A majority of these emissions come from animal agriculture, with animal products having a significantly larger environmental footprint on average than plant-based foods.⁴⁵ Leading IPCC climate scientists consistently recommend that shifting to more plant-based diets is one of the most effective ways to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change.⁶

We therefore applaud the UAE for including the promotion of plant-based diets and reduction of food waste as part of the 2023 Year of Sustainability. As the first country in the region to sign the Paris Agreement and announce its Net Zero Strategy, the UAE has already shown climate action leadership.

food.agriculture@youngoclimate.org
www.youngoclimate.org
Now, the UAE has a unique opportunity to set another milestone and become the first presidency to make catering at COP truly sustainable and predominantly plant-based. This step would also allow the UAE to highlight the importance of food systems in climate action, showcase its rich local cuisine, and cement its status as a pioneer in the use of innovative food and agriculture technologies.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to further communication on this matter as soon as possible. We would be delighted to have the opportunity to meet with representatives of the UAE presidency at the AIM for Climate Summit in Washington D.C. in May or at SB58 in Bonn in June to discuss how we can best advance our joint goal of sustainable food systems transformation at COP28.

Sincerely,

Hemavathi S. Shekhar
Global South Focal Point

Zihan Xuan
Global North Focal Point

This letter was initiated by the YOUNGO Food & Agriculture Working Group and the Food@COP campaign, with support from ProVeg International.

Endnotes
1 Plant-based foods consist of fruits, vegetables, pulses, legumes, grains, nuts, seeds, and their derivatives.
The Official Children and Youth Constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

**Endorsing Coalitions:**
- Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)
- CAN Latin America (CANLA)
- Fridays for Future Most Affected People and Areas (MAPA)
- International Association of students in Agricultural and related Sciences (IAAS)
- International Student Environmental Coalition
- Loss and Damage Youth Coalition
- Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY)
- MENA Youth Network
- Physicians Association for Nutrition (PAN)
- US Climate Action Network (USCAN)
- World Food Forum
- YOUNGO

**Endorsing Organisations:**
- A Well-Fed World
- Aalem for Orphan and Vulnerable Children
- Abibinsroma Foundation
- Action et Education Pour Tous (AEPT)
- African Youth Environment Assembly-DRC
- Alianza Alimentaria y Acción Climática A.C.
- Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
- Anasi Farmers Association
- Animal Legal Defense Fund
- Animal Think Tank
- Aquatic Life Institute
- Association Globale pour l’Environnement et le Climat - AGEC
- Ayllu Vegano
- Brighter Green
- Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
- Care About Climate
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Center for Earth Ethics
- Center for Grassroots Sustainability and Sovereignty
- Center for International Cooperation and Project Implementation
- Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment & Management (CECIC)
- Centre for Human Rights and Climate Change Research Young Researchers Forum
- Clim-Eat
- ClimTalk
- Climate 2025
- Climate Save Movement
- Climate Words
- Comité de Dialogue et de Cohabitation Pacifique
- Community And Family Aid Foundation - Ghana
- Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) International
- Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) USA
- Congo Basin Youth for Climate
- CSBE-MSAP Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE)
- Earth Action, Inc.
- Earth Safety Valve
- Earthjustice
- EAT
- Eat for the Earth
- ECOBAS Sustainable Youth Foundation
- Enable the Disabled Action (EDA)
- Essere Animali
- Fair Farm Project
- Feedback Global
- Flemish Youth Council (Vlaamse Jeugdraad)
- Food Tank
- Food@COP
- ForestCom
- Foundation for Upholding Agricultural Practice (FUAP)
- Fridays for Future Digital
- Fridays for Future Goma
- Fridays for Future Sierra Leone
- Fridays for Future Ukraine
- G.R.E.E.N. Dreams
- Gallifrey Foundation
- Germanwatch
- Global Environmental and Climate Conservation Initiative (GECCI)
- Go Green Sudan
- Grandmothers Advocacy Network
- Great Youth Owerri Municipal Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative Society
- Green Life Family
- Green REV Institute
- GreenFaith
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Green Fund
- Health Care Without Harm
- Horn of Africa Welfare Development Organization (HAWDO)
- Humane Society International
- Ianna Mallayka Environmental Organization
- IATP
- International Consortium on Climate and Biodiversity (ICCB)
- International Forestry Students’ Association (IFSA) KAFCOL
- International Helping for Young International Human Rights & Social Justice Council (IHR - SJJC)
- Jeremy Coller Foundation
- Jewish Initiative for Animals
- Kenya Environmental Action Network (KEAN)
- Kisumu Environmental Champions
- Klima-Allianz Deutschland
- Klimadlegation
- Latinas for Climate
- MAI Foundation
- Malaysian Youth Delegation (MYD) Climate
- Marafiki United Green Youths Initiative
- Mercy For Animals
- Mifali
- Mighty Earth
- Morya Samajik Pratishtan
- National Coordinating Organization for Farmers Associations The Gambia (NACOFAG)
- New Hope for the Poor
- ObbyPress Foundation
- ODD TV
- Omar Niode Foundation
- ONG-ASHAD
- Our Kids’ Climate
- Pan African Youth Network for a Culture of Peace (PAYNCoP)
- Parents For Future Global
- Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
- Peoples Federation for National Peace and Development (PEFENAP)
- Physicians Against Red Meat (PhARM)
- Plant Based Foods Institute
- Plant Based Treaty
- Plant-Based Advocates
- Planting Change Foundation
- Plataforma ALTO
- Powering Young Initiatives
- ProVeg International
- Rainforest Alliance
- RAPAD Maroc
- Real Food Systems
- Réseau des Jeunes pour le Développement Communautaire
- Seva Bharati
- SHE Changes Climate
- Sinergia Animal
- SPIRIT Cultural NGO
- Sustyory
- Switch4Good
- TEAL Climate
- The Humane League
- The Movements Trust
- Think Green
- UN1FY Nepal
- United Nations Association (UNA) of Chad
- United Youth Initiative for Africa
- Vegetarianos Hoy
- VegFest Fiji
- We The World Botswana Chapter
- World and Peoples in Transformation (WOPT)
- World Animal Protection
- YMCA Ndola
- YMCA of Lagos
- Young Africans Network for Global Goals (YANGG) - Kenya
- Youth Council in Action for Nation (YOUTH CAN)
- Youth Diplomats
- Youth Foundation of Bangladesh
- Youth Love Egypt Foundation
- Youth4Nature
- Zero Hour

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