



Food & Climate Action Group Submission on COP 30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

March 2026

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we welcome the opportunity to provide inputs to the *COP 30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030*.

The outcome of the first Global Stocktake (GST1) emphasized the importance of halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 and recognized the need for integrated, multi-sectoral solutions including sustainable agriculture and resilient food systems and “protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems, including forests.”¹

Food systems are central to addressing deforestation and forest degradation, and action is required at all stages of the food system—from production through consumption and waste. Current policy responses remain heavily skewed toward supply-side measures, while insufficiently addressing the consumption patterns that drive agricultural expansion threatening forest ecosystems.

Agricultural expansion linked to animal agriculture, including degrading or clearing forests for the rearing of livestock and animal feed production, and the prevalence of false solutions, which risk further forest degradation and other environmental harms, have persisted as barriers to halting and reversing deforestation. At the same time, demand-side interventions, particularly shifts toward more plant-rich diets, remain underutilized yet powerful levers for reducing pressure on forests and enabling faster, more long-lasting progress toward deforestation goals.

What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social — preventing the halting and reversing of deforestation and forest degradation?

Barrier 1: Agricultural Expansion Linked to Animal Agriculture

Deforestation is overwhelmingly driven by food systems. A critical barrier preventing the halting and reversing of deforestation and forest degradation is addressing agricultural expansion linked to industrial animal agriculture. Agricultural expansion causes almost 90% of global

¹ 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.

deforestation,² with pasture expansion and feed crop production for industrial animal agriculture among the key drivers. From 2000 to 2018, livestock grazing accounted for nearly 40% of global forest loss.³ In the Brazilian Amazon, “pasture is the primary land use for deforested areas over the years [in the period 1987-2020], representing more than 90% of deforestation.”⁴ A 2026 study published in the journal *Nature Food* quantified deforestation associated with 184 different commodities and found that beef was, by far, responsible for the largest share of commodity-driven deforestation.⁵

This expansion is closely tied to consumption patterns, particularly growing demand for beef and other animal-source foods in high- and middle-income countries. Without addressing demand, efforts to stabilize or reduce agricultural land use in order to protect forests face structural limits, and risk failing to address the underlying causes.

Agricultural subsidies can artificially lower the costs of GHG emissions and pollution at a domestic level, and can also produce environmental impacts across borders, with subsidies in one country driving deforestation elsewhere. For example, livestock subsidies in the United States have increased demand for soybeans, 75% of which are used as animal feed,⁶ which in turn is driving deforestation in Brazil.⁷

Barrier 2: Risks of False Solutions

Policies that promote “efficiency” in animal production and increases in yield without addressing the unsustainable scale of current animal production represent another critical barrier. These policies can include technological and digital innovation as well as genetic manipulation. “Efficient” production relies on monocultures and fossil fuel inputs, which are themselves sources of threats to forests and biodiversity. Furthermore, intensification often leads to more, not less, agricultural expansion as higher profits associated with cheap meat incentivize land conversion over conservation.⁸

Proposals to further intensify animal agriculture risk exacerbating other environmental and social harms while locking in high demand for land, feed, and water. They also fail to address the fact that a significant portion of deforestation and forest degradation is caused by existing intensive systems. As documented by numerous academics⁹ and in several investigations, the

² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], *FRA 2020 Remote Sensing Survey*, FAO Forestry Paper, No. 186, p. 47 (2022).

³ *Id.*

⁴ MAPBIOMAS, [Destques do Mapeamento Anual de Cobertura e Uso da Terra BIOMA AMAZÔNIA](#), p. 12 (2024).

⁵ Singh, C., Persson, U.M., *Global patterns of commodity-driven deforestation and associated carbon emissions*, *Nat Food* 7, 138–151 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-026-01305-4>

⁶ Fraanje, W. & Garnett, T., [Soy: food, feed, and land use change](#), Food Climate Research Network, University of Oxford (2020).

⁷ Reyes-García, V., [The costs of subsidies and externalities of economic activities driving nature decline](#), *AMBIO*, p. 1131 (2025).

⁸ Kremen, Claire, *Reframing the land-sparing/land-sharing debate for biodiversity conservation*, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1355, no. 1, p 52-76 (2015).

⁹ Lauber, K., Morris, V., et al., *The Animal Agriculture Industry’s Role in Obstructing Climate Action*, in Robert, T. J. and others (eds), *Climate Obstruction: A Global Assessment* (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197787144.003.0004>

agribusiness sector continues to receive preferential treatment when it comes to environmental and climate regulation, weakening efforts to effectively address emissions, land conversion, and other associated negative environmental impacts of such animal production systems. The potential land-saving of intensified, “efficient” production is not based in science or real-world experience, particularly in the absence of a global commitment to protecting forests, addressing agricultural pollution, and reducing the overconsumption of animal products in high-consuming countries.

The 2025 EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy, sustainable and just food systems calls for a significant global reduction in animal production and cautions that emissions intensity improvements in animal production may increase other risks, warning “[c]aution is urged around other environmental effects of densely occupied, confined systems, such as concentrated nutrient pollution, disease risk, overuse of antimicrobials, animal health and welfare, and labour conditions.”¹⁰

What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the commitment to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation?

Lever 1: Consumption Shifts Toward More Plant-based Diets

Shifts towards sustainable, plant-rich diets are one of the most effective and underutilized levers to decrease pressures on forests. The IPCC’s AR6 states that, “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, [and] support the preservation of biodiversity and planetary health.”¹¹

The second Global Land Outlook emphasizes the important role of food systems in ensuring positive outcomes for nature and climate, stating, “[a] transition to plant-based diets, where appropriate, would be a 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.”¹² The Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7), the most comprehensive scientific assessment of the global environment to date, further confirms the importance of sustainable diets, stating that “shifting towards plant-based diets can reduce pressure on land” and noting that “studies estimate that plant-based diets alone could reduce agricultural land use by up to 76 percent.”¹³

Embedding dietary shifts into national climate and forest strategies would address the root drivers of deforestation rather than treating forest loss as a downstream symptom. Demand-side

¹⁰ Rockström J, Thilsted S, Willett W. et al., [The EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy, sustainable, and just food systems](#), The Lancet (2025).

¹¹ IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, 7.4.5.1 (2022), https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FullReport.pdf.

¹² 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.

¹³ United Nations Environment Programme, *Global Environment Outlook*, Seventh Edition, 17.3.2, (2025).

measures, including public procurement standards, dietary guidelines, fiscal incentives, and public awareness efforts, offer scalable approaches for governments to reduce deforestation pressure while delivering public health, climate and biodiversity co-benefits.

Lever 2: Repurposing Agricultural Subsidies

Under target 18 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, governments committed to identifying, reducing or eliminating incentives harmful to biodiversity, including agricultural subsidies, by 2030.¹⁴ Agricultural subsidies can be repurposed to incentivise the production, and increase the accessibility and affordability, of nutrient-rich plant-based foods and reduce demand for industrial meat and dairy. Such support should be based on agroecological approaches which benefit local and Indigenous communities and support forest preservation. The World Bank's *Recipe for a Liveable Planet* calls on high-income countries to "decrease their own consumer demand for emissions-intensive, animal-source foods" including through "shift[ing] subsidies for red meat and dairy toward lower-emission foods" and "ensuring that the environmental and health costs borne by society are fully included in food prices."¹⁵

Lever 3: Protein Diversification

Protein diversification, including plant proteins, plant-based analogs, fermentation-derived, and cultivated proteins, can complement dietary shifts by expanding consumer choice while reducing reliance on land-intensive animal-source foods. Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs) indicate land-use reductions ranging from 86% to 97% when novel plant-based foods are compared to conventional beef production.¹⁶ Access to climate finance remains limited and unevenly distributed across many developing countries, constraining the implementation of sustainable production systems.¹⁷ Climate finance and international cooperation mechanisms could support research infrastructure,¹⁸ innovation ecosystems, and entrepreneurship related to sustainable food technologies in forest rich countries, in turn supporting locally appropriate alternatives to meat, reducing import dependency, and creating economic opportunities aligned with forest conservation. For instance, in Brazil, transitions from livestock farming to plant-based agroforestry systems have demonstrated how degraded pastures can be transformed into biodiverse, carbon-rich landscapes that also deliver significantly higher farmer incomes.¹⁹

¹⁴ Convention on Biological Diversity, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 18, 15/4 (Dec. 19, 2022), <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>

¹⁵ Sutton, et al., [Recipe for a Livable Planet: Achieving Net Zero Emissions in the Agrifood System](#), Agriculture and Food Series, World Bank, p.xiii (2024).

¹⁶ United Nations Environment Programme, *What's cooking? An assessment of potential impacts of selected novel alternatives to conventional animal products*, p28 (2023), citing Rubio, N.R., et al., *Plant-based and cell-based approaches to meat production*, Nature Communications 11, 6276 (2020), and Saget, S., et al., *Comparative life cycle assessment of plant and beef-based patties, including carbon opportunity costs*, Sustainable Production and Consumption, 28, 936-952 (2021).

¹⁷ Climate Policy Initiative, [Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2023](#), (2023).

¹⁸ ClimateWorks Foundation, Global Innovation Needs Assessments: Protein diversity (2021), <https://www.climateworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GINAs-Protein-Diversity.pdf>

¹⁹ ProVeg Brasil, *Increasing Income, Respecting The Planet, Nourishing People*, (2025) <https://proveg.org/br/report/transicao-agroflorestas-vegetais/>

Conclusion

Greater integration of food systems considerations into climate and forest policy frameworks could significantly improve the effectiveness of implementation. Recognizing food system transformation—taking a systems-level approach from production to consumption, including dietary shifts and protein diversification—as a complementary measure to forest conservation, restoration, and sustainable land management is critical to address the underlying drivers of deforestation and to unlock synergies between climate, biodiversity and health objectives.

The COP 30 Presidency Roadmap presents a timely opportunity to explicitly link dietary shifts, subsidy reform, and food system investment with forest outcomes, ensuring that commitments to halt and reverse deforestation are supported by coherent demand-side strategies. Halting and reversing deforestation by 2030 will not be achievable without confronting the consumption patterns that drive agricultural expansion. Dietary shifts toward more plant-rich foods, enabled by subsidy reform, regulatory alignment, and investment in sustainable alternatives, can reduce pressure on forests while advancing climate, biodiversity, and public health goals.

[The Food & Climate Action Group](#) is a coalition of 25+ international NGOs advocating for food systems transformation within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The statement above represents the position of some of the group members, which are listed below.

Brighter Green
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
Climate Bridges
Good Food Institute Brazil
Humane World for Animals
Mercy For Animals
Plant Based Treaty
Project Drawdown
ProVeg International
Sinergia Animal