COP30 Presidency Roadmap: Halting & Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

Halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 will not be possible without addressing the structural role of industrial animal agriculture in driving land conversion, forest degradation and biodiversity loss. A credible roadmap must therefore go beyond technical land-use measures and confront the economic and political systems that incentivize expansion of cattle, soy for feed and other forest-risk commodities.

This submission represents the views of the Just Food Transition Network, bringing together a globally diverse community of actors—including farmers, farm workers, pastoralists, women, youth, and advocates across public health, human and labour rights, animal welfare and environmental fields—reflecting a wide range of lived experiences and expertise. While united by a shared vision to move beyond industrial animal agriculture, the network recognises and centres the diverse perspectives, needs and leadership of the communities most impacted by the transition.

Part I – Why Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation Is Central to the Paris Agreement

1. Paris Agreement, UNFCCC and other International Commitments

Forests are not merely carbon sinks—they are living ecosystems that sustain biodiversity, regulate climate, protect watersheds, and uphold the livelihoods, cultures, and rights of millions of people, particularly Indigenous Peoples and local communities,with women having an essential role. Halting and reversing deforestation is therefore essential for achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement and responding to the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake (GST1), which highlight the urgent need for accelerated action across sectors to address the drivers of emissions and ecosystem degradation.

2. Environmental and Scientific Aspects

Industrial agricultural expansion remains the primary driver of global deforestation, accounting for almost 90 percent of forest loss worldwide[1]. Within this context, the expansion of land-intensive livestock production and associated feed supply chains has become a significant but often under-addressed contributor to forest conversion. Globally, livestock production occupies nearly 80 percent of agricultural land[2] while providing less than one fifth of global calories, and approximately three quarters of global soy production is used for animal feed[3]. In several regions, including the

Amazon and Cerrado in South America, cattle ranching and feed crop expansion have contributed to large-scale forest loss and ecosystem degradation.

Deforestation not only accelerates climate change but also drives biodiversity loss, threatens wildlife habitats and disrupts ecosystems that support human well-being. Forest loss can also increase interactions between wildlife, livestock and human populations, contributing to heightened risks of zoonotic disease spillover. Efforts to halt and reverse deforestation must therefore address structural drivers across food systems, trade and finance while safeguarding biodiversity, protecting animals, and supporting the rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to enable a just transition towards deforestation-free food systems.

Part II – What Countries Can and Should Do

4. a. Deforestation and Forest Degradation Drivers

Weak Food System Governance

- **Unequal accountability frameworks**: Responsibility is often placed disproportionately on forest-rich developing countries, while insufficient attention is given to global drivers, particularly demand for commodities linked to deforestation in high-income countries. Consumption patterns in the Global North, especially for animal-based products and feed crops, continue to drive land conversion in producer regions of the Global South. At the same time, many forest countries face structural constraints, including crushing debt burdens and limited access to concessional finance, which limit their capacity to protect forests and lock them into extractive agricultural models to service debt and pursue development.

- **Corporate capture and vested interests**: Corporate influence in commodity sectors fundamentally weakens governance, in ways that enable exemptions, loopholes, and weak enforcement that allows industrial producers to externalize environmental costs particularly those impacting forests. These dynamics shift the burden of environmental degradation onto ecosystems and local communities. Voluntary certification schemes reflect, in part, a systemic failure to establish and enforce mandatory accountability measures. In practice, voluntary certification schemes and industry-led roundtables for products such as palm oil, beef, soy, and timber have delivered limited impact in reversing deforestation. As non-binding mechanisms, they often result in weak standards, limited monitoring, and continued deforestation alongside greenwashing sustainability claims. High compliance costs also exclude smallholders and small and medium enterprises, reinforcing market concentration among larger corporate actors who profit from forest destruction.Without robust, binding regulations and transparent oversight, such voluntary approaches risk serving as substitutes rather than complements to effective governance.

- **Policy incoherence**: Despite commitments to protect forests, many governments continue to subsidize and support activities that drive deforestation and forest degradation, including industrial animal agriculture expansion, infrastructure development, and poorly regulated

bioenergy supply chains. These conflicting signals undermine enforcement and weaken overall governance.

- **Insecure land tenure**: Weak land governance and insecure tenure rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, with an increased unfairness towards women, increase vulnerability to land grabbing, illegal clearing and unsustainable agricultural expansion whilst hindering restoration efforts. Indigenous Peoples, afrodescendants and local communities are the best forest protectors, yet their rights are systematically violated.

Growing Demand for Animal-Based Food

- Animal-based foods from industrialized systems are being consumed in growing, unhealthy amounts across many countries, harming both public health and environmental sustainability. As incomes rise and dietary patterns shift toward higher levels of animal protein consumption in many regions, the expansion of industrial livestock production and feed crop cultivation has accelerated. This demand increases pressure on forests through the expansion of pasture and the large-scale production of feed crops such as soy and maize.
- Addressing deforestation therefore requires attention not only to production systems but also to the broader food system dynamics that shape demand, including consumption patterns, food environments and access to healthy foods, market incentives, and dietary guidelines. As the Just Food Transition Network[4] emphasizes, encouraging diets within planetary and social boundaries can play an important role in reducing pressure on forest ecosystems while supporting public health, climate mitigation and adaptation, and food security.

Structural Demand for Feed in Industrial Livestock Systems

- The expansion of livestock production and associated feed supply chains is a major driver of agricultural land conversion in forested regions. Global demand for commodities such as soy and maize for animal feed continues to increase as industrial livestock production intensifies. While it is well known that much of the global soy produced is used as feed for farmed animals, making it a major cause of deforestation, there is less awareness that large quantities of grain (barley, corn, wheat and oats) are also fed to animals. In fact, the amount of grain used in animal feed far exceeds the amount of soy used in this way, accounting for around 1,000 million metric tons per year. According to the International Grains Council, 45% of the world's grain is used as animal feed.
- These global supply chains link consumption patterns in international markets to deforestation in producer countries. In regions such as the Amazon basin, cattle ranching has historically been responsible for the majority of deforestation, while feed crop expansion further contributes to land-use pressures and even armed violence towards Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- As a result, forest-rich impoverished countries often face economic incentives to convert forests into agricultural land in order to maintain competitiveness in global commodity markets, creating a cycle where higher profits from these crops incentivize further agricultural expansion

Misaligned Finance

- Economic and financial systems frequently incentivize agricultural expansion linked to deforestation. Public subsidies, development finance and private investments support livestock production and feed cultivation without sufficient safeguards to prevent forest conversion. Agriculture subsidies are responsible for 14% of global deforestation, according to the World Bank[5].
- At the same time, financial support for sustainable agricultural systems, agroecology, forest protection, conservation and restoration remains limited in many regions. This imbalance makes it difficult for governments and producers to prioritize forest protection and sustainable land-use pathways.
- As highlighted in World Animal Protection's *Subsidising Factory Farm Harm*, current subsidy structures disproportionately benefit large-scale industrial operations, while public investment in agroecology remains minimal, estimated at only around 1–1.5% of total agricultural research funding. The report also notes that subsidized soy, beef and palm oil production contributes materially to global deforestation and that subsidy-linked deforestation released an estimated 4.3 billion tonnes of carbon over a 20-year period.

4. b. Deforestation and Forest Degradation: Solutions

A just transition away from industrial animal agriculture, reliant on forest degradation and deforestation-linked commodities, towards equitable, humane and sustainable food systems represents an effective strategy to considerably curb those problems, whilst delivering multiple social, environmental and economic benefits. Equitable, humane and sustainable food systems are climate-resilient, locally and democratically governed, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, promote biodiversity, protect animal welfare, empower workers, and advance food sovereignty that fulfills food security.

To achieve a deforestation-free food system, we recommend three key levers of change: strengthen food system governance, promote agroecological practices, and shift towards diets within planetary and social boundaries in high-consuming countries while protecting traditional diets and local food systems in low-consuming countries. These levers of change must occur alongside cross-cutting financial measures.

Strengthen Food System and Forest Governance

Strengthening the food system and forest governance is a foundational lever to halt deforestation. This requires:

- **Limiting corporate influence** over forest protection policies and regulatory bodies with full transparency of any conflicts of interest.
- **Enforcing forest protection laws:** Existing laws and international agreements must be fully enforced to increase accountability for deforestation, forest degradation, land grabbing, and harms to forest dependent communities.
- **Empowering local communities** to regain management over land and water tenure and forest-related policies.

- **Recognizing Indigenous rights**: Indigenous Peoples and forest dependent communities rely on forests for their livelihood; they are the best forest protectors as they are at the front line of any forest-related policies and impacts. To increase Indigenous and community control over lands, it is critical to increase funding for land access and ownership, return stolen land to Indigenous Peoples, establish land co-ops, and implement or strengthen participatory land and territory management and land-sharing agreements.
- **Strengthening policy coherence**: Particularly through the Just Transition Work Programme and the Sharm El Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture and Food Security, governments can help place forest protection at the center of climate action. By aligning climate mitigation, adaptation, land-use planning, rural development, and social policies, governments can ensure that efforts to transform economies and address food security and foreignty also safeguard forests while supporting the livelihoods of communities who depend on them. Policy coherence across agencies also helps identify potentially harmful trade-offs and avoid false solutions.

Promote Agroecological Practices

For impoverished countries severely affected by deforestation and forest degradation, shifting to agroecology can serve as a strategy to reduce pressure on forests, restore degraded landscapes, and strengthen the resilience of forest-dependent communities.
For economically developed countries that heavily rely on industrial animal agriculture, transitioning to agroecology should be prioritized as a key mitigation measure to reduce demand for forest-linked commodities and prevent further forest loss.

Shift Towards Diets Within Planetary and Social Boundaries

For high-consuming countries, putting policies in place that support the uptake of diets within social and planetary boundaries by decreasing the consumption of meat and dairy products is an untapped and necessary strategy to curb deforestation and deliver health co-benefits.
The EAT–Lancet Commission (2025) argues that halting deforestation and other agricultural expansion into natural ecosystems would require a major global dietary shift, including cutting red meat consumption by more than half.

7. Sustainable Forest Management, Bioeconomy, Agroforestry

Illustrative cases and replicable solutions.

Evidence consistently shows that forests under Indigenous and community management have lower deforestation rates and higher biodiversity conservation outcomes compared to other governance models.

- **Latin America**: In the Amazon and Cerrado regions, Indigenous territories serve as critical barriers against agricultural expansion. Indigenous communities have successfully resisted cattle ranching expansion and soy monocultures through territorial defense, traditional knowledge systems, and community monitoring. However, they face increasing threats from corporate land grabbing and weak government enforcement of their land rights.
- **Africa**: Community conservation initiatives in countries like Zambia and Kenya demonstrate how local forest stewardship, when supported with secure tenure rights and adequate

resources, can reverse degradation while improving livelihoods. Women's leadership in community forest management has been particularly effective in integrating biodiversity conservation with food sovereignty.

- **Asia**: Community forest management in countries like Nepal and India shows that when local communities have legal rights and decision-making power over forests, they invest in long-term sustainability, combining traditional knowledge with adaptive management practices.

Part III – Fostering International Cooperation and Addressing Regulatory Bottlenecks

10. Finance, Markets, Partnerships

Align Public Finance with Forest Protection

An effective immediate step to curb deforestation lies in aligning public finance and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) investments with forest protection, starting with subsidies. Subsidies and public investments going to industrial animal agriculture is a key driver of deforestation, and should be, instead, redirected towards Indigenous Peoples and communities to steward forest protection and support workers and farmers affected by the transition out of deforestation-linked industries, such as industrial animal agriculture. This financial transformation is essential for a credible roadmap.

Carbon Markets

The practice of allowing companies to purchase carbon credits, often through carbon markets or cap and-trade, to "offset" their GHG emissions in one area by investing in practices that reduce or remove GHGs in other areas is highly underregulated and lacks accountability. The following concerns apply to all market-based schemes that allow companies to purchase pollution credits, including tropical forest carbon credits that claim to protect tropical forests:

- Carbon markets let the biggest polluters off the hook. Companies that purchase the most carbon credits tend to be the largest corporations that cause the most damage, using credits to continue causing environmental harm.[6] Carbon credit prices are notoriously low, making it hard for smaller farms to turn a profit from selling them while allowing big polluters to buy up a lot at little cost.[7]
- Carbon markets are almost always voluntary, lacking accountability and transparency, and there have been documented instances of fraud and inaccurate reporting.[8] [9] In a recent analysis, prominent carbon credit purchasers invested in carbon offset projects that didn't result in the greenhouse gas reductions they claimed. [10]
- Carbon offsets may increase emissions. A study of California's cap-and-trade program found that the majority of facilities in the program reported higher GHG emissions since the start of the program.[11]
- Many offsets are unmeasurable and cannot be easily quantified. For example, carbon sequestration is one of the most popular forms of offsetting, but because there is no scientific consensus on how to measure soil carbon, it cannot be accurately quantified in the

form of credits.[12] An industry has cropped up to take advantage of selling carbon credits based on these inconclusive measurements.[13]

- Offsetting harms marginalized communities. The facilities regulated in cap-and-trade programs are often disproportionately located in disadvantaged communities.[14] Some carbon offset projects have been linked to human rights violations, particularly concerning Indigenous land rights.[15]

Conclusion and recommendations

Food system transformation grounded in justice and the Common but But Differentiated Responsibilities Principle

Incremental reforms and voluntary corporate commitments have failed. Halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 requires confronting uncomfortable truths about power, consumption, and economic systems.

Halting deforestation will not happen without a profound transformation of how we produce and consume food. The corporate-controlled industrial animal system has been allowed to externalize the environmental and social costs of its production for too long and the world's forests, climate, biodiversity, and vulnerable populations have paid the price. Its role in deforestation and forest degradation cannot be overstated and addressing this industry and its underlying drivers must be a core part of any forest plan.

Forest protection must be grounded in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. High-income countries that drive demand for forest-risk commodities must take primary responsibility for transforming their consumption patterns and providing adequate finance to support forest protection in the Global South without imposing conditionalities that undermine sovereignty or perpetuate colonial relationships. Regardless of development stage or forest cover, recognition and protection of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights must be the foundation of any forest policy.

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