



IUF - International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations

UITA - Unión Internacional de Trabajadores/as de la Alimentación, Agricultura, Hotelería, Restaurantes, Catering, Tabaco y Afines

UITA - Union internationale des travailleurs-euses de l'alimentation, de l'agriculture, de l'hôtellerie-restauration, du catering, du tabac et des branches connexes

IUL - Internationale Union der Lebensmittel-, Landwirtschafts-, Hotel-, Restaurant-, Catering- und Genussmittelarbeiter-Gewerkschaften

IUL - Internationella unionen för livsmedels-, njutningsmedels- och lantarbetareförbund samt förbund inom hotell-, restaurang- och cateringbranschen

## **Socioeconomic and food security dimensions of climate change in the agriculture sector.**

### ***TUNGO statement by the International Union of Food Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and allied Workers Associations (IUF)***

The IUF has 423 affiliates in 127 countries and is the global union federation for food, farm, and hospitality workers and represents more than 10 million workers.

Transformation to climate friendly agricultural practices is necessary to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and will also reduce poverty and inequality and enhance food security.

Almost one billion people are chronically undernourished. Many of those suffering malnutrition are engaged in growing the world's food. They are smallholders and agricultural workers. Agriculture is the sector where there is the greatest incidence of child labour. 108 million girls and boys work in agriculture worldwide and are deprived of formal education and suffer from exposure to workplace hazards.

Women in the dual roles of agricultural worker and primary family caregiver, face extra burdens and suffer greater deprivation resulting from environmental degradation and diminishing food security. Women are more likely to be victims of sexual harassment and other forms of gender based violence.

The IUF advocates a rights based approach to the socioeconomic and food security dimensions of climate change. The right to food must frame the shift to climate friendly agricultural practices. Rights at work underpin access to safe, nutritious and adequate food. Human rights are universal, indivisible and interrelated. A rights based approach is centred on the right to food, the right to a healthy and safe workplace, the prohibition on forced and child labour, and access to core ILO standards, particularly C87 on freedom of association and C97 on the right to organize and enter into collective bargaining. Safe and healthy workers in secure employment produce safe food.

Food systems are central to climate change solutions. Agricultural workers and smallholders must have a voice in shaping change and their representatives must have a prominent role in re-designing the food system.

The IUF advocates agroecology as necessary to both reduce emissions to meet global targets and to reform the world food system to guarantee the right to food.

Agroecology is an approach that blends experimental science and traditional knowledge and considers social and ecological dynamics as interrelated and inseparable.

Developed nations and agribusiness interests prioritize 'sustainable intensive agriculture' (also known as the "New Green Revolution") to mitigate GHG emissions.

The IUF believes that this approach, combined with a trade system that upholds the interests of investors at the expense of human rights and food security, will fail to

prevent global temperatures rising by more than 1.5 degrees and will put millions of lives and livelihoods in jeopardy.

The transition to agro ecological farming techniques needs to be incentivized by governments and by the FAO.

Agroecology protects biodiversity and promotes soil regeneration. It discourages monoculture and promotes the sustainable farming techniques of polyculture.

To meet climate targets, farming practices must move away from reliance on pesticides and artificial fertilizers. Pesticides emit greenhouse gases and poison the soil, water and people.

New methods of farming require investment in transition so that farmers, workers and rural communities receive income support and comprehensive education and training to enable the transition. Government subsidies to support climate damaging farming including overproduction and monoculture, must be replaced with subsidies to assist transition to agroecology.

International trade in agriculture suppresses human rights and supports monoculture in the name of efficiency. It encourages climate damaging distortions. For example, chickens are reared and slaughtered in Brazil, shipped to China for further processing and exported to North America to be sold in fast food outlets.

Trade in agricultural products currently benefits agribusiness corporations and this exploitative system is supported by the nations of Europe, North America, East Asia and Australasia. Trade rules set by the WTO impoverish small farmers and undermine the right to food. Most of the trade in agriculture is reliant on climate damaging farming practices including monoculture, the use of artificial fertilizers and pesticides, soil exhaustion and genetic engineering. The problem is exacerbated by price distortions created through financialization of the land and its products. Land grabbing violates the rights and destroys the livelihoods of indigenous people who generally practice traditional methods of farming in harmony with nature and protective of biodiversity.

Attention must be given to transition for workers who are employed in food and beverage processing along with their communities. Millions of workers throughout the food supply chain rely on unsustainable food systems for their employment. This is especially true of the meat and dairy sectors. Growing food to feed animals produced for human consumption is an inefficient way of providing protein. Grazing and eating bio-matter not consumed by humans, such as some seaweed which reduces methane emissions, will mitigate against climate damage. Mixed farming through rotation of animals and crops allows soils to regenerate and animal waste to be utilized as fertilizer.

Reducing climate damaging emissions requires the world to move away from CAFO's (concentrated animal feeding operations) as a food production system. As this change occurs, it will be critical to socio economic stability for governments to allocate time and resources to active labour market interventions to manage a just transition for workers who now rely on unsustainable food systems for their livelihood.

The transition planning and implementation must involve tripartite processes of governments, employers and unions to increase effectiveness, acceptance and to deliver just outcomes.

When workers and their communities are abandoned, the results are poverty, rural depopulation, drug addiction and crime, and a political shift of support for authoritarian and xenophobic leaders who promise to deliver an illusory glorious past.

Transition programmes must include income support, education and training on sustainable practices within the food industry as well as preparation for alternative jobs in environmental restoration and community care.

Action is urgent as the world contends with multiple crises: a zoonotic pandemic, malnourishment and obesity linked to a failed food system, and the climate emergency.