



## Meeting Brief

### “Unlocking Solutions to Ensure the Future of Global Food Security”

Roundtable Held on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, 10:00–11:15am EST

#### International Peace Institute and Bioversity

##### Food Is a Victim, a Problem, and a Solution

Urgent action is needed to address the challenges of climate change, health, and food security. Around the world, soaring temperatures, eroding soil, frequent extreme weather events, disappearing groundwater, and flooding are impacting food production, access to food, and the nutritional value of crops. Yet food systems also account for nearly one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions and are a major driver of deforestation and land degradation, making food both a victim and a perpetrator of climate change. Farmers on the front lines are facing daily climate disasters. International and national governance systems need support in managing these constant crises.

The good news is that food can also be a solution. In contrast with transport or energy, it is the only sector that can change from a net source of emissions to a net sink. There are huge opportunities in the food sector. However, to get to these solutions, we need to put thorny issues such as subsidies, shifts in diet, and livestock management on the table. Farmers, scientists, and NGOs need to sit with government representatives and policymakers to find common ground and a common voice. We must address the false dichotomy between adaptation and mitigation, as we can both adapt and mitigate at the same time in food systems. We also need to change the way we talk about food and climate change. We must go beyond simply discussing producing more food and begin to think about how we can make our food systems more sustainable, more resilient, and more nutritious while also improving the livelihoods of the millions of small-scale farmers on whom we depend.

##### Challenges

The challenges of transforming food systems to be more sustainable and resilient to climate change are complex and interconnected:

- **Production:** There is a need to collaborate locally to improve the efficiency of food production and reduce its environmental impact.
- **Diets:** Consumers need choices and incentives if they are to change their diets to be healthier and more sustainable (i.e., more plant-based and less resource-intensive). We need to find ways to engage consumers without burdening them with the responsibility to effect change.
- **Waste:** We need to reduce food loss and waste by not only encouraging behavioral change in the developed world but also making it easier to preserve food at peak harvest times in the developing world.
- **Trade:** We need to make food trade more accessible, sustainable, and equitable.

- **Finance:** We need to curb the perception that sustainable and resilient food systems and innovations are not profitable.
- **Research:** The amount of funding given to agricultural research is inadequate, yet the potential for research to discover the solutions we need is huge.
- **Governance structures:** The fragmented governance system is encumbering communication between relevant food-specific governing bodies.
- **Political redlines:** An “anti-development narrative” needs to be discussed, especially in large fora such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Conferences of the Parties (COPs).

### **Opportunities at COP28 on Food Systems and Climate Change**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is putting food systems, agriculture, and climate at the forefront of the agenda at COP28. They will unveil a high-level declaration on food systems and climate change to reaffirm the importance of food systems transformation in addressing climate change and ask countries to take specific actions to support this transformation.

There will be a road map for scaling up innovation in food systems. This road map could identify key areas where innovation is needed to reduce the environmental impact of food systems and increase their resilience to climate change. It will look at how to accelerate the adoption of these innovations at scale.

There will be a global food systems accountability framework. This framework could track progress on transforming food systems to be more sustainable and resilient to climate change. It could also identify areas where further action is needed.

There will be a commitment to increasing public and private investment in food systems transformation. This commitment could help to bridge the significant funding gap that exists in this area.

There will be a focus on subnational and local action. Food systems are complex and diverse, and solutions need to be tailored to local contexts. COP28 could provide a platform for subnational and local governments, businesses, and civil society organizations to share their experiences and best practices in transforming food systems.

There is an urgent need for philanthropists to step forward as strategic disruptors and supporters of innovation and catalytic change.

### **Conclusion**

Transforming food systems is essential to addressing climate change and building a more sustainable future. It is abundantly clear that we need massive change in all areas of food systems and that governments, the private sector, philanthropies, and individuals all have a role to play in addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities that lie ahead. We must improve coordination between those working on food security and climate action to ensure that we are all working toward the same goals.