

Good Food Cities: Achieving a Planetary Health Diet for All

The current global food system is out of balance. Millions of people around the world have insufficient food whilst millions of others consume too much. More than 820 million people suffer from hunger, yet many more eat an unhealthy diet that contributes to premature death and rising healthcare costs.ⁱ Under-consumption of fruits and vegetables, nuts, and legumes and over-consumption of red meat, dairyⁱⁱ and foods that are ultra-processed and/or high in fat, sugar and saltⁱⁱⁱ are associated with numerous chronic illnesses, such as coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer and type-2 diabetes.

Our diets are not just hurting our health but also the eco-system that supports human life. Food is among the largest drivers of global environmental change contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, freshwater use, interference with the global nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, and land-system change. Research shows that, without substantial changes, greenhouse gas emissions from the food sector will increase by 38% by 2050.^{iv} The world is in a climate crisis, causing droughts, floods, and desertification, reducing our ability to feed everyone on the planet.^v

In 2017, emissions associated with food consumption in C40 cities accounted for an estimated 13% of cities' total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with consumption of animal-sourced food representing roughly 75% of those food emissions.^{vi} Most of the world's food is consumed in cities (80% of all food is expected to be consumed there by 2050^{vii}). Food insecurity, malnutrition, child undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies are increasingly urban problems, just as much as rising rates of obesity.

Furthermore, an estimated one-third of all food produced globally is either lost or wasted, estimated to be worth more than US\$900 billion, equivalent to the GDP of Indonesia or the Netherlands. If food waste was a country, it would be the third largest emitter in the world after China and the United States.^{viii} Food loss also represents a vast waste of labour, water, energy, land and other natural resources, as well as emissions, that went into producing it.^{ix}

As mayors of some of the world's largest cities, we recognize the power of food policy to reduce GHG emissions and deliver on the 1.5°C ambition of the Paris Agreement. We can be global leaders and develop food systems that are sustainable, inclusive and resilient accelerating our progress to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Where our city governments directly purchase food that is served in schools, hospitals and other public institutions we will ensure those meals are **healthy and sustainable** and ideally sourced from organic agriculture.^x We can influence food distribution, availability, and affordability as well as regulate food advertisements in public spaces in order to promote whole foods and **discourage consumption of foods that are ultra-processed and/or high in fat, sugar and salt.**^{xi} We can impact how land is used and how food is produced within and beyond our boundaries. We have the power to reduce food waste to minimize emissions generated by food that is not eaten as well as improve the overall circularity of the system.

Research by [C40/ARUP/University of Leeds](#) and separately by [EAT/Lancet](#) highlight the magnitude of the problem of unsustainable diets for the health of the people and the planet. These studies also provide a way forward and offer concrete targets for transitioning to a "[planetary health diet](#)" -- one which involves eating more fruit, vegetables, nuts, and legumes, and for many, less food from animal sources. The planetary health diet has the potential to dramatically reduce emissions and provide a balanced, nutritional diet for 10 billion people while saving 11 million lives every year. Because obesity and undernutrition often co-exist and food insecurity is a global challenge, the shift towards a planetary health diet involves keeping overall calorie intake within the recommended guidelines and ensuring the consumption of more and better healthy, nutritious food, especially for those with limited food access.

Through C40 and its collaboration with the [EAT Foundation](#), the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#), and the [WRI "Cool Food Pledge"](#), city leaders are working to transform urban food systems. While we are not able to do it all alone, we are committed to respond to the global climate and health emergencies and bring together the necessary stakeholders to quickly deliver results.

We commit to working with our citizens to achieve a '*Planetary Health Diet' for all by 2030^{xii}*, with balanced and nutritious food, reflective of the culture, geography, and demography of our citizens.

We will achieve this by implementing the following measures by 2030:

- Aligning our food procurement to the Planetary Health Diet, ideally sourced from organic agriculture.
- Supporting an overall increase of healthy plant-based food consumption in our cities by shifting away from unsustainable, unhealthy diets.
- Reducing food loss and waste by 50% from a 2015 baseline.
- Within two years of endorsing this declaration, working with citizens, businesses, public institutions and other organizations to develop a joint strategy for implementing these measures and achieving these goals inclusively and equitably, and incorporating this strategy into our Climate Action Plan.

Each city will develop and share an action plan, including baseline figures and environmental, health, social, and economic co-benefits where available, upon which they will regularly report.

ⁱ FAO, 2018, [The State of Food Security and Nutrition In The World](#)

ⁱⁱ EAT-Lancet Commission, 2019, [Food in The Anthropocene](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Brazilian Ministry of health (2014) [Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population](#)

^{iv} C40, 2019, [In Focus: Addressing food related consumption in C40 cities](#)

^v UN Dispatch, [Climate Refugees Explained \(2017\)](#)

^{vi} C40, 2019, [In Focus: Addressing food related consumption in C40 cities](#)

^{vii} Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019, [Cities and the Circular Economy for Food](#)

^{viii} FAO, 2015, [Food wastage footprint & Climate Change](#)

^{ix} C40, 2019, [In Focus: Addressing food related consumption in C40 cities](#)

^x FAO, [Organic Agriculture Programme](#): "Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasises the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. This is accomplished by using, where possible, agronomic, biological, and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials, to fulfil any specific function within the system."

^{xi} Brazilian Ministry of health (2014) [Dietary Guidelines for the Brazilian Population](#)

^{xii} *Planetary Health Diet' for all citizens by 2030*, with balanced and nutritious food providing up to 2,500 calories a day for all adults, not to exceed 16kg of meat per person per year or ~300g per week, and 90kg of dairy per person per year or ~250g per day, and low in ultra-processed food.