Priorities for Integrating Food Systems in the Just Transition Work Programme

A COP 31 Policy Brief by the Just Food Transition Network



The Just Transition Work Programme presents an opportunity to ensure that climate action across sectors not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions, but addresses social inequalities, meaningfully engages workers and vulnerable communities, recognises the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples, protects biodiversity, and advances animal welfare.

To achieve these goals, the Just Transition Mechanism should make transitions in food systems — including agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture — a central element and ensure policy coherence amongst just transition pathways across sectors using the following recommendations as guidance:

1) The Just Transition must prioritise the rights and sovereignty of those most impacted by food system transformation.

- Universal social protections, including a livable income, dignity, and safe working conditions, should be guaranteed for workers across the aquatic and agricultural food value chain, including Indigenous Peoples, African descendants, smallholders, landless people, pastoralists, fishers, aquaculture producers, women, youth and other vulnerable groups and communities. These protections should also cover workers in informal settings, who represent a significant number of workers in the agriculture and ocean sectors.
- Participation of workers, including Indigenous Peoples, African descendants, smallholders, fishers, women and other vulnerable groups should go beyond consultation, be meaningful, institutionalised and funded.

- Securing land and aquatic resource tenure rights, including agrarian reform and equitable land redistribution, access to seeds, recognition of customary rights and access to fishing grounds of Indigenous Peoples, African descendants, smallholders, fishers, women and other vulnerable groups are prerequisite conditions to a just transition and food security and sovereignty. This includes respect for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples and other tribal communities.
- Power imbalance and vested interests in food systems should be addressed to remove barriers to equal participation and the implementation of just transition principles.

2) The Just Transition must be funded to ensure costs are not borne by those harmed by current economic or climate injustices.

- Finance for a just transition in agriculture and aquatic food systems should, as in other sectors, be public and grant based. This is particularly relevant in the just food transition as food should not be considered a commodity and a tool of speculation, but public goods.
- Smallholder farmers, fishers and pastoralists should not bear the costs of transformation while large agribusinesses continue benefiting from public support.
- Workers in the agribusiness supply chain should have access to economic, technical and market support in order to transition to good jobs in sustainable sectors.
- Subsidies, including grants and other direct and indirect financial benefits, should be directed away from industrial animal production toward food production that embraces just transition principles, agroecology, and high animal welfare practices.

3) The Just Transition must shift away from high-emission, fossil-dependent industrial livestock and aquatic food systems by prioritising agroecology and agroforestry solutions.

- Agroecology and agroforestry, as defined by La Via Campesina, should be prioritised in National Adaptation Plans to simultaneously advance climate mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity conservation, public health, animal welfare, food security and rural livelihoods. Agroecology is rooted in local ecological, social and cultural contexts, enabling solutions that respond to regional and national circumstances while delivering multiple environmental and socioeconomic benefits.
- Support should be prioritised for community-led approaches in fisheries and aquaculture that protect and restore marine, coastal and freshwater ecosystems, strengthen local food security and food sovereignty, and secure decent work and resilient livelihoods.
- Indigenous and traditional knowledge and community-led innovation should be recognised as core parts of a just transition to sustainable food systems. Technology transfer should also be grounded in justice and equity while excluding false solutions.

The Just Food Transition Network Vision: An equitable, humane and sustainable food system

The Just Food Transition Network brings together a globally diverse community of over 240 actors — including farmers, workers across the agriculture and aquatic value chain, pastoralists, fishers, 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. The network is united by a shared vision to phase out industrial animal agriculture, industrial fishing and intensive aquaculture as a key strategy to tackle the multiple crises we are facing from climate change and biodiversity loss to social inequalities and food insecurity.

In an equitable, humane and sustainable food system, nutritious foods are supplied through agroecological farming and community-led, ecologically sustainable fisheries and aquaculture that promote human rights, particularly the rights of traditionally marginalised populations including women and girls, Indigenous populations, people of colour and people living with disabilities. This system protects the environment and animals (domesticated and wild), while ensuring food sovereignty meets food security needs and guaranteeing that people working across the food system live in dignity and receive a livable income. Consumption of animal products in high-consuming countries is significantly decreased in favour of diversified, plant-rich diets, and remaining animal sourced foods are produced in worker-driven, cooperative production models using agroecological practices and high-welfare standards across land and aquatic food systems.

There is no place for false solutions in an equitable, humane and sustainable food system. Corporations are held accountable for the social and environmental damage they cause and the power that the multinational meat, dairy and seafood corporations hold over the food system is shifted to support industrial farmers and workers transitioning from the current industrial model to community-driven models, worker-led programmes, smallholders, cooperatives, territorial markets and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to scale up local and regional economies. This transition must also tackle the persistent gender gap in the current globalized and corporate-driven food system.

Learn more about the network at www.justfoodtransitionnetwork.com.

UNFCCC Just Transition Work Programme Context

For the first time, a dedicated dialogue focused on just transition pathways for holistic approaches to food security, including agriculture and oceans, took place in the lead up to SB64. The Just Transition Work Programme moved beyond energy, recognising that transforming food systems is essential to delivering climate action that is fair and inclusive.

During COP31 parties will have to agree on key messages that will guide transitions in the agriculture and oceans sectors. To achieve a just transition, these messages must continue the dialogue that began last year to integrate food systems, including agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, while ensuring policy coherence and rejecting false solutions.

