

# Policy Action Agenda for Transition to Sustainable Food & Agriculture

## Through Repurposing Public Policies and Support & Scaling Innovation

*This year, the COP 26 Presidency, the World Bank, and Just Rural Transition have been working with dozens of countries and civil society organisations to build support for a Policy Action Agenda for a Just Transition to Sustainable Food and Agriculture. The Policy Action Agenda identifies a range of concrete actions that both state and non-state actors can take to repurpose public support to agriculture.*

Providing nutritious, affordable food for a growing global population while protecting the vital natural systems that sustain life is a critical challenge for the coming decade. Current public support to food and agriculture has helped to rapidly increase production; but has failed to address growing challenges linked to climate change, environmental degradation of soils and water, biodiversity loss, food and nutrition security and pandemic risks. In many cases, public policies and support exacerbate these risks.

Time is running out to address these challenges. Urgent transition is needed towards sustainable agriculture that delivers healthy diets and resilient livelihoods, that takes place within environmental boundaries, maintains\protects or restores natural eco-systems and helps keep the world on track to within 1.5 degrees of global warming.

This **Policy Action Agenda** sets out pathways and actions that countries can take to repurpose public policies and support to food and agriculture, to deliver these outcomes and enable a just rural transition<sup>1</sup>. It also sets out actions and opportunities for other stakeholders (international organisations, food producers, financial entities, researchers, civil society and others) to channel their expertise, knowledge and resources in support of this agenda.

### **SECTION A: Definition of ‘sustainable agriculture’**

There are many definitions of sustainable agriculture. For purposes of this Policy Action Agenda, the following 7 principles are considered important elements of a sustainable approach.

Sustainable agriculture:

1. Supports the generation of better economic livelihoods and incomes for farmers and rural communities, leading in turn to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, resilience, and livelihood security.
2. Avoids deterioration of the environment and natural resource base and reverses this trend by reducing agriculture’s environmental footprint.
3. Uses inputs and resources efficiently and can thus reduce use of synthetic [non-renewable] inputs and resources that have harmful impacts on climate and environment; thereby also helping to maintain and, or, restore soil fertility as the basis for sustainable production, (noting the importance

- of maintaining and restoring soil fertility and agronomic productivity in order to ensure economic, social and environmental sustainability.)
4. Includes overall benefits for ecosystem integrity and inhibits further expansion of agricultural land into other ecosystems, and/or environmental degradation caused by agriculture, including deforestation, land degradation and desertification.
  5. Promotes agricultural practices that sequester or minimize greenhouse gas emissions; transition,
  6. Protect air and water from pollution; and enhances the resilience of agri-food systems to pests, diseases, climate and other exogenous shocks.
  7. Contributes to greater food and nutrition security and local resilience, in part through the sustainable production and increased availability of affordable and nutritious food.

## **SECTION B: Actions to accelerate transition to sustainable food and agriculture**

### **Actions that Governments can take:**

1. **Collect and analyse data** on current policies, programmes, subsidies, financial and non-financial incentives, and other forms of current public support to assess their impacts on land use, climate mitigation, biodiversity and eco-systems services, food security, nutrition and livelihoods. Evaluate consistency, trade-offs, policy gaps and opportunities for enabling sustainable agriculture that meets food, climate and environmental goals.
2. **Identify policies and programmes that can be (re)purposed** to improve outcomes and minimize trade-offs across these areas; and accelerate the transformation of food systems to deliver a healthier planet (nature and climate), healthier economies (livelihoods and jobs) and healthier people (food security and nutrition). This would include, among others:
  - **Integrate appropriate incentives into policy re/design** to encourage sustainable agriculture, e.g. reward farmers for adopting sustainable practices such as contribution to lower emissions, carbon positivity, climate resilient, restore and maintain biodiversity
  - **Adjust pricing and support mechanisms** to incentivize and reward more efficient use of resources such as land, water and energy
  - Phase out policies including those subsidies and market price support mechanisms that incentivize practices with harmful impacts on climate and environment, such as conversion of forests, peatlands and other fragile eco-systems for mono-crop agriculture and or other practices that lead to the degradation of natural resources measures (thereby increasing climate risk and undermining production)
  - **Link agricultural policies and programmes to forest and ecosystem protection** to ensure that food production goals are not achieved at the expense of ecosystems
  - **Develop policies and/or fiscal instruments that facilitate and incentivize private investment** toward low emissions/ carbon

positive, climate resilient and sustainable agriculture that maintains\protects or restores natural eco-systems.

3. **Invest in agricultural, livestock, forestry and fishing research and development (R&D) and innovation** to accelerate the development and scaling up of sustainable technologies and practices, to transform food systems for people, nature and climate, and to promote agricultural extension processes, including through the sister Global Action Ag Agenda for Agriculture Innovation.
4. **Develop, foster and/or implement more inclusive agriculture and food systems transition strategies** and incorporate these into national strategies including, Nationally Determined Contributions, national biodiversity strategies, action plans to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.
5. **Scale proven approaches** that better target farm households and agricultural landscapes most in need, reorient public expenditure towards investments in public goods and innovation, ensures a fair income for primary producers, and minimise trade-offs between climate, nature, food security and nutrition and sustainable development goals.

#### **Actions All Stakeholders Can Take:**

- **Scale analytical and technical support** to collect and analyse data, policy frameworks and policy options and conduct cost-benefit analysis, as well as political economy assessment of the trade-offs and opportunities for repurposing public support to food and agriculture systems;
- **Develop public-facing studies and policy briefs** on social, economic and environmental options, impacts and opportunities for repurposing, to share learning and experiences;
- **Develop or scale programmes and activities** that support local food producers, women and youth groups, indigenous peoples' organisations and local civil society organisations to strengthen capacity and support their participation in consultation processes;
- **Develop and or scale technologies and practices** that enable low emission, climate resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems;
- **Join multi-stakeholder platforms** that promote collaboration between countries, food producer organisations, research and implementation partners, financial entities and others – such as the Just Rural Transition initiative.

#### **SECTION C: ILLUSTRATIVE POLICY OPTIONS**

The policy solutions to achieve transition to sustainable agriculture will be context specific and will differ according to each country and region. The following options

set out potential pathways to sustainable agriculture that countries could undertake, as appropriate to their context:

1. **Develop or integrate cross-government approaches to achieve sustainable agriculture in line with Paris Agreement goals, net zero/negative emissions, protecting biodiversity and delivering nutritious food**, bringing together governmental agencies across finance, trade, agriculture, environment, and health, and take immediate steps to implement this plan by 2030 (and 2050);
2. **Direct significant public support to farmers, including smallholder farmers**, to incentivize and support uptake or continued use of sustainable agricultural practices and, or reward better outcomes for climate and biodiversity loss.
3. **Significantly increase investment in agricultural R&D for ‘multiple-win innovations’ and agricultural extensions** that support healthy diets, protect natural resources and biodiversity and help to mitigate climate change;
4. Channel public funds, including increased climate finance, to develop more equitable partnerships and supply chains and **support the just rural transition in developing countries**;
5. **Orient public policies to the achievement of nutrition and sustainability goals**, including (where appropriate) shifting diets;
6. **Create incentives, financial and non-financial, for greater flows of private sector finance** to the just rural transition, through guarantees, regulation, reducing credit restrictions, and provision of blended finance.

#### **SECTION D: CHANNELS FOR ON-GOING COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT**

Building on existing international collaboration, commitments and initiatives, there are a range of fora that may 1) provide a platform for continued dialogue, learning, peer pressure and support and 2) provide support for countries and other stakeholders to collaborate on redirecting policies and support to sustainable agriculture.