

Headline: Over 130 nations agree to include food, agriculture in climate plans

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More than 130 countries agreed to prioritize food and agriculture in their national climate plans at COP28 in Dubai on Friday, a move hailed by observers despite fears over its silence on the role of fossil fuels.

Food systems are estimated to be responsible for roughly a third of human-made greenhouse gases but are increasingly threatened by global warming and biodiversity loss.

A total of 134 countries, which produce 70 percent of the food eaten worldwide, signed the declaration, summit hosts the United Arab Emirates said.

"There is no path to achieving the goals of the Paris climate agreement and keeping 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach that does not urgently address the interactions between food systems, agriculture, and climate," the UAE's climate change minister, Mariam Almheiri, said.

The declaration stated that countries will strengthen efforts to integrate food systems into their emissions-cutting plans.

Nations would also pursue efforts to support farmers and other vulnerable food producers, including through increased funding, more infrastructure, and developing early warning systems, it added.

It also emphasized the importance of restoring land, moving away from greenhouse-gas-emitting agricultural practices, and reducing food loss.

The United States, European Union, China, and Brazil were among the countries to sign the declaration.

The 134 nations are home to 5.7 billion people and represent more than three-quarters of all greenhouse gas emissions from the global food system—or 25 percent of total emissions worldwide, the COP28 statement said.

The US think-tank World Resources Institute praised the announcement.

"This declaration is the moment when food truly comes of age in the climate process, sending a powerful signal to the nations of the world that we can only keep the 1.5-degree goal in sight if we act fast," said the group's CEO, Ani Dasgupta.

However, Patty Fong, of the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, said the declaration not directly referencing fossil fuels was a "glaring omission".

“The declaration doesn’t set out how governments will tackle food emissions and makes no reference to fossil fuels, despite food systems accounting for at least 15 percent of fossil fuels burned each year—equivalent to the emissions of all EU countries and Russia combined,” she said.

Sustainability group IPES-Food also criticized what it said was vague language and missing concrete actions or targets.

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There was “no commitment to shift to healthy, sustainable diets nor reducing overconsumption of industrially produced meat,” the group said.