



PRESS RELEASE - EMBARGOED THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 2019 10:00 CEST

IPCC report on role of land in the climate crisis must form basis for renewed political conviction to stop climate breakdown

Geneva, 8 August 2019: The IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land released today is another stark reminder that we are in an ecological and climate emergency. This report -- coming after the IPCC Special Report on 1.5C and the IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity -- brings together the best available science on how the enormous pressure on land is exacerbating the climate crisis.

It offers clear direction to governments to rapidly transform land and food systems, halt deforestation and pursue policies that empower small-holder farmers, eliminate poverty and hunger and protect the most vulnerable from increasingly frequent weather calamities. Drastically cutting food waste and switching to more balanced plant-based diets, particularly in high-emitting societies, and adopting agroecological farming will go a long way towards curbing emissions and building adaptation.

Governments must unite behind the science. They must substantially increase their national climate targets by 2020 in line with the 1.5°C goal to cut global emissions by half in the next decade. Nature-based solutions must go together with abandoning fossil fuel use and investing in renewables.

This report must form the basis for a renewed political conviction to stop climate breakdown.

Quotes from CAN members

Stephen Cornelius, Chief Advisor on Climate Change and IPCC lead, WWF:

“This report sends a clear message that the way we currently use land is contributing to climate change, while also undermining its ability to support people and nature. We need to see an urgent transformation in our land use. Priorities include protecting and restoring natural ecosystems and moving to sustainable food production and consumption.

“Good land choices are fundamental to tackling the climate crisis. A shift to sustainable land management must be accompanied by the necessary rapid and deep cuts to fossil fuel

emissions if we are to meet the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement. Action on one alone is not enough.

“Delayed action will increase the risk of climate change impacts on food security. Those most at risk are the world’s poorest. Early action to address the climate crisis has the potential to provide multiple co-benefits across the whole range of land challenges, with many options contributing positively to sustainable development and other societal goals.”

Christoph Thies, Forests and Climate Campaigner, Greenpeace Germany:

“Defending and restoring our forests and changing our food system by eating less meat will help turn the climate and biodiversity crisis into new hope for nature and people. Our land and biodiversity are under enormous pressure, as seen by the devastating fires in Siberia. We need to make some hard choices because we cannot use up our land twice and we’re already over-using it. To protect our climate and feed the world demands action now. Governments are now compelled to update and enhance their climate action targets in light of the IPCC’s report.”

Teresa Anderson, Climate Policy Coordinator, ActionAid:

“The world’s leading scientists are clear – the way we produce food and manage land must change dramatically if we are to avert catastrophic climate change. Farming must work with nature, not against it.

“The IPCC’s land report puts a big question mark on the future of industrial agriculture. A major shift to farming methods that work with nature, reduce emissions, empower women farmers and improve resilience to the impacts of climate change, is now essential.

“It sends a stark warning that relying on harmful technologies such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage, which would take up huge amounts of land, are at odds with our need to improve food security and protect our natural ecosystems.

“Rich, polluting countries cannot expect the Global South to give away swathes of farmland to clean up the climate mess.”

Tonya Rawe, Director of Global Food and Nutrition Security Advocacy, CARE:

“Our food systems are broken, driving environmental degradation and worsening the climate crisis while over 800 million people are chronically hungry, and small-scale farmers – particularly women -- struggle to achieve resilient livelihoods. Today, the IPCC joined a chorus of others sounding the alarm for fundamental change in our food systems to solve the climate crisis and end hunger & malnutrition. Scientists agree: we need urgent and ambitious climate action in our food systems or more people will be hungry, public health will continue to suffer, and land ecosystems will see irrevocable loss. But action can only be achieved if local communities, women, and indigenous peoples are empowered to make decisions and lead action. We have solutions: what we need is political commitments and leadership to make them happen – now.”

Peg Putt, Climate Action Network Ecosystems Working Group Coordinator:

“Nature-based solutions to the climate crisis and the linkage with the biodiversity crisis are recognised. There is a major role for conservation, restoration of natural ecosystems and prioritisation of forests. Ending deforestation and forest degradation is vital. The report emphasises the importance of carbon rich peatlands and coastal wetlands.”

“The enormous threat to ecosystems, people, and food security posed by large scale bioenergy and BECCS (Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage) leaps out of the report which points out the huge land area of 15 million square kilometers required for monoculture tree crops, which is actually equal to the extent of global cropland. As we clearly cannot afford to lose or

destroy ecosystems vital to life, the report effectively paints large scale bioenergy and BECCS as completely unacceptable and unworkable."

Katherine Kramer, Global Climate Lead, Christian Aid:

"The IPCC report reflected the importance of conserving natural ecosystems, as stores of carbon and for their importance for providing food, feed, fiber and timber. Many of the world's poorest people rely on natural systems for these resources and it is vital that policymakers recognize this in their land-use decisions.

"How we produce food will become an ever more important task for people needing to survive and thrive in a world facing a triple crisis of climate change, poverty and biodiversity loss. It's crucial we use land in the most efficient way possible to bring down our emissions, conserve the natural systems on which we rely and boost food security for the most vulnerable."

Martin Harper, RSPB Director of Conservation:

"We are in a climate and nature crisis- the two are interconnected and must be tackled in tandem.

"Nature-based solutions offer the opportunity to not only restore the natural riches of the world but to also slam the brakes on climate change.

"But we must act urgently to address the way we manage our land and our over reliance on fossil fuels or risk irreversible climate change with disastrous consequences for nature as well as people's lives."

Sara Lickel, Advocacy officer on the Right to food and climate, Caritas France:

"As lands and soils are every time more degraded, there is also increasing pressure from false solutions that are threatening human rights. The IPCC shows us that delayed action means we will have to choose between feeding ourselves, producing bioenergy or sequester carbon. We cannot morally and socially afford this kind of competition on land, and we need governments to ensure rapid and fast emissions reductions."

Reyes Tirado, Senior Scientist, Greenpeace Research Laboratory, University of Exeter:

"The challenge is great, but the solutions are many. Changing the way we produce food and what we eat will protect our climate and promote food security. We can free up vital land space being used for animal feed and grazing through healthier plant-rich diets and ecological farming practices that will help sequester carbon in the soil and increase biodiversity."

David Festa, Senior Vice President for Ecosystems at Environmental Defense Fund:

"Our best shot at a healthy, prosperous and food-secure future requires us to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to the climate impacts we cannot avoid. Making agriculture more sustainable and preserving our forests will help on both fronts."

Erika Lennon, Senior Attorney, Center for International Environmental Law:

"The climate crisis is here and getting worse every day. We need urgent action now to reduce CO2 emissions, and land has a critical role to play in addressing the climate crisis and sustaining human life. With its new Special Report on Land and Climate Change, the IPCC once again emphasized the significant threat that climate change poses to the environment and people, including to land and food security. To guarantee that land can continue to fulfill its vital role, countries must ensure and respect the land tenure of indigenous peoples, women, and local communities. Further, public participation in decision-making, including of women, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable groups, is essential to adopting ambitious and effective policies and practices to address the climate, biodiversity, and land crises."

Jennifer Tabola, Director, Global Climate Strategy, The Nature Conservancy:

“In the same way last year’s IPCC special report on 1.5°C focused global attention on the threats of climate change like never before, today’s new report promises to do the same for the complex challenges of land use. We already knew that humanity’s over-exploitation of the Earth’s lands is a key driver of climate change, and that we need to take urgent, ambitious action to address these issues. The IPCC’s land report simply puts this situation into sharper focus – and presents us with the opportunity to define our generation.

“As with climate change in general, we have a choice: do we balance the needs of human development and nature, or do we sleepwalk into a future of failing farmlands, eroding soil, collapsing ecosystems and dwindling food resources? Can we look at the powerful tools conservation science has already put at our disposal to help combat these threats and have the courage to take the urgent policy decisions now necessary to see these deployed at scale?”

Mahir Ilgaz, Research and Grants Coordinator, 350.org:

“Unless we start substantially reducing fossil fuel use now and go completely fossil free by 2050, the combination of climate change and land degradation will lock even more people into poverty and exposure to climate impacts. The more carbon dioxide and methane we emit now, the higher the risks of breakdown in our food systems, especially in vulnerable areas. Continuing investments in fossil fuels and fossil fuel extraction, at this point, equals indirectly starving poor people.”

Wendel Trio, Director of Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe:

To stop climate breakdown, we need a rapid and far-reaching change in the EU’s land sector, alongside all other sectors of the economy. The EU needs to rapidly increase the rate of emission reductions in agriculture and invest in nature protection. To spur immediate action in this sector in line with the 1.5°C goal, the EU needs to increase its 2030 climate target to at least 65% emission cuts. The perfect opportunity to do so is the UN Climate Action Summit in September.”

Michael Brune, Executive Director, Sierra Club:

“Changes to our climate and lands are a global crisis requiring a global solution--one in which we all play a role. The science is conclusive: in the U.S, public land management must be part of our climate solution. We must not only prevent further pollution by stopping new dirty fuels leasing and development, but also keep natural spaces wild to help pull us back from the brink of the climate crisis.

Keeping forests intact to store carbon and protecting public lands will also safeguard wildlife faced with mass extinction and provide protection from flooding and other climate-induced disasters that we’re already seeing. We have an incredible resource -- and incredible opportunity -- in our public lands, but we have to act now before our chance is lost.”

Stephan Singer, Senior Adviser, Climate Action Network International:

“The approved report should lead all governments to significantly enhance their nationally determined contributions with actions in the land sector to immediately halt deforestation, enhance restoration of ecosystems and build resilience for poor farmers and communities. In conjunction with the deep decarbonisation of the energy sector, the findings of the report, if implemented by governments, will lead us to the 1.5C pathway.”

Anton Beneslavsky, expert, Greenpeace Russia

"It's important that natural fires were named as a factor of climate change, although there is a feeling that the effects of natural fires and agricultural burning are generally underestimated: we are currently observing how climate change leads to the fact that natural fires become more and more intense and frequent, their impact on the climate through carbon dioxide emissions, soot and degradation of landscapes and soils is growing This is a vicious circle that needs to be broken and for this serious changes in the usual ways of managing land must be done."

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About CAN

Climate Action Network (CAN) is a global network of over 1100 NGOs in more than 120 countries working to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels. More information on www.climatenetwork.org