THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES (LGMA) CONSTITUENCY

COP31 Guidance for Negotiators on

ZERO WASTE & FOOD

The LGMA Guidance for Negotiators accompanies the LGMA COP31 Position and provides detailed recommendations, context and proposed negotiating text, setting out how each ask can be operationalized.

cities-and-regions.org/cop31-lgma-position

Background

The Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Zero Waste and Food Working Group addresses two of the most significant yet less recognized and underutilized drivers of climate impact at the local and subnational levels: circular development and sustainable food systems.

"Zero Waste and Food" encompasses three critical action areas: zero waste, zero food waste, and resilient food systems. Zero food waste contributes mainly to climate change mitigation, while sustainable food systems address both mitigation and adaptation.

Local, regional and subnational governments play a critical role in advancing these agendas, although their responsibilities vary across governance contexts. Through their mandates related to waste infrastructure, public procurement, land use, public health, and community engagement, subnational governments can help accelerate the transition toward a more circular economy and ensure more resilient and sustainable food systems.

The year 2026 presents a unique opportunity for multilevel governance alignment on zero waste and food as Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings are being held for all three Rio Conventions, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The requirement for Parties to the Rio Conventions to produce national plans, namely Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the UNFCCC, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) under the CBD, and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets under the UNCCD, presents an opportunity for this year's COPs[1], and in particular the Climate Change COP, to accelerate food systems and circular economy action. Ongoing negotiations on plastic pollution also present subnational governments with an opportunity to reduce waste.

With regards to food, the COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action was endorsed by over 150 countries at the UN climate summit in Dubai to integrate food systems into national climate plans. The over 130 national leaders covered nearly 70% of global land and 76% of food system emissions, and the core goal was to align national food and agriculture policies with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). At CBD COP15 in December 2022, nations adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), pledging under Target 16 to reduce the global footprint of consumption in an equitable manner, including by halving global food waste by 2030.

Main calls to action

1. Strengthen policy coherence between food systems and circular resource policies at national and subnational levels.

- Integrate food production, demand-driven consumption, and post-consumption waste practices into a circular economy.

[1] WWF (2024), Aligning the Rio Conventions for Sustainable Food Systems Transformation. WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

- Food systems are responsible for roughly 30% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (FAO, 2022) and roughly 70% of biodiversity loss (Chatham House, 2021) making them crucial for meeting the Paris Agreement targets: Elevate actions that make it easier for all people to have access to healthy and sustainable food, where they also waste less food, ensuring that steps are taken to avoid food going to waste.

> **Proposed text for negotiators**
>
> *Encourages* Parties to refer to and align with the COPs of the Rio Conventions and regard food systems and circular economy as entry points for high impact synergies on climate change mitigation and adaptation to be integrated into national plans (NDCs, NAPs, NBSAPs, LDNs) and collective agreements.

2. Recognize the importance of reducing all kinds of waste, and explicitly incorporate food waste into the zero-waste paradigm.

- Recognize food waste explicitly within the zero-waste paradigm, ensuring it is not lost inside a broader, harder-to-action food-systems agenda.
- Organic and food waste is often neglected but a major problem for developing cities and a major contributor to methane emissions.
- Poor waste segregation at the source, indiscriminate dumping, and open burning of food waste are major challenges for developing cities.
- Prioritize waste prevention at source, particularly food waste prevention and redistribution of edible surplus, in line with the waste hierarchy.
- Recognize that organic and food waste is a major contributor to methane emissions, and that its prevention and diversion from disposal can deliver significant near-term climate mitigation.

> **Proposed text for negotiators**
>
> *Urges* Parties to consider food systems, and in particular food loss and waste reduction in a circular economy framing as an essential component of NDCs to meet the Paris Agreement targets.

3. Create an enabling environment for subnational governments to plan and implement integrated zero waste practices.

- Invest in knowledge sharing and seed funding for best practice replication and pilot program scaling
- Strengthen urban governance to responsibly usher in real circular economies.

- Call for national policy frameworks that empower local authorities to enforce strict waste segregation at the source, ban single-use plastics, and regulate organic waste diversion.
- Deconcentrate climate finance by creating direct grant streams, seed funding, and concessionary loans for municipal-scale circular infrastructure (e.g., decentralized composting plants, materials recovery facilities).
- Ensure adequate finance for both operational expenses and capital investment, including for infrastructure and operations required to deliver a waste hierarchy solution, avoid generation, achieve universal collection, segregation at source, and treatment.
- Promote just transition pathways for informal waste pickers and support for decentralized, low-cost technologies (such as localized plastic shredding and community-scale composting units). Incorporating informal waste workers into official municipal resource-recovery frameworks enhances both climate mitigation and social inclusion.

> **Proposed text for negotiators**
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> *Recommends* that Parties ensure an enabling environment and explicitly support subnational governments, who have mandates related to waste infrastructure, public procurement, land use, public health, and community engagement to ensure a place-based progress on food loss and waste reduction in a circular economy framing.

4. Additional calls to action

> **Proposed text for negotiators**
>
> *Recognises* the significant contribution of integrated zero waste and food approaches at the subnational level toward achieving nationally determined climate commitments. Encourages Parties to acknowledge that climate goals cannot be achieved without investing in the capacity of subnational planners and actors, including urban and territorial authorities, to enhance resource circularity and reduce waste production.

What the LGMA can offer

- Technical assistance for local governments
- Capacity-building workshops
- Contribution to forums
- Advocacy platform (e.g., sharing case studies)
- Pilot projects and scalable solutions for funders

LGMA resources

- LGMA Case studies (coming soon)
- 20 Cities Toward Zero Waste
- UN Advisory Board names 20 city leaders in zero waste
- 20 Cities Towards Zero Waste Kisumu
- C40 Towards Zero Waste Accelerator
- C40 Sustainable Waste Systems Accelerator
- C40 Good Food Cities Accelerator
- C40 Thriving Food Systems Accelerator - C40 Cities
- Feeding people, not landfills: using social norms to tackle food waste in cities – Circulars
- Waste management – ICLEI Circulars
- Food – ICLEI Circulars
- Resources | CityFood
- Zero Waste Cities
- Criteria for food | Circular Procurement for Cities
- Circular Cities Declaration Report 2024
- Québec's Roadmap on circular economy (in French only)
- Québec's Policy on agrifood 2025-2030 (in French only)

Zero Waste & Food Working Group

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