



Submission by the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency (LGMA)

United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme

Just transition pathways for holistic approaches to food security, including with a focus on agriculture and oceans

Views on opportunities, best practices, actionable solutions, challenges & barriers

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The Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency welcomes the opportunity to submit views on opportunities, best practices, actionable solutions, challenges and barriers relevant to the topic of *Just transition pathways for holistic approaches to food security, including with a focus on agriculture and oceans, in the context of element c) paragraph 2 of decision 3/CMA.5*.

This submission is organised into three sections. **Section One** focuses on the crucial role of urban and regional systems in achieving both food and nutrition security through a just transition. **Section Two** presents tangible illustrations of how subnational governments are executing just transition pathways within their food systems. **Section Three** puts forward recommendations for national governments designed to ensure that local and regional dynamics are effectively integrated into national just transitions for food systems policies and programmes.

1. Background

The urgency is clear: unsustainable food systems are a major driver of the climate crisis. They are responsible for [about one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions](#) and contribute significantly to biodiversity loss. At the same time [one-third](#) of food produced globally is wasted contributing to [8-10% of global greenhouse emissions annually](#).

Hunger and food insecurity are urban problems. In 2024, an estimated [673 million people faced hunger](#), and about 2.3 billion experienced moderate or severe food insecurity, with progress stalling due to conflict, climate shocks, and inequality. Around [76% of those affected](#) live in urban and peri-urban areas, especially informal settlements, where women, children, and marginalised groups are most impacted and the numbers are bound to be on the rise, if measures are not taken, with [80%](#) of food produced globally projected to be consumed in cities by 2050.

Access to healthy and nutritious food is increasingly limited by affordability. [One-third of the global population cannot afford a healthy diet](#) with lower-income and marginalised



communities disproportionately affected by nutrition insecurity. At the same time, rates of obesity and diabetes [have doubled](#) over the past three decades.

The food economy is the biggest employer, especially in the Global South. The food economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America is a critical source of employment, forming [50-70% of the economy](#) and projected to be a leading job creator. More specifically, urban and peri-urban agriculture offers substantial green job potential, with well [over a billion people in urban and peri-urban areas growing food or engaged in agricultural activities](#) and with [266 million urban households](#) already involved in crop production in developing countries

Inequities between and within regions are stark. According to [FAO](#), food insecurity remains a pressing issue across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with Africa experiencing nearly double the global average prevalence at 58% in 2023. Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are [at the forefront of climate disruption](#), experiencing severe impacts like droughts, floods, heatwaves, and erratic rainfall that repeatedly disrupt food production and distribution, exacerbating food insecurity and existing inequities.

2. Subnational leadership

With increasing climate shocks and global inequities, subnational governments are using their powers to jointly advance social inclusion, health outcomes and stronger local economies through improved procurement, healthier food consumption, support for a regenerative transition and reduced food waste. The [EAT Lancet Planetary Health Diet](#) offers a powerful model for change: by 2050 it can sustainably provide nutritious diets to 9.6 billion people while preventing up to 15 million deaths annually.

As demonstrated below, many subnational governments are already committed to embedding the principles of just transition in their climate and food systems actions. This is evident through their active participation in initiatives such as the C40 [Good Food Cities](#) and [Thriving Food Systems](#) Accelerators, which engage 28 cities across Europe, Latin and North America, Asia, and Africa, as well as the [ICLEI CityFood Program](#) and the ICLEI-coordinated [AfriFOODlinks](#) initiative, which targets over 65 cities in Africa and Europe.

The following section highlights key areas with examples of subnational government leadership in already enabling a just and equitable transition in food systems:

- **PROMOTE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND HEALTHY DIETS:** Subnational governments have key powers over public food procurement, including through school meal programmes, management of fresh food markets, redistribution of surplus food that allow them to provide healthy food for residents, especially for low-income and marginalised groups. The right to food is a fundamental human right, and ensuring equitable access to nutritious food is central to a just transition that advances both social justice and climate goals.



- **New York, USA:** New York City is integrating the Planetary Health Diet into its public food procurement by increasing plant-based options and reducing animal products. In March 2022, NYC Health + Hospitals launched a [plant-based meals programme](#) where these options became the default for patients. In the first three years, 2 million plant-based meals were served, resulting in a 36% reduction in carbon emissions and a 59 cents/meal cost saving, alongside patient health benefits. Building on this success, NYC schools replaced its 'Plant-Powered Fridays' by [a rotating plant-forward day](#). By removing explicit labels and integrating these meals into standard menus, the city aims to normalise climate-friendly eating for students and staff.
- **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia:** Addis Ababa's [school feeding programme](#) provides over 800,000 students in more than 255 schools with two nutritious meals daily, sourced from local vendors and cooperatives. This city-led initiative has improved school attendance, created 16,000 jobs, and supported local food economies and women employment.
- **Nairobi, Kenya:** Since 2023, as part of the [Dishi Na County](#) school meal provision programme, Nairobi has built 17 central Giga kitchens and created 2000 jobs to feed 310,000 children in 230 primary schools a daily hot plant-based meal. These meals are designed to meet nutrition needs while respecting planetary boundaries. Meals are subsidised for the majority of learners. Parents pay a nominal fee of KES 5 (US\$0.04) for the KES 45 (US\$0.35) meal, with subsidies covering the rest. Enrollment has increased by 34% as a result, and in 2024 the national government funded the expansion of school infrastructure to accommodate more students. The city is actively working on extending this service to school children in informal settlements.
- **São Paulo, Brazil:** The city has established seven [Armazéns Solidários](#) (Solidarity Warehouses) - subsidised food stores that offer products up to 30% cheaper than commercial prices. They are strategically located in low-income areas to enhance access to fresh, healthy, and high-quality food, serving approximately 3,000 customers daily.
- **Milan, Italy:** Milan's [Food Waste Hubs](#) are neighbourhood-scale centres for rescue and redistribution of retailers' surplus food, coupled with a range of initiatives aimed at building social inclusion and community resilience. Today the city has eight Food Waste Hubs, each recovering about 130 tonnes of food per year or 350 kg per day, an estimated 260,000 meals equivalent.
- **Tswelopele Local Municipality, South Africa:** Tswelopele Municipality is implementing targeted programmes to alleviate poverty and improve livelihoods across its communities. Through greening initiatives and community food gardens, the municipality promotes environmental



resilience while enhancing nutrition security for marginalised residents. It supports food distribution to vulnerable households and leads vegetable seed production initiatives in schools and community gardens. These interventions build skills, encourage youth and community participation, strengthen local food systems, and contribute to long-term socio-economic resilience and inclusive local economic development outcomes.

- **BOOST LOCAL FOOD ECONOMIES TO DRIVE GOOD GREEN JOBS CREATION:**

Although subnational governments often lack direct authority over the entire food supply chain, they are actively enhancing local food economies and fostering green employment opportunities with improved working conditions which can play a key role in driving just transition. They achieve this by strategically utilising their powers over land use, by sustainably upgrading local markets, encouraging urban-rural partnerships, facilitating market access for food producers, and enhancing incomes and training prospects within sustainable food systems.

- **Quezon City, the Philippines:** To tackle Covid-19 related malnutrition and job losses, the city initiated [GrowQC](#), converting vacant land into urban farms. This improved food security and created sustainable jobs. GrowQC established almost 1,500 urban farms, supporting 43,170 farm workers. Tax exemptions encouraged private landowners to utilise 381,650 m² for urban agriculture. During the 2021 lockdown, GrowQC delivered 1.7 million meals to 325,600 families.
- **Quito, Ecuador:** Since 2005, Quito's [Participatory Urban Agriculture Programme](#) (AGRUPAR) has supported over 4,500 people, assisting 2,300 urban and peri-urban farmers with training, inputs, and access to land and markets. The programme produces 1,000 tons of food monthly. Farmers consume 57% (saving \$40/month) and sell the remaining 43%, generating an average profit of \$165/month and contributing to \$300,000 in annual sales. AGRUPAR strengthens food and nutrition security and the local food system, benefitting an estimated 80,000 indirect consumers of organic produce.
- **Phoenix, United States:** Phoenix's [Urban Agriculture Fellowship](#) is focused on encouraging more young people to take up careers in sustainable farming. Designed to train un/underemployed individuals because of Covid-19. It pairs residents between the ages of 18 to 24 with local farms, allowing them to learn about implementing resilient and sustainable agriculture projects.
- **Seoul, Republic of Korea:** The city-affiliated [Seoul Agricultural Technology Center](#) provides training and technical support on sustainable urban farming development to residents who are interested in urban and peri-urban agriculture.
- **Medellín, Colombia:** Medellin's [Conexiones Medellín Rural - COMER](#)



programme is aimed at strengthening connections between rural producers and urban markets by providing farmers with technical assistance and guaranteed market access, which in turn ensures a stable and diverse food supply for urban residents. It helped mobilise 20 tonnes of food in the first two weeks of the Covid-19 lockdown, because groups of food vendors were active in the neighbourhoods.

- **Cape Town, South Africa:** Cape Town's [Smiley Market](#), where women have sold sheep's heads for generations, is being upgraded via the AfriFOODLinks programme. Informal traders (primarily women) and other community actors collaborated directly with an architecture firm through three workshops to co-create a redesign framework. This process respected social dynamics and addressed critical needs: better access to clean water, efficient waste management, and delineated spaces for food preparation, cooking, and customer waiting. As of May 2025, the framework is being finalised with municipal partners, promising enhanced market conditions.
- **Lagos, Nigeria:** In 2026, Lagos, with support from C40 Cities, [revived a biogas plant](#) at the Ikosi Fruit Market to divert organic waste from landfills. The facility, depending on organic waste inputs, can avoid up to 9,550 tonnes of CO₂eq per year and generate 720 kWh of electricity daily. Scaling this to all 35 markets could avoid nearly 130,000 tonnes of CO₂eq annually and generate over 10,000 kWh of electricity daily. The plant will also supply power for market lighting and refrigeration, helping traders preserve perishable produce. The organic digestate are being used by farmers to improve soil health and crop yields, boosting farmer livelihoods and food security. The initiative also targeted the creation of green jobs, with a focus on integrating informal waste workers (who 84% of the sector's labor force) to improve their working conditions and livelihoods.

3. Recommendations

Given the vital role of subnational governments as both implementers of a just transition and drivers of climate-resilient and equitable food systems, it is essential to enhance the whole-of-government approach to the transition and strengthen vertical collaboration. This can be achieved by:

1. **Embedding food systems, including urban-rural territorial food systems, into national policy and planning.** This alignment, including in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), National Just Transition Strategies, and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, can maximise the collective impact on climate action and food system transformation. It can also enhance policy coherence across all levels of governments, strengthen urban-rural collaboration, and improve urban food security. A relevant example is **South Africa's**



[Just Transition Framework](#), which prioritises support for local and subsistence food production, including composting, access to climate-resilient seed stocks, and water-wise irrigation systems.

- 2. Empowering, co-developing and institutionalising the mandates and actions of subnational governments within national food strategies to improve policy coherence and strengthen urban food systems that contribute to a just transition.** These strategies should include actions that reinforce local sustainable food systems, address food and nutrition insecurity, and formalise fairer, healthier, and more sustainable food environments - particularly in urban peripheral areas and among vulnerable populations. They should also enhance access to safe and nutritious diets, reduce social and nutritional inequalities, strengthen governance, and foster stronger urban - rural linkages. In addition, these strategies should support local, innovative, and participatory initiatives focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation, and intercity cooperation. An example of a successful best practice is **Brazil's** [Strategy for Food and Nutritional Security in Cities](#) (*A Estratégia Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional nas Cidades*) which seeks to “bridge actions across urban and rural food agendas, integrate diverse ministries and policies, and foster inclusive, territorial food governance as a pathway towards healthier, more just, resilient and sustainable food systems”.
- 3. Investing in subnational programmes that place a just transition (including true cost accounting) at the centre of food systems.** While a just transition seeks to ensure the shift toward a low-carbon economy is fair, protects workers' rights, and supports communities, true cost accounting is a methodology that measures and monetises the environmental, social, and health impacts (externalities) of economic activity, particularly in food systems. Priority should be given to expanding school meal programmes to enhance food security, stimulate local economies and generate unmatched returns and towards scaling up investment in sustainably upgrading public food markets and supporting informal vendors through improved infrastructure - such as renewable cold storage, sanitation, and sustainable waste management - alongside business training. These measures create jobs, strengthen livelihoods, and improve food safety. Realising this requires an appropriate allocation of fiscal budgets to subnational governments, supported by capacity strengthening to bridge the personnel and technical gaps. For instance the government of **Kenya** is undertaking an ambitious programme of [constructing over 400 modern markets](#) across the country, aiming to strengthen local economies and provide vital infrastructure for small-scale traders, including cold rooms for storage of fresh produce, and daycare facilities for mothers with young children.