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Sustainable agri-food systems needed



Rajesh Tiwari
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ROBOTICS, DIGITALISATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ARE ALL BEING DEPLOYED IN AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS AND MAY REDUCE THE NEED FOR WORKERS. IN ADDITION, IN MANY LOW AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES, THE AVERAGE FARM SIZE HAS BEEN DECREASING.

In a sign that food security and nutrition are increasingly seen as key vectors for sustainable development, the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (CPD) approved a resolution likely to enrich and intensify discussions at the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit.

To be held later this year, the deliberations are going to be important and historic.

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, which is going to stay for some years and disturb the economy, food will be an important issue.

The agreement, as well as the UN Secretary General António Guterres's report to the Commission to which FAO made substantial contributions, span a vast array of themes—from the need to make healthy diets affordable to all and the importance of assuring income opportunities for all even as capital-intensive industry transformations may reduce the need for existing types of jobs and labor, to stopping illicit cross-border financial flows and the need for governance and ownership of big-data to make sure its benefits are available to all, including smallholders and marginalised people.

"Agri-food systems lie at the heart of sustainable development," Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) recently said.

Even before the world population has reached an expected ten billion in 2050, "food systems are already exceeding planetary boundaries for key resources," he said, pointing to other problems including unbalanced dietary patterns that are leading to both chronic and infectious diseases and the scale of inequalities that make access to affordable healthy diets a challenge.

The FAO called on the international community "to focus on actions that favour

responsible consumption and production patterns to ease pressure on ecosystems, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change" as well as to "apply policies that create income-earning opportunities, build human capacity and provide revenue supplements where needed."

The number of people aged 65 years or older is projected to more than double from 2020 to reach 1.5 billion in 2050, affecting demand for various types of food and minimum dietary energy requirements.


Worldwide, only 19 per cent of children aged six to 23 months eat a minimally accepted diet, and only half eat the recommended minimum number of meals.

Since 2012, the global prevalence of undernutrition has followed a path close to one that FAO, in its report 'The future of food and agriculture - Alternative pathways to 2050' identified not as "business as usual" - which is already unsustainable - but as the "worst-case" trajectory, associated with the 'stratified societies' characterised by increasing inequalities and overuse of natural resources.

Robotics, digitalisation and artificial intelligence are all being deployed in agri-food systems and may reduce the need for workers. In addition, in many low and middle-income countries, the average farm size has been decreasing.

All this calls into question the applicability of the conventional wisdom regarding broader economic transformation and development patterns.

The world is not on track to eliminate hunger by 2030, and the current global food system is environmentally unsustainable.

A sustainable transformation of food and agricultural systems is required at all levels and in all countries. 

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Nippon Paint unveils the newly painted National Highway near Ranipet Toll gate

Nippon Paint (India), Asia's leading paint manufacturer has completed the painting of National Highway near Ranipet toll gate. A 47,341 Sft.Ft of the highway was painted by Nippon Paint as a part of their CSR initiative in the span of three months. The newly painted National Highway near Ranipet tollgate was beautified in association with Kamini, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Vellore, Dr. R. Sivakumar, Superintendent of Police, Ranipet and K.T. Poorani, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Ranipet in the presence of several Nippon Paint representatives.

People from the nearby villages and the vehicles which cross the highway will be benefitted with the newly spruced up bridge. Approximately 3000 litres of Exterior emulsion and 1400 litres of Exterior Wall Primer was utilized to beautify the national highway. Nippon Paint's superior Exterior will beautify and protect the walls. Five artists and ten painters were involved in the beautification of the Ranipet bridge. Apart from the bridge, the interiors of the family counselling room, child-friendly corner and the lock up rooms in the Police Station of Ranipettai, Arokanam and Sholinghur were also painted.

Through this project, Nippon Paint wanted to convey the message of Eco-friendliness, sustainability and living in harmony with the flora and fauna. The walls are painted with



Mr. Mahesh S. Anand - President Nippon Paint (India) Private Limited (Decorative Division)



Nippon Paint unveils the newly painted National Highway near Ranipet Toll gate

murals around the theme - living in harmony with nature. It covers artistic work on agriculture, wildlife, portraits of people from different walks of life amongst others. Speaking about the project, S Mahesh Anand, President – Decorative Paint, Nippon Paint India commented, “We are very happy to have collaborated with Ms Kamini to paint the National Highway stretch. We are also certain that the newly painted bridge will cheer the villagers and the vehicles, which cross the bridge every day. Eco-friendliness and sustainability are reflected in all of Nippon Paint's operations, products and CSR

initiatives. Beautifying the city forms a huge part of our CSR initiatives. We hope that the passers-by will receive our message about the importance of respecting nature and keeping public spaces clean.”

Speaking further about the project, Kamini, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Vellore commented, “We are thrilled to partner with Nippon Paint for this very special project. I think the newly painted bridge looks beautiful and we are receiving a lot of appreciation from the residents of Ranipet and the passers-by. We are thankful to Nippon Paint for collaborating with us on this initiative.”

Medikabazaar donates 50,000 masks to Mumbai Police in their largest Mask Awareness Initiative

This is a part of Medikabazaar's Mask Awareness and Donation initiative where they are donating over 1 Lac Masks to various Government organisations and NGOs



The Mumbai Police will further distribute these masks to local citizens to emphasise the need to wear masks and educate them on COVID appropriate behaviour and how it helps in protection against the virus. Unfortunately, the underprivileged sections of the society have higher risk of exposure and transmission due to lack of awareness and affordability for basic protective gear such as masks.

This particular initiative of presenting 50,000 masks to the Mumbai Police was kicked off by senior officials of Medikabazaar. The masks were handed over to Mr. Manjunath Singe (IPS), Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mumbai.

The efforts were acknowledged and welcomed by Mr. Vishwas Nangare Patil, Joint Commissioner of Police, Mumbai



The second wave of Covid-19 has posed new challenges across the country. The medical and welfare fraternity is going through a difficult time with the rising number of new cases.

Understanding the criticality and importance of proactive steps to fight the pandemic, Medikabazaar, India's largest B2B platform for healthcare procurement solutions, has initiated a Mask Awareness

Initiative to educate the citizens on the importance of wearing masks through their campaign - #DontShowMeYourFace, through which they are donating over 1 Lac masks to various Government organisations and NGOs.

Medikabazaar distributed 50,000 masks to the Mumbai Police, which will be further distributed as 500 masks per police station across all 100 police stations in the city.

City. Vivek Tiwari, Founder & CEO of Medikabazaar was felicitated by Mr. Nangare Patil and Mumbai Police took to social media to share their appreciation for the initiative by Medikabazaar.

The initiative aims to create mask awareness and inculcating Covid-appropriate behaviour in the general public. This campaign is focused on curbing the second wave and preempting a third wave of Covid-19.



Countries like Malaysia have procured large commitments from solar energy developers amid the pandemic, through tender processes.
Image: India Climate Dialogue, CC BY 2.0

How Covid-19 can be the impetus for growth in renewable energy

The transition toward clean energy remains as attractive as ever. How can private sector players and governments come together to leverage its potential for success? asks **Gilles Pascual**

The Covid-19 pandemic blindsided the world, and led to an economic downturn globally, with countries experiencing a sharp fall in national gross domestic product (GDP), income and employment levels.

Governments around the world have worked tirelessly to protect their people and reduce the eco-

nomic disruption through various relief packages and fiscal stimuli.

Despite this global disruption, the transition to clean energy did not come to a complete halt. In fact, the pandemic led to greater focus on climate issues.

In the article, Clean energy innovation in the Covid-19 crisis, International Energy Agency (IEA) highlighted a survey by the Smith

School of Enterprise and the Environment in mid-2020 that found broad agreement among 231 government officials and economists from 53 countries that clean energy R&D and clean energy infrastructure investment scored highest among various stimulus spending options for both positive impact and long-run multipliers.

As IEA Executive Director, Dr. Fatih Birol said during the launch of the special report on sustainable recovery in June 2020, "Governments have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reboot their economies and bring a wave of new employment opportunities while

RENEWABLES SHOULD OVERTAKE COAL IN 5 YEARS TO SECURE GOAL

By 2026, the world needs to make a 'radical' shift such that renewable energy meets two-thirds of the global energy supply. This is a 'critical year at the start of a critical decade', according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), write **Simon Evans** and **Josh Gabbatiss**, Carbon Brief

The world needs a “radical” shift towards renewables to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 and secure the 1.5C goal, says the International Energy Agency (IEA).

This would see renewable energy overtake coal by 2026, passing oil and gas before 2030. By 2050, it should go on to meet two-thirds of global energy supply and nearly 90 per cent of electricity generation.

In a 227-page report, titled “Net-zero by 2050: A roadmap for the global energy sector,” the IEA calls for “a total transformation of the energy systems that underpin our economies”.

It says this is a “critical year at the start of a critical decade for these efforts”, which must start turning the world’s energy system from one dominated by fossil fuels into a future “powered predominantly by renewable energy like solar and wind”.

The roadmap sets more than 400 milestones showing how this transformation should happen, including an immediate end to new investment in fossil-fuel extraction and net-zero electricity by 2040.

On top of keeping below 1.5C, the Paris-based agency says its net-zero emissions by 2050 (NZE) scenario would boost global GDP, create millions of jobs, provide universal energy access by 2030 and avoid millions of premature deaths due to air pollution.

In a commentary published ahead of the roadmap, IEA executive director Dr Fatih Birol says the NZE blueprint is the “energy future we all need to focus on”.

WHAT IS THE NET-ZERO ROADMAP?

The IEA report is a “how-to guide” for the world’s decision-makers, many of whom have committed their countries, cities or businesses to net-zero emissions by midcentury.

It offers a “net zero emissions by 2050” (NZE) scenario and the “concrete milestones for technology deployment, sectoral trends and choices that have to be made” to meet it.

The NZE is the IEA’s first-ever detailed pathway to reaching net-zero carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from energy and industry by 2050. It is described as “1.5C compatible”.

The IEA says NZE would give a 50 per cent chance of staying below 1.5C with no “overshoot”, if paired with stringent cuts to non-CO₂ greenhouse gases and emissions from forestry and land use.

Cumulative global CO₂ emissions from energy use and industry would reach 450bn tonnes (GtCO₂) between 2020-2050, it says, with 45GtCO₂ from land use and forestry.

This falls within the 500GtCO₂ remaining carbon budget for 1.5C, the IEA says, based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on 1.5C.

(The remaining carbon budget for 1.5C is fairly uncertain. A recent Carbon Brief guest post looked at the latest evidence and put the budget at just 440GtCO₂ from 2020.)

The NZE builds on preliminary modelling in last year’s World Energy Outlook but extends to 2050 and adds more detail, including full data tables.

The scenario is built on three principles:

- Technology neutrality, with adoption driven by costs, technological readiness, country and market conditions, and trade-offs with wider societal goals;
- Universal international cooperation, in which all countries contribute to net-zero, with an eye to a “just transition” and where advanced economies lead;
- An “orderly transition” that seeks to minimise stranded assets “where possible”, while ensuring energy security and minimising volatility in energy markets.

To produce the NZE, the IEA has combined the outputs of its “World Energy Model” from its annual World Energy Outlook, with its technology-rich “Energy Technology Perspectives” model.

The results from the IEA models are then “coupled” with the GAINS and GLOBIOM models from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA).

This allows for consideration of the health impacts of air pollution, as well as the land use and emissions impacts of demand for bioenergy.

Finally, the team used the Global Integrated Monetary and Fiscal (GIMF) model of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to look at investment, spending and global GDP.

The NZE is not the only 1.5C path, says a commentary by Laura Cozzi, the IEA’s chief energy modeller, and Timur Gül, head of the energy technology policy division:

“Our new NZE scenario should not be mistaken as the path to net-zero emissions by 2050. Rather, it is a path that seeks to provide clarity on what delivering on ambitions to reach net-zero by 2050 might actu-

Climate safety nets for all

The extreme weather that comes with climate change will leave the world's poorest and most vulnerable even worse off, overwhelming today's system of humanitarian aid. Strengthening poor people's climate resilience is crucial, writes **Kevin Watkins**



An aerial view of flood affected areas in Bihar. Image: Public Resource Org, CC BY 2.0

As preparations for this year's COP26 climate summit in Glasgow intensify, attention is focused on efforts to prevent a future catastrophe. But real-time climate catastrophes already are playing out in the lives of millions of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. What will COP26 offer them?

Stick a pin in a map of global humanitarian emergencies, and you will most likely land on a crisis that has been caused or aggravated by droughts, floods, and storms. In 2019, extreme weather events pushed more than 34 million people into hunger and food insecurity.

In the 55 countries with food-insecurity crises, 75 million children under the age of five are chronically undernourished and face higher risks of diarrhea, pneumonia, and other killer diseases that accompany

droughts and floods. Save the Children is responding to these emergencies. In the Horn of Africa, our nutrition programs are treating the children of farming families devastated by successive droughts, floods, and the worst desert locust infestation in a generation. In the Sahel region, we are working with communities hit by drought and displaced by increasingly deadly conflicts over water. But humanitarian efforts are being overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis – and worse is to come.

COP26 is one of our last opportunities to lock in the measures needed to keep temperatures within the 1.5°-2° Celsius ceiling set in 2015 by the Paris climate agreement. But even 1.5°C of warming would have disastrous implications for poverty and malnutrition in the poorest countries.

The evidence from climate science points overwhelmingly toward less predictable rainfall, more

extreme, frequent, and protracted droughts, and more destructive storms. Meanwhile, the World Meteorological Association anticipates a long-term decline in food productivity in Africa, the world's most food-insecure region.

Rich countries are already investing heavily in adapting to climate-change threats. When disasters strike, their citizens can fall back on elaborate safety nets, well-financed health systems, and insurance policies covering loss and damage to assets.

Flood defenses are being strengthened across Europe, and America's current Farm Bill includes a \$39 billion federal insurance program to protect heavily subsidised producers against crop losses.

Contrast that with the situation facing Africa's farmers. When extreme weather events destroy crops, kill livestock, and drive up

Chinese fishing trawlersTwo Chinese fishing trawlers in the South China Sea.

Image: Asitimes, CC BY-SA 2.0



A triple win for oceans, climate, and us

Protecting the right places in the ocean could safeguard unique and irreplaceable marine life currently at risk from human activities, while increasing the supply of seafood, writes **Enric Sala**

Last November, something happened in the middle of the South Atlantic that was unusual enough to make a local northern rockhopper penguin raise one of its long spiky yellow eyebrows. The tiny archipelago of Tristan da Cunha, a British Overseas Territory, set aside more than 687,000 square kilometers

(265,000 square miles, an area larger than France) of ocean to establish the world's fourth-largest marine protected area (MPA).

Tristan da Cunha hosts the breeding grounds for more than three-quarters of the world's remaining northern rockhoppers, an endangered species. With the archipelago's ecosystem now protected

from industrial fishing that targets the penguin's prey, scientists hope that this iconic species can recover.

More than half of all fish stocks in the Southwest Atlantic are overfished, meaning that we are taking them out of the water faster than they can reproduce. Globally, over three-quarters of fish stocks are overfished, and the total catch of wild fish has been declining since the mid-1990s. Excessive fishing is thus harming global food security.

To solve this problem requires recognising that less is more. A 2017 study by the World Bank suggested that reducing fishing efforts by almost half would actually increase



In search of a successful recipe for forest landscape restoration

In a newly published infographic, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) shares the key elements behind the tree planting model it has put into place together with its local partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Planting trees may seem like a relatively simple task, but much more is required for successful forest landscape restoration. People and trees have a symbiotic relationship, and local buy-in is an essential part of caring for restored areas

and keeping trees in the ground over the long term as they grow to maturity. Improved living conditions throughout the community are an essential component.

This is one of the many lessons that the field team of the Center for International Forestry Research

(CIFOR) and its local partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have learned since 2018 working in the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve, a protected forest area in the north of the country.

This week they celebrated a million planted trees.

Part of a larger initiative aimed at reactivating Yangambi's local economy, creating green jobs and increasing land productivity, restoration can offer a cost-effective solution to improve livelihoods and meet local energy and nutritional needs, while reducing pressure on natural forests. In a newly published

Wealth inequality fuels flow of wildlife from poor countries to rich, says new analysis

The US, France, and Italy are the largest importers, while Indonesia, Jamaica and Honduras are the biggest wildlife exporters, according to a new study of legal trade data from a global wildlife treaty, writes **Malavika Vyawahare**



A coral reef landscape in Komodo National Park in Indonesia. Image: Yuxuan.fishy.Wang, CC BY-NC-ND 3.0

Toxic Bubble Bounce Mushrooms or Green Iguana Disco Mushrooms may sound like psychedelic drugs, but they are, in fact, names of live corals available for sale online. These brilliantly colored corals from the tropical waters of Indonesia and small Pacific islands like Fiji and Tonga adorn aquariums across the US

Most live corals sold in the international market end up in the US. The country is, in fact, the largest importer of wildlife by far, a paper published in *Science Advances* found. France comes in a distant second, followed by Italy.

Indonesia, Jamaica and Honduras are the biggest exporters of wildlife.

The possible link between Covid-19 and the wildlife trade has focused attention on both illegal and legal markets for wild animals. One of the most comprehensive data sets on the legal trade comes from CITES, the global convention governing the

wildlife trade. What was clear from the 21-year data set: richer countries are the biggest destinations for wildlife, which, more often than not, originates from poorer countries. “We expected wealthier countries to be central to CITES regulated trade, what caught us off guard was how much more important they were,” said Jia Huan Liew, first author of the study and researcher at the University of Hong Kong.

One reason for the pattern is simple: people in richer countries can pay more for the wildlife.

Digging deeper, the researchers found it isn’t just that wildlife products mostly flow from developing to developed countries, but that wealth inequalities drive the trade. “When the inequality between countries was higher, the volume of trade was larger,” Liew said.

The study considered 12 widely traded groups: mammals, birds, fish,

reptiles, insects, amphibians, anthozoans (which include corals), sharks and rays, arachnids, bivalves (which include oysters), hydrozoans (which include jellyfish), and snails.

More than 4 million individuals from these groups were traded across international borders between 1998 and 2018. The number is only an estimate owing to record-keeping discrepancies. For example, in some cases, information provided by importing and exporting countries about transactions does not match.

“This is an excellent use of wildlife trade data, and I am especially impressed by the large number of explanatory variables the authors looked at to explain the patterns they observed,” said Vincent Nijman, an anthropologist at Oxford Brookes University in the UK.

The transactions are legal, but this is no guarantee that the trade is not harming wild populations. The

The checkpoint at the India-Bhutan border next to Totopara. The stone-crushing operations in Bhutan can be seen in the distance, behind the checkpoint.
Image: Gurvinder Singh/ The Third Pole. CC BY NC-ND 2.0

Pollution pushes indigenous people to brink of extinction in India

The entire population of one of the world's smallest indigenous groups, the Toto, live in a village on the India-Bhutan border. They are threatened by mining, water scarcity and a blood disorder, writes **Gurvinder Singh**, The Third Pole