

UK leads 45 governments in new pledges to protect nature

Forty-five governments, led by the UK, will pledge urgent action and investment to protect nature and shift to more sustainable ways of farming at the COP26 Nature and Land-Use Day happening today (Saturday 6 November).

Approximately one-quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture, forestry and other land-use – creating an urgent need to reform the way we grow and consume food in order to tackle climate change.

Urgent action on land use is needed as demand for food increases. We are currently losing forests, damaging soils and rapidly destroying other ecosystems that play a critical role in absorbing carbon and cooling the planet. Farmers' livelihoods are also under increasing pressure as climate change impacts on productivity. To help farmers adapt and to make our food system more resilient for the future, more sustainable practices are essential.

Countries from across the world will set out their commitment to transform agriculture and food systems through policy reforms, research and innovation in order to reduce emissions and protect nature, whilst securing food and jobs. This includes leveraging over US\$4 billion of new public sector investment into agricultural innovation, including the development of climate resilient crops and regenerative solutions to improve soil health, helping make these techniques and resources affordable and accessible to hundreds of millions of farmers.

This commitment includes a pledge to support internationally agreed "Action Agendas" which set out steps that governments, farmers and others can take through policy reform and innovation to deliver the changes necessary for sustainable food systems. Sixteen countries will launch a "Policy Action Agenda" and more than 160 stakeholders will join a "Global Agenda for Innovation in Agriculture" to lead the way on the global transition towards climate resilient agriculture and food systems to more sustainable ways of farming.

As part of the Prime Minister's commitment to spend at least £3 billion of International Climate Finance on nature and biodiversity, the UK will launch a new £500 million package to help protect five million hectares of rainforests from deforestation, an area equivalent to over 3.5 million football pitches. The funding will create thousands of green jobs, including in sustainable agriculture and forestry, throughout rainforest regions and generate £1 billion of green private sector investment to tackle climate change around the world.

Speaking ahead of Nature and Land-Use day, Environment Secretary George

Eustice said:

To keep 1.5 degrees alive, we need action from every part of society, including an urgent transformation in the way we manage ecosystems and grow, produce and consume food on a global scale.

We need to put people, nature and climate at the core of our food systems. The UK government is leading the way through our new agricultural system in England, which will incentivise farmers to farm more sustainably, create space for nature on their land and reduce carbon emissions.

There needs to be a fair and just transition that protects the livelihoods and food security of millions of people worldwide – with farmers, indigenous people and local communities playing a central role in these plans.

UK will also outline a range of new funding commitments from the £3 billion fund for nature, including:

- Nearly £25 million out of the £150 million from BEIS' Mobilising Finance for Forests (MFF) programme will be invested to develop sustainable supply chains in tropical countries
- An investment of over £38 million into a new global research initiative through the world's leading agricultural research organisation, the CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research), to address the climate crisis and protect nature while advancing gender equality, poverty reduction, and food and nutrition security
- The UK will contribute up to £40 million of international climate finance to establish the Global Centre on Biodiversity for Climate. The Global Centre will address critical research gaps in how the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity can deliver climate solutions and improve livelihoods in developing countries

The UK will also launch a £65 million Just Rural Transition support programme to help developing countries move towards more sustainable methods of agriculture and food production. This will include support to ensure that farmers are included in policy-making processes, including through consultations, trials and pilot programmes for new technologies and approaches.

The UK will announce its support for the US/UAE-led Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM4C) which will mobilise over £4 billion of new global public sector investment in agricultural innovation, research and development over the next five years with contributions from over 30 countries for public and private sector as well as knowledge partners.

These new partnerships will help accelerate adoption of more climate resilient and sustainable agriculture practices to deliver healthy diets, improve the trade in agricultural goods, contributing to a healthier planet

and a more prosperous future.

The production of commodities such as beef, soy, palm oil and cocoa is a major driver of deforestation. Twenty-eight governments, including the UK, representing 75% of global trade in key commodities that can threaten forests – such as palm oil, cocoa and soya – have come together through the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) Roadmap which was created at COP26 to deliver sustainable trade and reduce pressure on forests, including support for smallholder farmers and improving the transparency of supply chains.

As holders of this year's G7 and COP26 Presidency, Nature and Land-Use day will build on the Government's promise to lead both the UK and the nations of the world to build back greener, secure a global net zero and keep 1.5 degrees within reach.

In a landmark step, almost 100 high-profile UK companies will agree to work towards halting and reversing the decline of nature by 2030 and commit to getting 'Nature Positive'. This includes OVO Energy announcing its commitment in planting one million trees in the UK within the next year and Severn Trent pledging to restore over 2,000 acres of peatland across England and Wales by 2025. Burberry has also unveiled a new biodiversity strategy, which includes the assurance that all its key material will be 100% traceable by 2025, for instance, through sourcing more sustainable cotton, leather and wool, as well as recycled polyester and nylon. Commitments also include a pledge by Co-op, M&S, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose to cut their environmental impact across climate, deforestation and nature in a 'Retailers Commitment for Nature' with WWF.

UK Clean Growth, Energy and Climate Change Minister Greg Hands said:

If we are to keep the 1.5 degrees target in reach, we need to work with other nations to halt global deforestation, investing in the sustainable trading of commodities that will help communities thrive, while protecting our planet for generations to come.

Backed by a £500m package of support, today's historic UK commitment at COP26 will help protect millions of hectares of land, boosting rural communities and forest-friendly businesses, while creating thousands of green jobs across the world's rainforest regions.

WWF Chief Executive Tanya Steele said:

The climate and nature crisis are two sides of the same coin and we can't turn things around unless we transform our food system, which is destroying forests and habitats in some of our most fragile landscapes. The commitment from leading UK supermarkets to halve the food retail sector's environmental impact by 2030 will help millions of families make their weekly shop greener and help reverse the loss of nature.

Justin Adams, Executive Director, Tropical Forest Alliance, World Economic Forum said:

The FACT Dialogue process has created new momentum – from 28 countries – to work on issues of trade, forests and finance in an integrated way. Bringing these governments together – from the global south and north – to tackle the issue of commodity production and deforestation head on is a very significant development. Continued dialogue after COP26 will be critical to progress.

The full package of commitments and action includes:

Agricultural reform and innovation:

- A Global Action Agenda on Innovation in Agriculture – launched today – to transform food systems under climate change. It was launched with support from more than 150 allies from governments, researchers, farmers and businesses. It will drive action to close the innovation gap that limits our efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change, while accelerating efforts towards greater food security around the world.
- The Policy Action Agenda – launched today – sets out pathways and actions that countries can take to repurpose public policies and support to food and agriculture, to deliver these outcomes and enable a just rural transition. It also sets out actions and opportunities for other stakeholders (international organisations, food producers, financial entities, researchers, civil society and others) to channel their expertise, knowledge and resources in support of this agenda.
- A new global initiative launched to reach 100 million farmers at the centre of food systems transformation with net zero and nature positive innovations by 2030 via a multistakeholder platform convened by World Economic Forum (WEF) involving farmers’ organisations, civil society, businesses and other partners.
- New UK funding to the CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) the world’s leading agricultural science and innovation organisation, which will create and scale new crops and technologies yielding climate, nature, health, gender and economic impact (£38.5m over two years). Funding will support the development and deployment of:
 - Crop varieties that are climate-resilient (more resistant to heat, drought and flooding) and more nutritious (with elevated levels of essential micronutrients);
 - agricultural practices that are more productive, sustainable and climate-resilient;
 - new livestock varieties, diagnostics and management practices, which reduce the risks faced by pastoralists and livestock keepers;
 - Foresight and trade off tools for risk management of, and resilience to, major threats emerging from the food system, including anti-microbial resistance and emerging zoonotic diseases;
 - evidence on better policies to help poor farmers use new technology to

access markets, reduce risks and increase incomes.

- A new UK Government initiative to transform climate-resilient food systems through research and innovation. The Gilbert Initiative will coordinate investments in evidence generation, technology development and delivery to support a food system that by 2030 feeds nine billion people with nutritious, safe foods; uses environmental resources sustainably; enhances resilience and adaptation to climate change; and generates inclusive growth and jobs.

Ocean Action:

- At COP26, more than 10 new countries signed up to the 30by30 target, including Bahrain, Jamaica, St Lucia, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, India, Qatar, Samoa, Tonga, Gambia and Georgia.
- The UK announced a £6m investment into the World Bank's PROBLUE, as part of its Blue Planet Fund – supporting the development of the blue economy to act as a key driver of growth in small island developing states (SIDS) and coastal least developed countries. The programme works across a broad range of activities, from sustainable tourism to developing aquaculture markets; from fostering the transition to circular economies to investment into NbS as a powerful vehicle for delivering disaster risk reduction and improved water resource management.
- The UK also announced it that it will be contributing to a UN-led programme to support the government of Fiji in issuing its first sovereign blue bond. The blue bond will help to create a supportive environment for sustainable ocean finance in Fiji, supporting projects that improve ocean health and support the livelihoods of coastal communities.
- The UK has also announced an additional £1m contribution to the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR), in addition to the £5m we announced earlier this year. GFCR is dedicated to the conservation and restoration of coral reef ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. The UK's contribution will go into helping developing countries within the Caribbean, India Ocean, Pacific and Southeast Asia prevent the extinction of vital coral reefs by exploring techniques such as sewage treatment and the management of marine protected areas.
- The Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance, a multi-sector collaboration designed to drive investment into coastal natural capital by pioneering ground-breaking finance products that incentivise blended finance and private investment, hosted a roundtable yesterday that saw commitments towards the partnership's target to secure over at least \$20m USD from largely private finance.
- The UK announced its intention to work together to help establish a new cross-Administration UK Blue Carbon Evidence Partnership to progress the evidence base on these habitats. Through this partnership, UK Administrations will work together to address key research questions related to blue carbon policy, including working to fill the evidence gaps that currently hinder inclusion of saltmarsh and seagrass habitats into the UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory.
- The UK also announced that the Environment Agency have published pioneering toolkits to support the restoration and protection of blue

carbon habitats to combat climate change. The three handbooks will focus on saltmarsh, seagrass and intertidal sediments and will be instrumental in informing the restoration of blue carbon habitats in the UK and beyond.

Sustainable production and consumption:

- The Forest Agriculture Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue, co-chaired by the UK and Indonesia, was launched in February 2021 and brings together 28 of the largest consumer and producer governments of beef, soy, cocoa and palm oil. They have collaborated to ensure that these goods can be traded in a way which strengthens economic development, food security and improves livelihoods – while avoiding deforestation that causes climate change and biodiversity loss.
- The FACT roadmap identifies actions on four critical and related areas of work which are central to achieving the FACT Dialogue's overall objectives: trade and market development, smallholder support, traceability and transparency, and research, development and innovation. This roadmap actions puts countries on a path to ending deforestation whilst promoting sustainable trade and development.
- The £500m UK funding package drawn from the £3bn International Climate Finance committed for nature and biodiversity will fund a second phase of the Investment in Forests & Sustainable Land Use (IFSLU) programme and will support the delivery of the FACT Roadmap.

Private Sector Action:

- The CEOs of Co-Op, M&S, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose have joined forces to sign WWF's 'Retailers Commitment for Nature' in which they commit to cutting their environmental impact across climate, deforestation and nature and leading the way for the whole food retail sector to halve its overall impact on the natural world by 2030. The supermarkets have committed to take action across seven areas – climate change, deforestation, sustainable agriculture, sustainable diets, marine, waste and packaging.