

WFF - Young Fair Trade Advocates' statement

The [Young Fair Trade Advocates](#) (YFTAs) are a are EU young individuals aged 18-30 advocating for a global, fair, and ecological transition. They have been meeting with politicians, engaging with stakeholders from the Global South, and preparing policy papers. They are passionately engaged in supporting the 2023 World Food Forum's pivotal theme: "Agrifood systems transformation accelerates climate action". They acknowledge that climate change is a pressing global issue that cuts across national boundaries and they recognize agrifood systems' role in the current social and environmental crisis.

As the World Food Forum is rightly exposing, agrifood systems are often responsible for environmental and social catastrophes, contributing to one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, 90% of global deforestation, and 70% of global water use.

However, it is crucial to understand that it is possible to change this trajectory. Current agrifood systems' transformation is not just a noble aspiration but an essential component of the global climate solution. This effort is not just about environmental conservation, but about social and economic justice, working for a more equitable future for all.

As a matter of fact, the YFTAs, believe that to achieve a global, fair and ecological transition, three levers of change need to be equally targeted: support the agroecological transition; achieve climate justice, ensure living incomes and living wages.

Whereas the actions to impulse these levers must involve:

- Inclusion of smallholder farmers, workers and artisans in climate solutions as the global focus on the climate crisis intensifies.
- Enforcing transparency and accountability in supply chains.
- Securing climate financing mechanisms.
- Ensuring living incomes and wages for the world's smallholder agricultural farmers, workers and artisans.
- Paying fair value, fair prices and adhering to fair trading practices to ensure producers have resources to make the investment needed for climate adaptation and mitigation.
- Integrating global citizenship education from primary levels onwards.

As detailed above, to make everlasting change, **it is essential to emphasize that true and lasting change must take into account and respect the people more historically in marginalised positions (i.e. smallholder farmers)**. For instance, smallholder farmers, representing about 84% of farms worldwide, are vital in the global food supply chain. These farmers produce a third of the world's food and play a pivotal role in numerous global value

chains.¹ Yet, they often face challenges (such as overexploitation, environmental harm, and social conflict among others) due to imbalanced trade agreements. This is more evident in the implementation of certain EU trade agreements on African, Asian, and Latin American countries. For example, Jorge Acosta, banana producer from Ecuador, has expressed concerns over the lack of monitoring of compliance of obligations for all parties in Free Trade Agreements, which has limited countries' abilities to benefit from the trade agreements.²

In this sense, it's crucial to acknowledge a key perspective calling for a holistic approach and the notion of shared responsibility, as offered by Marike De Peña, Director and co-founder of the cooperative Banelino in Dominican Republic. Marike emphasizes that: 'in the quest for accountability and sustainability, businesses are not the sole players in this narrative'³. Marike stresses the vital role that local governments must play as co-responsible actors, actively engaging in the dialogue. Local governments must play a crucial role in promoting accountability and sustainability, collaborating with civil society organizations (CSOs) and stakeholders to develop policies and programs fostering fairness and sustainability within the food supply chain.

Shared responsibility is a notion on which YFTAs have also worked, where young people urge for greater shared accountability in addressing global concerns. Governments, businesses, CSOs, individuals, and producers are being urged to work together to discover practical solutions to sustainability issues in food systems. Particularly, citizens are seen as powerful agents driving change via various roles like voting, activism, and responsible consumption. Likewise, smallholders in global supply chains are highlighted as important but often in a disadvantageous position, warranting support for sustainable practices.

Having said that, to embark on a meaningful transition towards sustainable food systems, the YFTAs acknowledge the need for structural changes that create a holistic approach to all sectors and industries. Ultimately shaping a new socio-economic model that responds to environmental challenges while **championing climate, social, and trade justice**.

In conclusion, the YFTAs stand resolutely alongside the World Food Forum in advocating for the transformation of agrifood systems as a potent catalyst for climate action and sustainable development. Their commitment to building a better, more equitable future for all is unwavering, and they believe that by embracing sustainable agrifood systems, it is possible to pave the way for a brighter and more sustainable world. It is their hope that their voices are heard and their recommendations included in the final statement.

¹ <https://fairtrade-advocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/yfta-policy-recommendations-standard.pdf>

² https://fairtrade-advocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/YFTAs_Un-Doing-EU-Trade-Agreements.pdf

³ Ibidem