

I am delighted to represent the United Kingdom on this Panel. Thank you to the CFS for organising this Special Event. *[I agree with others]* With World Food Day on Friday, this is an important opportunity to draw attention to the challenges the world is facing in achieving zero hunger.

The way we have consumed and produced food over the past few decades has caused extraordinary damage.

On the individual level - poor-quality diets cause poor health.

On a much broader level, the way we produce and consume food is the principle driver of biodiversity loss and deforestation- which in turn is one of the biggest causes of climate change.

Food production and consumption patterns are responsible for up to 29% of greenhouse gas emissions.

This month, we learnt that populations of key species have declined by more than two thirds in my lifetime – a mere nanosecond in evolutionary terms.

An extraordinary – terrifying – diversity of species face extinction.

We are destroying forests at a rate of 30 football pitches per minute

...and life is being hoovered out of the ocean at a rate that has brought the world's great fisheries to the brink of collapse.

Last week it was revealed that an astonishing 2 of every 5 species of plants are now threatened with extinction.

More than anything else, it is the way we produce and consume that is driving this devastation.

And in a vicious cycle, this environmental destruction is risking a food security crisis.

Globally, more than half of agricultural land is now degraded. It is estimated that the resulting diminishing yields will hit 500 million small farms hardest.

A billion people depend on fish as their main source of protein.
A billion depend on forests that we are wiping out.

And to add to the uncertainty, we learn from recent research by Kew Gardens that just 15 plants make up 90% of the energy we get from food...
...and that 4 billion people rely entirely on just three crops – rice, maize, and wheat.

In theory, just three effective plant diseases could wipe out the bulk of our food supply virtually overnight.

Clearly none of this is sustainable. We cannot continue to degrade forests and land, destabilise our fragile climate, deplete the ocean... without paying a very high price.

So learning to feed a growing population – likely 9 billion people by 2030 - whilst protecting the vital natural resources that sustain life and support economic development, is one of, if not the greatest challenge of our time.

What can we do to shift the food system to promote these mutual benefits?

As part of our commitment to improving food security and malnutrition for the most vulnerable people on the planet, the Foreign Secretary recently announced a new UK Aid commitment to address COVID-19 and famine, and appointed Nick Dyer as the UK's first Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs.

We will also continue working with partner governments to improve day-to-day nutrition services for the most vulnerable – as part of our commitment to ending preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children.

Through our support for the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit and the CFS voluntary guideline negotiations, we will also be encouraging all governments to take action in line with recommendations that will improve how food systems support people's health and nutrition.

Here in the UK, we have been working on a new National Food Strategy, which will look at the entire food chain from farm to fork to make sure our food system delivers better outcomes for people's health and nutrition, climate and environment, and for jobs and growth.

We are shifting our land use subsidies away from the destructive Common Agriculture Policy, which simply pays landowners for the farmable land they own, towards a system where payments are conditional upon environmental care.

As President of the next Climate COP, we are putting nature at the heart of our response to climate change, and part of this will focus on delivering a Just Rural Transition to feed a growing global population.

Around the world, the top fifty food producing countries spend around \$700 billion annually on – often destructive – land use subsidies.

That's roughly 4 times the all world's Aid budget combined.

If we can persuade other countries to do join us in shifting those subsidies, we can flip the market in favour of sustainability.

At the recent UNGA, the UK, together with the European Commission and Costa Rica, launched the 'Leaders' Pledge for Nature'.

This sets out ten ambitious commitments to tackle biodiversity loss by 2030, including a specific commitment to identify and shift incentives that are driving climate change and environmental destruction.

Encouragingly, 76 countries have already signed the pledge. But we have a duty now to turn those powerful words into action.