

Thank you for inviting me. I'm delighted to be part of this Expert Panel.

Over the last decade, the Committee on World Food Security has consistently called attention to climate change as a threat to food security and the lives and livelihoods of food producers, especially in developing countries.

It has emphasized water as the lifeblood of eco-systems that food security depends on, and poor water management as a significant challenge.

And it has recommended action: to protect eco-systems, manage water sustainably and to address climate change.

The recommendations have been endorsed by 116 member states and many other organisations.

But the evidence couldn't be clearer - we need do a great deal more.

Hunger has been growing since 2014.

2bn people don't have access to adequate food, and 3bn are unable to afford a healthy diet.

Even before the pandemic, 690m people went to bed hungry each night, with 135m people facing the worst forms of food insecurity.

Now 150m *more* people may join them – that's almost a *billion* people.

It is remarkable that food production has tripled in the last forty years. But that has come at a huge cost.

We know that we cannot continue to produce and consume food in the way that we have been doing for the last few decades without causing extraordinary damage to our health and to that of our planet.

The dominant agricultural and land use policies incentivise over-use of land and soil, over-use of chemicals, deforestation and degradation of carbon-rich natural habitats;

We know beyond any doubt that the damage we have done to the natural world is both catastrophic – and fundamentally unsustainable.

We have learnt that populations of key species have declined by more than two thirds since the 1970s.

2 out of 5 *plant* species face extinction.

Life is being hoovered out of the ocean at a rate that has brought the great fisheries of the world to the point of collapse.

And we are destroying forests at a rate of 30 football pitches a minute.

In a vicious cycle, that terrible environmental destruction is further undermining food security.

Invariably it is the world's poorest who suffer first and worst when the free but rarely valued services that nature provides begin to fail.

Forests for instance not only regulate our water and climate systems they underpin the livelihoods of a billion people.

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

And to add to the uncertainty new research by Kew Gardens tells us that 4 billion people rely entirely on just three crops rice, maize, and wheat.

In our efforts to produce ever cheaper meat, our industrial scale use of antibiotics is exacerbating the crisis of antimicrobial resistance, which threatens millions of lives.

It is worth considering that three quarters of new and emerging human infectious diseases are zoonotic.

And finally, in yet another vicious cycle, Agriculture is now the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions after energy.

And climate change in turn means crops failing, pests thriving, produce deteriorating, weather changing, and rising sea levels devastating coastal fields and freshwater.

Governments of course have both the ability - and responsibility to address these issues.

All governments need to rethink the way we use public money, so that we incentivise practices that protect rather than destroy the natural world.

Every year the top 50 food-producing countries pour \$700bn into support for often-destructive land use.

That's around four times the world's aid budgets combined – and coincidentally – it is roughly what scientists estimate we need to reverse environmental destruction and help nature recover.

So, imagine the impact if even part of this public support could be redirected to help farmers transition to climate friendly, nature-positive land management?

In the UK, we are doing just that.

We are bringing switching our land use subsidy system so that payments are conditional upon good environmental outcomes.

We are also taking steps to reduce our international environmental footprint.

We are introducing new due diligence legislation to cut deforestation from business supply chains.

We are actively looking at ways to ensure our food imports don't increase water stress, especially in drought-prone areas.

And related to this, the UK's Taskforce for Climate-related Financial Disclosure has produced water reporting standards for our companies and investors, that will become compulsory by 2025.

We are investing in international research. UK supported science through the CGIAR international research system has already prevented the clearing of 27 million hectares of land –more than the entire UK landmass; with a hugely positive impact on biodiversity and climate.

At the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019 we launched the Just Rural Transition initiative to help get policy and investment behind the critical shift towards more productive, profitable, and sustainable land-use around the world.

As COP26 Presidents, we are committed to putting nature at the heart of the climate conference – and as part of that, we are leading global dialogues.

We are asking producer and consumer countries – North, South, East, and West – to build what we hope will be a global commitment to clean up global supply chains and redirect the incentives.

And we invite governments, farmers, and others to re-think how we can shift agricultural policies and support away from destruction towards sustainability.

Because if enough governments make these commitments, then together we can flip the immense power of the *market* in favour of sustainability as well.

Without this, there is no pathway to net zero, to the ambition of the Leaders Pledge for Nature to put biodiversity on a road to recovery by 2030, or to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We have a chance – indeed a *duty* now – to catalyse change at the Global Forum on Food and Agriculture, at the UN Food Systems Summit, at Glasgow, and beyond.

If we work together, we can achieve healthy food *and* sustainable livelihoods. We can make food systems part of the solution to tackling climate change and reversing the decline of nature.

Thank you for all that you do to make that happen – I wish you well.