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**WEAK COP28 OUTCOMES ON CLIMATE ACTION, FINANCE AND FOOD SYSTEMS LACK NEEDED URGENCY,
LEAVING IT TO COUNTRIES TO TAKE THE LEAD**

Corporate influence limits U.N. climate summit outcomes for fossil fuels and agriculture

MINNEAPOLIS—Before dawn in Dubai, COP28 negotiators issued a final text that included a call to transition away from fossil fuels. Yet, the call sets a feeble course for the phaseout of their use, finance commitments are weak and equity is largely ignored. Increased corporate influence at COP28 impeded substantive action on phasing out fossil fuels and tackling agriculture-related emissions. Despite the spotlight on food systems at COP28, the final decisions said little about the urgent need for transformative shifts toward agroecology to address the climate crisis.

The Global Stocktake decision, designed to inform governments as they ramp up their national-level climate plans, failed to strengthen climate finance commitments. The final report contains only high-level principles about food systems without concrete guidance on reducing or preventing food system emissions or strengthening their adaptive capacity. Left without strong guidance, countries now must ambitiously push beyond the COP28 stocktake recommendations to reform climate policies and transition food systems to avoid the loss and damage from a worsening climate. Countries in the Global North, home to the highest-emitting agriculture systems and with access to the most resources, must spearhead climate action independent of the UNFCCC.

“The COP28 outcome is evidence of how little trust developing countries have in the promises of rich countries. Until richer countries take the lead and cut emissions from their domestic food systems, many of which are highly polluting and emissions intensive, they have little credibility internationally. For multilateral negotiations to thrive, we need confidence-building measures at home, coupled with incentives for agroecological practices everywhere, in richer and poorer countries alike,” said IATP Executive Director Dr. Sophia Murphy.

Food and agriculture featured prominently on the agenda at COP28, offering big food companies, big philanthropy and several countries a forum to announce a handful of voluntary initiatives, including the United Arab Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Change and an update on the Sharm el-Sheikh food system workstream, launched at COP27. On Food and Agriculture Day, the FAO launched its [Roadmap to 1.5°C](#), an important report on how to reduce food system emissions while maintaining the right to food.

“FAO’s Roadmap offers a welcome focus on the right to food in the cacophony of food interests that have descended on COP. Disappointingly, the report neglects to call on big agricultural companies to make real emissions reductions, especially in rich countries where cutting methane and nitrous oxide emissions from industrial animal operations is a low-hanging fruit with huge collateral benefits for biodiversity, rural economies and healthy diets,” said Dr. Murphy.

With the elevated profile of food and agriculture came a record-breaking presence of agribusiness lobbyists at COP28, with [three times as many](#) meat and dairy lobbyists in attendance than at COP27 and the formal recognition of lobbyists as members of national delegations. In the flood of announcements made, agribusinesses promised everything except real cuts to their emissions.

“Big meat and dairy companies are taking a page out of big oil’s playbook on how to influence both the narrative and negotiations at COPs. Without good governance rules, anything goes. With growing scrutiny of emissions from meat and dairy companies, it is unsurprising they stepped up their game to head off any COP outcome that might hinder their operations. Yet, a tripling of delegates is alarming and drives home the urgent need for reforms that limit corporate influence at U.N. climate meetings,” said Ben Lilliston, IATP director rural strategies and climate change.

Encouragingly, some governments set forth concrete policies to address fossil fuel-based methane, but most continued to sidestep the largest source of human-caused methane: agriculture. Rather than clear policy solutions to cut and regulate methane emissions from the industrial livestock system, governments and corporations announced new projects, voluntary pledges and investments in untested and questionable agricultural technologies. Two years in, the Global Methane Pledge still lacks teeth: improvements must be made to the [accountability and governance](#) of the pledge.

In a best-case outcome, countries rejected the Article 6.4 “market mechanism” recommendations from the Supervisory Body (SB) and instructed the SB to revise the texts to deal forthrightly with controversial issues over how to govern carbon markets. Negotiations were deadlocked between delegations who want to approve two recommendations on requirements for the sale of carbon emissions from governments to the private sector and those who opposed approval. Major issues, such as governments’ responsibility and liability for monitoring the private sector’s emissions offset projects and emissions reversals, were not included in the emissions removal recommendation. Instead, proponents of approving the recommendations trusted that a small group of negotiators will provide future non-binding guidance to resolve such controversies as determining what are “avoidable” vs. “unavoidable” emissions reversals. How these controversies are resolved will have major financial consequences, particularly for the developing countries that host land-based emissions offset projects.

“The Article 6.4 Supervisory Body could not agree on key issues and so presented incomplete recommendations to COP28 delegates. The developing country host governments of most land-based emissions offset projects were asked to approve these documents and trust that subsequent SB supplements to the recommendations will help realize promised benefits of the ‘market mechanism.’ The delegates returned these recommendations to the SB with instructions to send complete recommendations to COP29 that will clarify government and private sector responsibilities and liabilities in the ‘market mechanism,’” said Steve Suppan, IATP senior policy analyst.

On the [first-ever Trade Day](#), governments, businesses and international organizations discussed the role that trade in goods and services and trade policy can play to facilitate the clean energy transition and promote environmentally sustainable development, and opportunities to decarbonize global supply chains and incentivize businesses to invest in a net-zero future.

“We call on governments at COP28 to commit ambitiously to cutting global food sector and trade-related emissions. This includes committing to strengthened action on food system emissions and quantified GHG goals for agricultural sub-sectors in their Nationally Determined Contributions to mitigation and adaptation reports, especially for the major agriculture producers and traders like the U.S., India, China and EU. Climate, trade and agriculture policies need to be coordinated and mutually reinforcing if they are to shape effective climate action that fosters inclusive and sustainable development,” said Calvin Manduna, IATP senior trade policy analysis.

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