Statement by Shefali Sharma, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) on behalf of Climate Action Network (CAN)—ENGO, 24 November 2020

Thank you chair and parties to the KJWA for this opportunity.

The biggest challenge in improving livestock management systems is the dominance of industrial animal agriculture in crowding out more sustainable systems and practices.

The mass production and overconsumption of food animals in specific regions and populations have led to dramatic increases in food animals and greenhouse gas emissions. The industrial model with long supply chains has not only contributed to increased emissions due to land use change and non-Co2 emissions, but also to biodiversity loss, nitrate pollution, dead zones, the increase of zoonotic diseases and public health impacts such as antimicrobial resistance and cardiovascular diseases.

This video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic is a vivid reminder of how human degradation of wildlife habitats, including through industrial scale agriculture, is linked to the spread of infectious zoonotic diseases. Livestock often serve as intermediate or "amplifier" hosts, particularly when industrial operations make large numbers of animals of low genetic diversity more vulnerable. Bird flu and the African Swine Fever are other devastating examples of this challenge.

Parties to the UNFCCC and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture can help address these challenges and catalyze a transformational shift in livestock systems through their NDCs, national climate and adaptation plans and the Green Climate Fund. The KJWA should explore ways to facilitate a shift towards less and better livestock production. Such a shift should benefit people, nature and climate in an equitable manner. It must also ensure that food security and nutrition are not undermined.

Approaches to this shift must be equitable. 6 countries and the European Union are responsible for 43% of the world's livestock emissions though they are 15% of the world's population. Include China and just 8 are responsible for 60% of global livestock emissions.

In contrast, up to 90% of livestock in West Africa is raised on extensive production where it can be a source of biodiversity, environmental sustainability, nutrition and livelihoods.
It is therefore critical to recognise the contribution that different types and scales of livestock production and consumption have on the climate, wider planetary boundaries and social justice.

The shift must be holistic. As such, actions must not be limited to greenhouse gas reductions, but must integrate human rights and larger planetary boundaries such as biodiversity, air, water and land pollution.

The shift must address absolute livestock emissions. Advocates of the industrial model claim that "emissions intensity" reductions per kilo of meat or milk can help the livestock sector mitigate climate change.

However, emissions intensity reductions with rising numbers of animals in production result in increasing absolute emissions. It is critical that absolute emissions and not emissions intensity reduction be the metric for livestock related climate action.

The shift must include the role of diets. An equitable approach to reducing meat consumption could contribute significantly to reducing emissions and at the same time ensure food security and nutrition. Countries that overconsume must take the lead. Several studies suggest that an average per capita diet of 300g of meat a week would meet nutritional needs, while reducing the climate contribution of the meat sector by about half.

The IPCC's Special Report on Land substantiates that increasing amounts of plant-based protein sources such as pulses, nuts and seeds in diets could help address food security needs and reduce pressure on land, ecosystems and the climate.

Support must shift away from industrial animal agriculture towards ensuring that livestock production contributes to ecosystem restoration including through low stocking densities and well-managed pasture.

Agropastoral and agroecological systems are key to livestock's adaptation and resilience to climate: Agroecology aims to build integrated and diversified systems at various scales. Livestock can be essential in ensuring ecosystem fertility through closing nutrient cycles. When permanent pasture and meadows are well-managed, grazing provides a vital source of livelihoods, carbon conservation and other ecological benefits.

The KJWA should provide guidance and input to the development of NDCs, NAPs and Green Climate Fund policies to further these goals. In doing so, Parties should apply just transition principles for agriculture.

Such a Transition must address rather than exacerbate existing inequalities. It must be inclusive and participatory, including key actors and communities that are marginalised, including women farmers, pastoralists and indigenous peoples.

A Just Transition must protect farmers, workers and land rights. For example, mitigation efforts in the livestock sector should not result in disenfranchisement of pastoralist communities or further consolidation of corporate supply chains.

Such consolidation contributes to low-paid and precarious working conditions in slaughterhouses, pushing smallholder farmers off their lands and paying below cost of production prices to livestock producers while public subsidies uphold a broken system.

Comprehensive policy frameworks must provide avenues for economic diversification and support farmers and workers to shift practices, including through ramping up investment, training, and social protection.

CAN has outlined several recommendations in our submission to the KJWA. We encourage all parties to review them.

This is a decisive decade for climate action and for our future on this planet. The livestock sector can and must do its part in preserving our planetary boundaries and protecting rural livelihoods.