

Food and Climate Change - what is it all about?

What do we mean by Climate Change?

The world is now about 1.2°C warmer than it was in the 19th Century – and the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere has risen by 50%. Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures.

Climate change is likely to be the greatest cause of species extinctions this century. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says a 1.5°C average rise may put 20-30% of species at risk of extinction. If the planet warms by more than 2°C, most ecosystems will struggle.

While we largely understand climate change through the impacts it will have on our natural world, it is the devastation that it is causing and will continue to cause for humanity that makes it an urgent human rights issue. It will compound and magnify existing inequalities. And its effects will continue to grow and



worsen over time, creating ruin for current and future generations. In 2021, scorching temperatures caused deadly heatwaves in Canada and Pakistan and set off wildfires in Greece and Siberia. There was severe flooding in Germany and China, while in Madagascar a particularly prolonged and intense drought has driven 1 million people to the brink of what is being described as the world's first "climate change-induced famine"

COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021



COP26 (26th Conference of Parties) was a gathering in Glasgow of 120 world leaders and over 40K registered participants for 2 weeks to talk about how climate change is affecting the world as a whole. The

outcome was the 'Glasgow Climate Pact'. This pact did not go as far as was hoped in tackling the urgent issues and ended up being a compromise and political will overshadowed making significant progress.

The agreement states that 'efforts' would be made to limit global warming to 1.5°C; specifically an agreement was reached to have a 'provision to call for' a phase down of coal power; there were calls for a doubling of financial support to developing countries facing the impacts of climate change and to identify collective needs and solutions; commitment to end and reverse deforestation and cut methane emissions by 30% by the year 2030. Most believe the agreements didn't go far enough.

COP26 provided the backdrop to many climate activists and campaigners (and members of the public) to have their voices heard

and to raise awareness of how political and business interests have and are standing in the way of real progress in tackling the climate crisis.



Food For Thought:

How does climate change affect you and your community? How do you think it might affect you in the next 10/20/50 years?

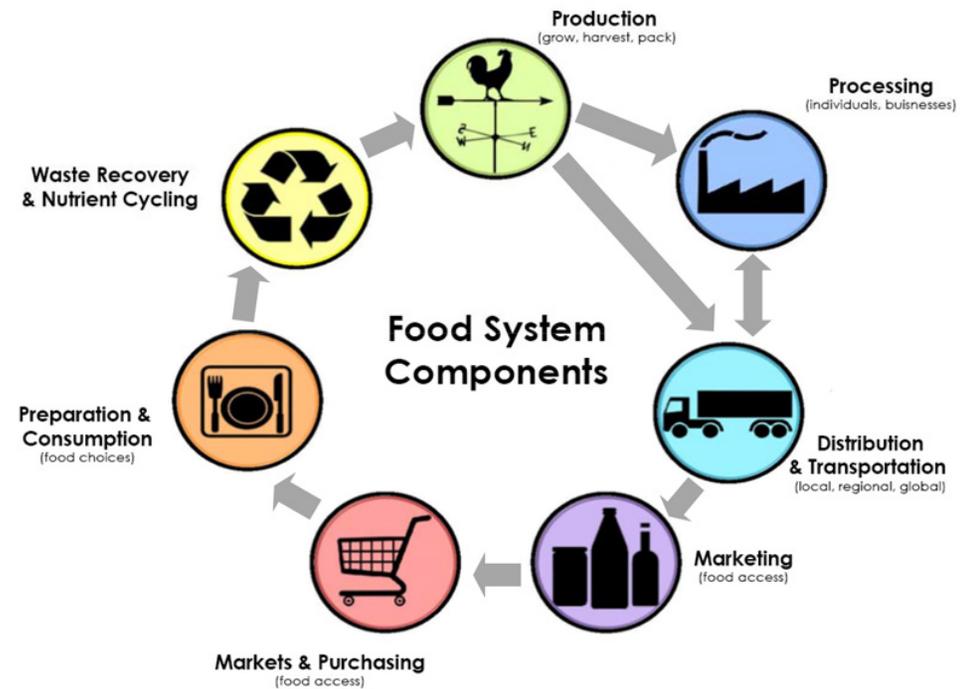
What's it all got to do with food?

About 25-33% of all greenhouse gas emissions come from our food system. The food system encompasses everything from how food is grown over how it gets to our plates to what happens to it when we throw it away, so all areas of production, processing, transport, retail, consumption and waste.

At all steps of this system, there are greenhouse gas emissions and other damaging effects on the natural environment, be that from industrial farming dependent on oil, synthetic pesticides and fertilisers; emissions from transporting food around the globe; plastic waste from processing and packaging; or methane and other greenhouse gases emitted from the 30% of food that is wasted before it even reaches our plates.

The food system is already greatly impacting the climate, but climate

change will also impact the availability, prices and choice of food in the future (and already does in some parts of the world). This will lead to increased hunger, poverty, conflict and migration. Many believe that food (or lack of it) will be the main factor through which most people will experience climate change.



What's the solution?

The food system is complex and any solution will be just as complex. More locally embedded food systems that focus on agroecological methods (= trying to preserve and support local ecosystems for example through low tillage, agroforestry and avoiding chemical inputs)

provide training and employment to local communities and have proven to be more resilient in the face of crisis. However, we believe that to create a food system that is good for both the planet and people, it needs to have a holistic approach that puts the needs of those impacted the most by climate change first.

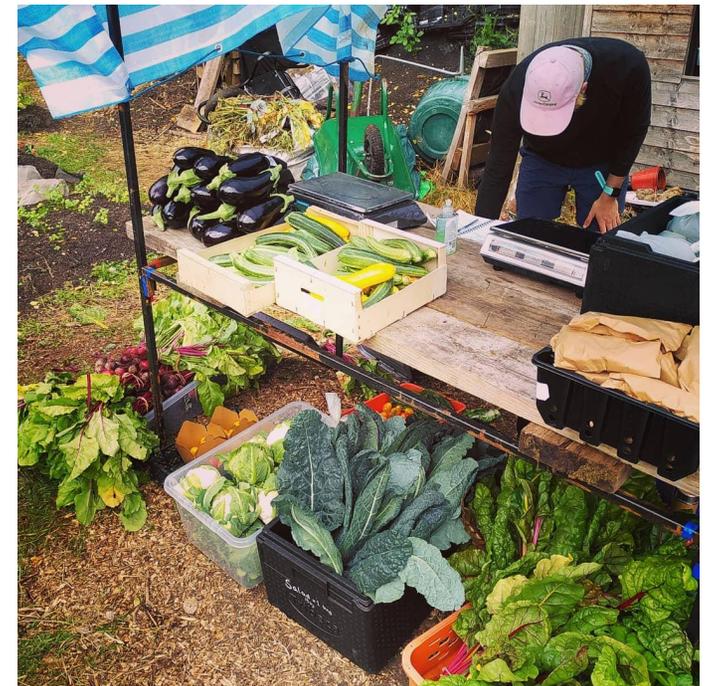
This means that we cannot just look at how food is produced, processed and consumed but that we also need to make good food accessible to everyone by making it more available as well as by pushing for better living conditions for those in our society experiencing financial hardship, for example by campaigning for better wages, better housing, a better welfare system and more rights for people with no recourse to public funds.

What can we do?

Our food system is broken - but not beyond repair! Plus, it is a great place to start making changes. We all have to eat and food has the power to bring communities together. Our choices do matter and even shifting part of your diet to more locally grown, seasonal foods can make a difference. Or you could try composting at home to reduce your food waste or learn how to grow some of your own food, even if it's just herbs on your windowsill. See the resources at the end for some inspiration.

Not everyone has access to locally produced / organic/ unprocessed foods and they can be expensive and time-consuming to prepare. There are other ways to support a better food system, for example by getting involved in community projects and by lobbying and pushing for change on any of the issues raised above. We need a movement of engaged citizens holding our local and national governments to account.

There are many community-led, grassroots projects all over Glasgow to support and get involved with. Are there any community gardens or community food shops near you? They could probably do with a hand. Lastly, there is a growing number of local producers and food initiatives you can support, not just by buying their produce, but also by giving them a hand or by spreading the word.



Resources:

Further reading on Climate Change & Food:

Climate Change and the Future of Food - at United Nations Foundation Blog [Climate Change and the Future of Food | unfoundation.org](https://www.unfoundation.org/blog/climate-change-and-the-future-of-food)

Nourish Food Atlas - an atlas of Scotland's food system mapping out possibilities for the future at www.nourishscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Food-Atlas_FINAL_online.pdf

The Land Workers Alliance Scotland Manifesto at [LWA-Scotland-Manifesto-website-1.pdf \(landworkersalliance.org.uk\)](https://www.landworkersalliance.org.uk/LWA-Scotland-Manifesto-website-1.pdf)

Ideas for making personal changes:

Giki App - free app that helps you track your carbon footprint in day to day life and gives suggestions on how to improve at www.giki.earth

Urban Worm - build your own home worm composting system out of recycled materials at <https://theurbanworm.co.uk/wormup/> (they provide you with free worms)

Trellis Factsheets - lots of resources on how to get started growing food at home including indoors and in small spaces at <https://trellisScotland.org.uk/content/factsheets>

Glasgow-based food initiatives:

Glasgow Community Food Network - Network of organisations in Glasgow that grow, produce and eat food at www.glasgowfood.net

Glasgow Green Map - map of community resources (inc community gardens) and sustainable, locally run businesses at www.glasgowecotrust.org.uk/glasgow-green-map

Urban Roots Free Food Map - Map of food initiatives in Glasgow providing free food at www.urbanroots.org.uk/freefood/