



Panel Summary

Holistic Climate Solutions Summit

Solutions at the Nexus of Climate,
Animal Welfare, and Sustainable
Development, Panel Summary

Background

As part of Climate Week NYC and in parallel with the UN General Assembly, on September 23, 2022, Brighter Green, Compassion in World Farming, Mercy For Animals, Parliament of the World's Religions, ProVeg International, World Animal Protection, and World Federation for Animals held a panel discussion, "Solutions at the Nexus of Climate, Animal Welfare, and Sustainable Development," for the Holistic Climate Solutions Summit hosted by the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. A recording of the event is available [here](#). The panel was moderated by Amelia Linn, director of global policy at Mercy For Animals. Below is a summary of the discussion's key messages.

Introduction

In recent years, we have seen growing recognition of the significant interlinkages between animal welfare; sustainable development; and the triple planetary crises of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Earlier this year, the UN Environment Assembly adopted a landmark resolution "acknowledging that animal welfare can contribute to addressing environmental challenges, promoting the One Health approach and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals."¹ But even with this growing recognition across the UN system, the current sustainable development agenda overlooks animal welfare.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 on climate action has particular relevance to animal welfare—both in the contribution to global emissions



and in the impact of climate change on animals. Raising animals for food accounts for at least 14.5 percent of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.² In addition, the impacts of climate change—from rising temperature to increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters—are affecting the lives of human and nonhuman animals at a global scale.

The panel discussion focused on existing solutions that advance animal welfare, climate action, and sustainable development, highlighting policy, alternative proteins, refined production systems, and transitions to plant-rich diets. Panel organizers hoped to empower policymakers and attendees with actionable paths to integrating improved animal welfare while tackling climate change.





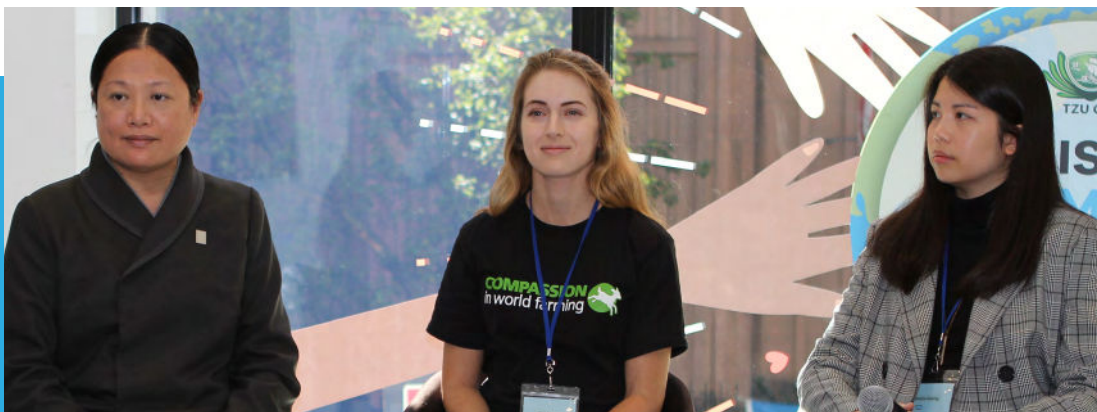
Allie Molinaro, Campaigns Manager, Compassion in World Farming

“Just as countries have set fossil fuel reduction targets, we need to see them begin setting reduction targets for animal-sourced food production and consumption.”

—Allie Molinaro

Allie Molinaro works to advance Compassion in World Farming USA's state and federal policy work, thought leadership, and activist mobilization. She focuses on placing factory farming in a broader context, highlighting its impacts not only on animal welfare but also on pollution, climate change, public health, and social justice. These are some of Allie's key messages:

- First, we need to reduce the number of livestock in the food system. There are currently 80 billion livestock animals slaughtered each year globally, and 50 billion of these animals live in intensified systems. Agriculture takes up 50 percent of the world's habitable land, and 83 percent of that is dedicated to livestock production. So even if we wanted to move away from intensified systems, with the current number of animals in the food system, there is not enough land for all livestock to be raised in higher-welfare, pasture-based systems. Second, we need to integrate livestock back into local ecosystems and restore the microscopic biology within soil that stores carbon. Regenerative agriculture practices can enable livestock to contribute to nutrient cycles and improve the soil's ability to absorb carbon.
- Improving animal welfare helps advance nearly all the SDGs. In particular, the inefficiency of animal consumption speaks to SDG 2, Zero Hunger. There are enough human-edible grain crops used for industrial animal agriculture to feed four billion people directly. For every 100 calories of human-edible crops (such as soy or corn) fed to a livestock animal, we get only 17–30 calories back as meat.
- Compassion in World Farming would like to see countries add meat and dairy reduction targets to their nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. At a national level, countries can reduce procurement of animal-based products and raise awareness of the sustainability of diets, particularly in high consuming countries. In conjunction with these efforts, countries must provide financial incentives and assistance for farmers to transition away from intensive animal agriculture.



Yuru Chou, Director of Audit, Tzu Chi Medical Foundation

“From a Buddhist perspective, to love all living beings, we adopt a plant-based lifestyle as a way of showing our compassion.”

—Yuru Chou



As director of audit at Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, Yuru Chou continues her life's work bridging integrity and effectiveness to champion humanistic medicine development and education. At Tzu Chi, she employs three decades of auditing and communications skills to improve processes and collaboration in order to not just treat patients but promote good health and well-being. These are some of Yuru's key messages:

- Research from Tzu Chi Medical Foundation has found that plant-based diets are good for our health, including for curing chronic diseases. Tzu Chi's hospitals, nursing homes, and long-term care facilities all serve plant-based foods to demonstrate how delicious and affordable plant-based foods can be.
- The Tzu Chi organization also promotes a plant-based lifestyle and compassion for animals through educational programs for all ages and works with companies and sponsors to invite them to join in the promotion of a healthy plant-based lifestyle. For example, a teacher from Tzu Chi's kindergarten program shared that young children displayed better anger-management skills when plant-based meals were introduced at school.
- Plant-based diets can help simplify one's lifestyle and increase charity. Tzu Chi Foundation asks donors and volunteers to reflect on having respect for animals and how we can help those in need. Even small changes add up and enable us to act quickly to alleviate suffering in the event of a disaster.



Cristina Mendonça, Managing Director, Mercy For Animals in Brazil



“The recent IPCC mitigation report is absolutely clear—from the demand side, there is nothing more impactful than a dietary shift to a plant-based diet along with avoiding food waste and overconsumption.”

—Cristina Mendonça

Cristina Mendonça serves as Mercy For Animals’ managing director in Brazil. She provides strategic leadership and guidance to advance efforts to build a compassionate food system in Brazil in direct cooperation with diverse stakeholders. Before joining Mercy For Animals, Cristina founded Techni, an inclusive sustainability consulting firm. She also worked for the Clinton Climate Initiative and C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group for almost 11 years in various capacities. These are some of Cristina’s key messages:

- The best thing we can do for animals and the environment is to reduce the number of animals in the food system. In Brazil, livestock represents 21 percent of total GHG emissions, more than either the energy or the transportation sector. When combined with emissions from land use and land-use change (which is also largely tied to livestock production), this number reaches 71 percent of GHG emissions in Brazil.³
- Mercy For Animals in Brazil works with both the private and public sectors, helping companies and governments promote vegan options and offer more healthy and sustainable meals by reducing consumption of animal products. Over the past five years, partners in this program have served more than 15 million plant-based meals, preventing 16,000 tons of CO2 emissions.
- Animal welfare issues are critical to a number of SDGs, including SDG 2, Zero Hunger; SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy; SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities; and SDG 15, Life on Land. In addition, SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, urges us to reflect broadly on our role in creating an inclusive society for sustainable development, including reducing violence and animal suffering.
- The framework of the SDGs can help broaden the concept of sustainable food systems to include dimensions of human and nonhuman animals, individual and societal health, energy, and ecosystems.



Jessica Kwong, Founder and CEO, Jack & Friends

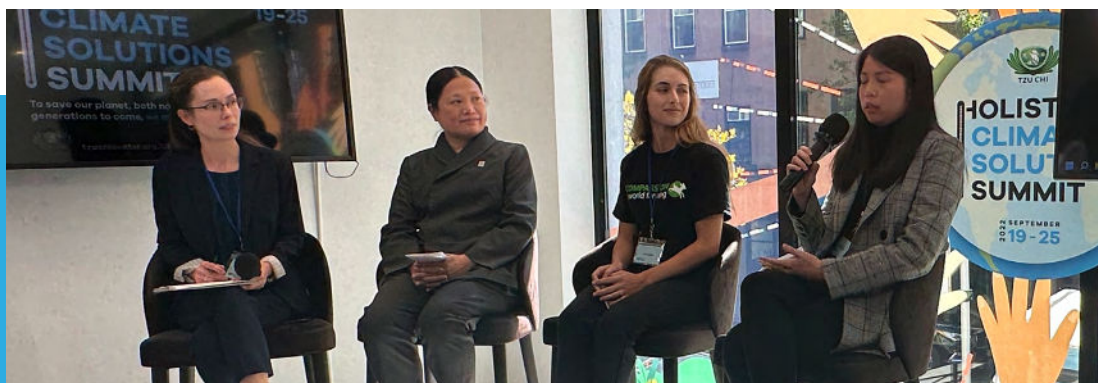


“We’re seeing a huge increase in awareness, importance, and interest in the plant-based food industry. Consumers are becoming more educated and are more willing to try new options, and because of that, companies like Jack & Friends are innovating.”

–Jessica Kwong

Jessica Kwong is the founder and CEO of Jack & Friends, a company creating plant-based jerky from jackfruit and pea protein. Jessica used her technical background, which includes a BS in food science from Cornell University, and experience working in consumer packaged goods (CPG) corporations like Mondelez International and The Hain Celestial Group to launch and lead her successful startup. These are some of Jessica’s key messages:

- In the plant-based CPG space, it is crucial to educate consumers on the impacts of animal agriculture on the climate, environment, and animals. Consumers drive purchase, and their decisions and feedback create a cyclical process in influencing which products are on the market and the commercial pipelines of food companies.
- Having a specific point of introduction can be helpful for a consumer to take interest in the sustainability and environmental impact of the products they purchase. A consumer may pick up a plant-based food product and learn more about the product’s contribution to sustainability efforts. This can spark further interest in not only plant-based food but also the broader impacts of agriculture on the environment.
- The United States can take many lessons from other parts of the world in terms of accelerating plant-based innovations. Europe is years ahead of the United States in availability of product options and, most importantly, widespread consumer adoption. Asia, particularly Singapore, incorporates government assistance and policy in partnership with industry to support plant-based innovation. Using Europe, Asia, and other countries or regions as case studies can help in further developing our own domestic plant-based sector and provide insights to U.S. companies looking to expand internationally.
- We recognize that the food supply chain and food trends are global, and the more we share ideas and products, the more we can support sustainability and the rise of the plant-based industry in general.





Nisreen Elsaim, Chair, UN Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change

"When we talk about the threats of climate change, we are not only meaning humans; we are also talking about other creatures who share the same planet with us."

—Nisreen Elsaim

Nisreen Elsaim is an environmental and a climate activist with a bachelor's degree in physics from the University of Khartoum, Sudan. She pursued her master's degree in renewable energy from the same University. She serves as the general coordinator for Youth and Environment – Sudan and served as the chair of Sudan Youth Organization on Climate Change. She is also a junior negotiator with the African Group of Negotiators and in 2020 was chosen to chair the UN Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change along with six other young climate activists. These are some of Nisreen's key messages:

- Climate change and conserving the environment are not about humans only. The natural equilibrium has always been about both humans and animals—we all complete one another. In 2020 during the initial COVID-19 lockdowns, we saw examples of nature and animals returning to urban spaces, and we saw how much clearer the air was.
- Indigenous communities have closer relationships with nature and animals. We can learn from Indigenous communities and territories how to live in equilibrium again.
- Climate change, humans, and animals are interlinked. This is why—from changing our diet to changing our energy systems—we need holistic solutions.



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Endnotes

- ¹ United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, Fifth Session, [Resolution 5/1, Animal Welfare–Environment–Sustainable Development Nexus](#) (March 7, 2022).
- ² P.J. Gerber et al., [Tackling Climate Change Through Livestock: A Global Assessment of Emissions and Mitigation Opportunities](#) (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2013), 15; Richard Twine, “[Emissions from Animal Agriculture—16.5% Is the New Minimum Figure](#),” *Sustainability* 13, no. 11 (June 2021): 6276.
- ³ [Emissions by Economic Activity](#), Greenhouse Gas Emission and Removal Estimating System, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://plataforma.seeg.eco.br/sankey>.

