SPECIAL PROCEDURES
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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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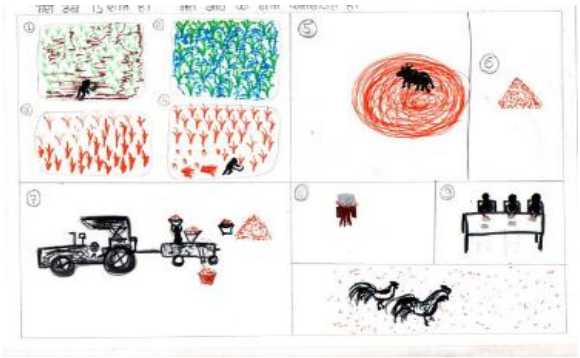
Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change

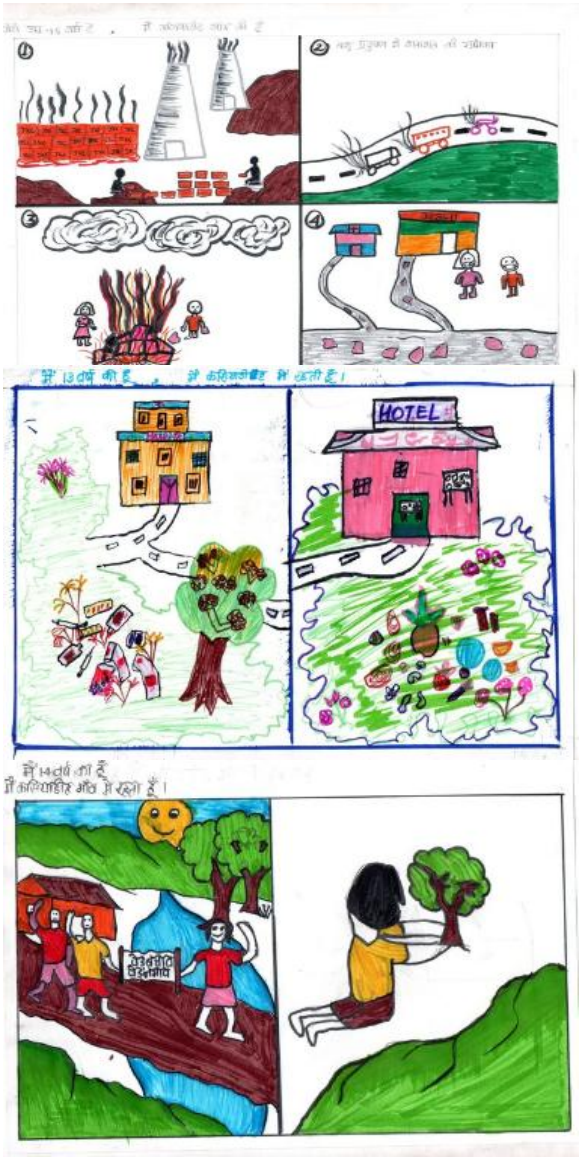
Annex II – Child and Youth Consultations on the report on food systems and climate change

To the report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Elisa Morgera, titled "Transforming food systems for a safe climate and health for all" (A/HRC/62/44)

Seeds of Hope
(poem by 14-year-old child from India)

Beneath the soil a tiny seed,
holds every hope the earth may need.
With drops of rain and golden light,
it slowly wakes from silent night.
It grows to feed both land and sea,
the fruit, the grain, the shaded tree.
The meals we share, the bread we break,
all come from choices that we make.
But storms grow strong and rivers dry,
the forests fade, the oceans sigh.
The earth, so patient, kind and wise,
now softly asks us to realize.
That every seed we plant with care,
is hope and healing we can share.
When hearts protect the land and sky,
new forests bloom and rivers sigh.
So let us grow a kinder way,
for brighter fields and skies of grey.
For every child and bird above,
the earth will thrive through care and love.
For even seeds both small and few,
can grow a greener world anew.





Drawings by two 15yo, a 12yo and a 14yo children from India

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Introduction

In February-March 2026, the Special Rapporteur on climate change and human rights conducted consultations with children and young people to inform the thematic report on food systems and human rights. The consultations gathered inputs from 67 participants (47 children and 20 young people) across 11 countries (Colombia, Germany, India, Iraq, Lao PDR, Mexico, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States).

Submissions were collected through an online questionnaire and one focus group discussion. The consultations aimed to collect perspectives on food systems, climate change and human rights, identify lived experiences and priority concerns; and explore modalities for sustained child and youth participation in the mandate. Participants were encouraged to express themselves in ways accessible and meaningful to them, recognizing that knowledge is not only verbal, but also embodied, visual and affective.

The consultations align with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and General Comment No. 26 on children's human rights and a healthy environment, with a focus on climate change, which affirms children's right to be heard, to participate meaningfully in matters affecting them, and to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

Part I summarises the results of the consultations with children and young people. Part II offers an experience of the conversations and submissions made by children and young people, to provide readers with a sense of the depth and breadth of the exchanges of ideas, including direct quotes and artwork (poems and drawings) that were offered by children and young people.

The Special Rapporteur is grateful to the invaluable support of CRIN in organising the consultation with the CRIN Climate Advisers who shared insightful experiences; and Child Rights Connect for their expert advice on child participation. She also highly appreciates and learned from the vast contribution from children and youth in this process.

PART I - KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CONSULTATIONS

Children and young people articulated a coherent critique of industrialized food systems, linking environmental degradation, structural inequality and climate change. Their responses reflect an awareness of both the global context surrounding food insecurity and climate change, as well as the intimate, embodied experiences of food insecurity, pollution and a changing climate. They advocate for transformative, rights-based solutions that centre local knowledge, community agency and participation.

In the analysis of data, two overarching themes emerged:

1. **Food systems and biodiversity loss**: Children and young people consistently linked industrialized food systems to ecological degradation. They identify intensive agriculture, monocultures, overfishing, and deforestation as drivers of biodiversity loss. Responses received from children and young people demonstrated a strong recognition of the inter-linkages of the triple planetary crises and how food production intensifies these interlocking challenges. Participants also highlighted the damage caused by large-scale agribusiness, including through soil degradation, overfishing, habitat loss from land conversion and industrial farming, poaching and illegal extraction. Participants also expressed an appreciation for traditional knowledge and ecologically sound practices from Indigenous Peoples and local communities and called for the revival of regenerative approaches such as polycropping, agroecology, and ancestral farming techniques, which sustain biodiversity while supporting food security.

2. **Negative emotions around the status quo in the context of global food system**: In the responses received, children and young people express frustration, urgency and grief toward the status quo of global food systems. Participants viewed environmental destruction linked to food systems as a moral failure and a violation of intergenerational justice and expressed concerns over corporate greed and profit-driven models that prioritise wealth over people and planet, violence against environmental defenders, especially in conflict-affected regions, and government inaction and lack of accountability for food and climate injustices. Participants also reflected a sense of responsibility as consumers, with some expressing guilt over complicity in unsustainable systems. Throughout the responses, understandings of food systems elicit strong emotional responses in children and young people.

1.1 Knowledge of problems

Children and young people were consulted on their views and perspectives about a number of issues related to food systems. This section describes respondents' knowledge of different problems in food systems, disaggregated by age (children under-18 and young people over-18).

Children's knowledge of food systems is shaped by daily lived experiences, access to food at home, and community practices. While some children described food production through simple, observational terms (e.g., growing vegetables, selling at markets), others exhibited a nuanced awareness of broader challenges. Key problems highlighted by **children** included:

- **Environmental degradation**: Children expressed concerns over overuse of fertilizers, pesticides, and plastics and its harmful impact on soil and water. Particularly, they expressed their concern about the environmental impact of single-use plastic in packaging of food and pollution from transport and industrial processing in the production of food.

- **Access and inequality**: Children also recognized that financial status determines food quality and access. Some noted local programs like food banks or government ration shops that support low-income families as positive practices, but also observed that poorer households face barriers to healthy food.
- **Corporate influence and greenwashing**: In their responses, children critiqued big agribusiness monopolies and described how companies use "green" branding to hide damaging practices, expressing concerns over greenwashing.
- **Climate impacts**: Children actively linked extreme weather events (droughts, floods) to problems in food availability. They also noted how climate change affects animals and crops they observe locally, such as the death of birds from smoke or changes in planting seasons.

Responses received from **young people** adopted a structural, systemic perspective on food systems, linking environmental, economic, and social issues in ways that reflect a more holistic understanding of food systems and its impact on climate. Key concerns highlighted by young people included:

- **Food systems and climate vulnerability:** Young people expressed concern over how climate change disrupts food production and access to food, including through droughts and unpredictable rainfall, rising sea levels and floods, and extreme temperatures. They also identified how these impacts undermine basic human rights, including the right to food, health, and education, particularly when schools are flooded or food becomes unaffordable.
- **Inequality and exclusion:** Young people demonstrated a strong awareness of structural drivers of food insecurity. They highlighted how income inequality forces low-income households to rely on cheaper, less nutritious food. They also identified how urban-rural divide makes city dwellers more vulnerable to price fluctuations and supply shocks, while rural communities depend on increasingly climate-vulnerable agriculture. Young people also expressed concerns over the compounded barriers faced by marginalized groups including refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), landless farmers, and female-headed households. In some contexts, young people explicitly identified structural racism as a determinant of food access, pointing to historical redlining, food deserts, and racialized violence in access to food.
- **Environmental harm from industrial practices:** In their responses, young people identified and critiqued the use of fossil fuels in machinery, food transport, and energy-intensive processing. They also critiqued the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and its harmful impact on soil, water, and human health. Young people also expressed concerns over the use of plastics in packaging and agricultural practices such as mulching, creating waste and pollution, particularly in countries with limited recycling capacity. They also connected these practices to broader environmental injustices and public health risks, including respiratory diseases from indoor cooking with coal.

- **Corporate power and accountability:** Young people expressed deep skepticism toward corporate-led food models. The responses demonstrated a heightened concern over business monopolies that control food supply chains and prioritize profit over people and planet. Land grabs and deforestation for monocultures (e.g., palm oil) were cited as examples of corporate exploitation. Some young people also called for legal and financial accountability, including a global enforcement of supply chain laws like the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive regulation, which mandates human rights and environmental due diligence.

1.2 Knowledge of solutions

Children and young people were also asked about their views and perspectives about their knowledge of existing or potential solutions to the problems that they identified in food systems. This section describes their responses, also disaggregated by age (responses from under-18yo considered separately from over-18yo).

In the responses received, **children** propose community-based, participatory solutions that emphasize care, education, and local action. Key solutions identified by children include:

- **Sustainable agriculture**: Children expressed strong support for organic farming, composting, and avoiding chemical inputs. They also highlighted the importance of protecting soil and water as foundations of food security.
- **Green spaces and gardens**: School gardens, community plots, and tree-planting initiatives were identified by children as powerful tools for education about the interlinkages between food systems and climate, given their role in providing hands-on learning and improving access to fresh food.
- **Waste reduction and recycling**: Children also advocated for reducing food waste and plastic use, noting the pollution caused by excessive packaging. They also identify local and community-led cleaning campaigns and composting projects as positive practices in their community.
- **Education and awareness**: Children stressed that schools must teach about food systems, climate change, and rights. They also suggested integrating sustainability into curricula and offering students opportunities to influence policy through local youth councils or debates with decision-makers.
- **Respect for local and traditional knowledge and innovation**: In their responses, children also identified practices passed down through families and communities, especially related to seasonal farming and local crops as important traditional practices that need to be preserved and restored. While responses from children portrayed an openness to innovation, they also expressed caution about genetically modified foods and unproven technologies, particularly those controlled by corporations without community consent.

Echoing young people's focus on the more structural issues influencing food systems, their responses about solutions tended to emphasise structural change that addresses root causes of food system injustice. Young people identified solutions that combine scientific

innovation, social equity, and democratic participation. Key solutions identified by **young people** included:

- **Ecological and technological innovation:** Young people identified how renewable energy (especially solar) can power irrigation, food processing, and transport to reduce fossil fuel dependence. They also highlighted how practices like precision agriculture and efficient irrigation can conserve water and energy. Among effective and ongoing solutions, young people identified research and tests conducted by research institutions towards Bioremediation (e.g., using mycelium to clean contaminated soil) in urban agriculture projects. Lastly, they also highlighted how digital tools can empower small farmers, though access and data transparency are critical concerns.
- **Agroecology and knowledge co-creation:** In their responses, young people expressed strong support for agroecology, polyculture, and regenerative farming as sustainable alternatives. They also advocated for integrating scientific knowledge with Indigenous and traditional practices, such as the "three sisters" method (corn, beans, squash) or Sahelian "demi-lune" farming. Young people also highlighted the importance of decolonizing knowledge systems and validating local expertise in policy and research.
- **Economic and policy reform:** Among the economic dimensions of solutions, young people advocated for fair wages for farmers and food workers. They also suggested reducing food waste through community programs and policy incentives, supporting small-scale and local food systems to increase resilience and reduce dependency on global supply chains and promoting circular economies where waste (e.g., food scraps) is converted into energy or compost.
- **Meaningful youth and community participation:** Importantly, in their responses, young people demand inclusive governance of food systems. They called for spaces where youth can contribute ideas, access reliable information, build skills, and work with mentors. Recommendations from young people included creating youth councils, school clubs, and public policy forums giving children and young people real decision-making power. They also emphasised on equity in access to technology, education, and data to avoid deepening the digital divide.
- **Rights-based education and empowerment:** Through their responses, young people demanded that climate and food literacy must go beyond classrooms to include hands-on learning and civic engagement. They also expressed the importance of training in sustainable farming, digital monitoring, and human rights advocacy. Lastly, they advocated for career pathways in sustainability to enable long-term engagement in climate justice.

3. Methodology

The consultation adopted a mixed-methods approach to gather insights from children and young people, combining online questionnaires, focus group discussions, and creative

submissions. This approach was designed to be inclusive and accessible, allowing participants to engage in ways that felt most comfortable and meaningful to them. The consultations were conducted in multiple languages (English, French, and Spanish) to broaden participation across different regions. At least 67 children and young people (47 children and 20 young people) took part in the consultation. across 11 countries, including Colombia, Germany, India, Iraq, Lao PDR, Mexico, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States. The youngest participants in the consultations were 5 years old.

At the start of her mandate, the Special Rapporteur was supported by the Child Rights Connect Working Groups on Child Participation and on Children and the Environment to carry out consultations with children to inform the priorities of the mandate. On that occasion, children had expressed an interest in being involved in the work of the mandate on an ongoing basis, including contributing to the Special Rapporteur's initial report (see Summary of the past consultations here). As an outcome of the past consultations and for the Special Rapporteur to communicate on a regular basis with children, the Special Rapporteur also launched the 'ClimateRights4Kids' Instagram channel. This Instagram channel was actively used to disseminate information for this consultation.

However, following the severe cuts to UN and aid budgets in 2025 which severely impacted on the operational capacities of child rights NGOs, it was not possible to continue this form of collaboration in the preparation of the 2026 thematic reports.

Made possible by funding from the Scottish Government, the subsequent methodology for these consultations differed from past consultations conducted by the Special Rapporteur in two main ways:

1) **Harnessing intergenerational perspectives**: Firstly, this consultation included responses from children (under 18 years old) as well as young people aged 18-25, thereby capturing intergenerational perspectives. Two separate questionnaires were designed, one for children under the age of 18 and another for children over the age of 18. Children and young people both actively responded to the questionnaires. The focus group discussion involved children and young people who were already involved in climate-related activism, facilitated with the support of a prominent child rights civil society organisation. The intergenerational approach illustrates how the perspectives of children tend to evolve across different geographical contexts, shifting from more individualistic understandings of problems and solutions towards more structural factors that connect food systems, climate change and human rights. This allows for a more nuanced and dynamic consideration of the concept of 'evolving capacities' in relation to children's knowledge about climate change and human rights as they 'age-out' of childhood. In addition, it is a reminder for duty bearers to explore how fulfilling children's right to be heard about climate-related issues, as per GC26, might be upheld in a way that attends to relational processes not only between/amongst generations, but also amongst other living and non-living

entities in the child's ecosystem, which opens space for Indigenous ways of being (ontologies) and knowing (epistemologies).

2) **Engaging with a wider group of respondents through social media:** The previous consultations with the Special Rapporteur engaged with children through the support of child rights NGOs using a purposive sampling method. In the scope of this thematic report on food systems, the focus group discussions conducted with children and young people with the support of a child rights NGO also used purposive sampling. In addition, given that the questionnaires were disseminated online via the ClimateRights4Kids Instagram channel this consultation also adopted a voluntary response sampling method. This allowed for further responses to be gathered from a much larger pool of potential respondents, including those who may not be linked to civil society organisations. Therefore, these consultations suggest that combining different types of qualitative sampling methods might be an effective way to overcome limited resources.

4. Learnings and recommendations

In the past consultations by the Special Rapporteur, children who were a part of the consultations recommended that the priority of the Special Rapporteur's mandate should be:

- The impact of climate change on children's rights to a healthu environment, health, food and good standard of life (also covering hunger and poverty);
- Safe participation of children in climate policymaking, advocacy and activism;
- Climate education in schools, access to information and participation of children in innovative projects and climate research;
- Unequal access to new technologies and the energy transition;
- Discrimination in the context of climate change;
- The impact of climate change on children in vulnerable situations;

The latest consultations further reinforced the priorities expressed in the previous consultations. Children and young people who participated in these consultations demanded that:

- **Child participation should be systemic and continuous**: Children and young people recommended that permanent mechanisms be established and implemented to support child and youth participation along with strong understanding of children's right to participate, and be given due weight, paying attention to questions of equity and accessibility. The Special Rapporteur's mandate should enhance regular spaces for exchange with children and young people.
- **Climate education must advance beyond awareness to action:** Education on climate change and food systems must evolve from simply raising awareness to providing practical, hands-on skills. Young people called for learning in agroecology, sustainable farming, food waste management, composting, and

using digital tools for advocacy. This practicable climate literacy should also integrate Indigenous and traditional knowledge, such as community-based forest management and ancestral farming techniques, as vital and legitimate forms of adaptation and resilience. While pushing for climate education in schools, access to information and participation of children in innovative projects and climate research, these recommendations should inform the Special Rapporteur's mandate.

- **There must be transparent and accessible accountability for corporate actions:** Children and young people expressed deep concern and distrust towards large companies in the food and energy sectors, identifying a clear pattern of greenwashing where environmental harms (through fossil fuel use, chemical fertilizers, and plastic pollution) are obscured by superficial actions by corporations. The Special Rapporteur should include in her priorities the demand from children to ensure companies are held accountable for their real-world impact on children's rights to food, a healthy environment, and health.
- **The root causes of inequality must be addressed through a justice-based lens:** The impact of climate change on food systems cannot be separated from entrenched social injustices. Children and young people identified how structural discrimination, including racial, economic and gender inequality deepens food insecurity. A rights-based response must confront these drivers and challenge unjust systems, such as land concentration and the commodification of basic needs.
- **A just energy transition must ensure equitable access and benefit-sharing:** As the world shifts away from fossil fuels, children highlighted that unequal access to technologies risks creating new divisions. The transition toward renewable energy in food systems must be structured so that it benefits smallholder farmers and low-income communities. Drawing from the demands from children in past consultations towards making unequal access to technologies and the energy transition a priority, the Special Rapporteur's mandate should guide governments towards ensuring that investment and policy support the accessibility of technologies to protect the most vulnerable from being left behind.
- **Solutions must be holistic, addressing interconnected systems:** Children and young people view food, the climate, and human rights as fundamentally connected. They champion integrated and community-led solutions such as urban and school gardens, reforestation initiatives, local food networks, community composting, and public transportation reforms, actions that simultaneously reduce carbon emissions, improve food security, enhance community health, and empower children and youth. The mandate can therefore play an important role in elevating these community-driven models for a truly just and resilient transformation.

By establishing permanent, equitable participation mechanisms, advancing practical and rights-based climate education, enforcing corporate accountability, confronting the root causes of injustice, ensuring an equitable energy transition, and promoting holistic, community-led solutions, the mandate can move to realizing more effective

implementation of UNCRC General Comment 26, which had emerged as the most important priority for the Special Rapporteur's mandate in previous consultations.

Despite the budget cuts in the aid sector that have negatively impacted on all civil society organisations, a strong commitment remains in the child rights sector to deliver on the promises set out in GC26, particularly around enabling meaningful and ethical child participation. Therefore, building on this approach adopted in this consultation, with funded support it is envisioned that future consultations could include sustained partnerships with civil society children's rights organisations for regular and ongoing dialogue with the Special Rapporteur, to support her commitment to enabling children's views to meaningfully inform her reports. Additionally, donor support would enable the leveraging of the ClimateRights4Kids Instagram channel not only for dissemination but as a participatory platform for ongoing dialogue, feedback and co-creation of knowledge. Instagram stories for polls, Q&A sessions and creative challenges can engage children and young people in real-time and would offer inspiring and highly relevant mechanisms to enable yet greater reach and richer learning, through which to strengthen delivery of this mandate.

The integration of a dynamic digital platform like the Instragram channel @climaterights4kids is essential to bridge the gap between international processes with children and youth engagement, ensuring that the voices, visions, and solutions of children are not only heard, but are central to shaping a just, sustainable, and equitable future for all. The Instagram channel has increasingly served as an accessible entry point for children and young people to engage with issues related to climate change and children's rights, while also expanding the reach of the Special Rapporteur's mandate to wider youth audiences. The consultations were also disseminated through the Instagram channel as part of broader efforts to make the consultation process more accessible to children and young people online.

Through child-friendly videos, interactive content, and guiding questions, the platform has helped prompt reflection and discussion among children and young people on the impacts of climate change on their rights and everyday lives. The channel also plays an important role in translating and communicating the work of the Special Rapporteur in more accessible formats, helping bridge international human rights processes with the lived realities of children and young people globally. Looking ahead, the instagram channel could serve as an important tool for the Special Rapporteur to reach more children and young people worldwide, while strengthening its role as an ongoing space connecting the Special Rapporteur's mandate with children and youth across different regions and contexts.

PART 2 – QUOTES AND ARTWORK FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Section 1: Overarching themes

Children and young people alike focused on two overarching themes distinctly:

1.1 Food systems and biodiversity loss

Children and young people's reflections about biodiversity loss in the context of food systems and climate change highlight their understanding of the interconnectedness between the different aspects of the triple planetary crisis.

- "*I believe that food systems, climate change, and biodiversity are all connected. In a country like Laos, our traditional knowledge is a great strength. We should focus on combining this wisdom with modern sustainable practices to ensure no child goes hungry*" (21-year-old, Lao PDR).

- "*Creo que algo importante a tener en cuenta, es volver a ver como funcionaban los sistemas agroalimentarios en el pasado, mas amigables con el ambiente y las personas, los policultivos, evitan la degradacion del suelo, garantiza que las personas tengan acceso a alimentación." [translation: I think one important thing to keep in mind is to look back at how agricultural systems used to work in the past—systems that were more environmentally friendly and people-friendly. Mixed cropping prevents soil degradation and ensures that people have access to food."* (18-year-old, Colombia).

Some participants noted the links between intensive farming and fishing and biodiversity loss:

- "*On peut parler des industrielles, les grands agrobusiness qui font une agriculture intensifiée car ils favorisent le profit au détriment de la protection de l'écosystème, les gros navires qui, avec l'utilisation de certains filets non recommandés pêchent même les petits poissons, ce qui fait que la reproduction devient faible, les braconniers aussi qui tuent les espèces en voie de disparition juste pour le profit*." *[translation: We can talk about industrial companies—the large agribusinesses that practice intensive farming because they prioritize profit over protecting the ecosystem—as well as large ships that, by using certain types of nets not recommended for fishing, catch even small fish, which leads to a decline in reproduction, and poachers who kill endangered species solely for profit.]* (24 year old, Senegal).

- "*There has been a significant decrease of fish in the English Channel and North Sea from over-fishing, with some species going extinct. Decrease in wild animals and plants: there are a lot of animals which are killed as pests, including badgers; as well as ecosystem loss from deforestation.*" (19 year old, UK).

1.2 Negative emotions around the food system status quo

Across all of the different areas of questioning, many children and young people expressed their disappointment and frustration with the status quo

- "*Our rights are being violated, if we do not care about nature why should nature care about us. Nature is not speaking anything but it wants care back*" (17 year old, India).

- "*Dans ce monde on note une importante inégalité du système donc nos dirigeants supérieurs doivent prendre compte aux personnes qui n'arrivent à subvenir leurs besoin et qui se trouvent dans des situations très difficiles. Aussi on constate un gaspillage que l'homme fait subir la nature sans se soucier de la génération future donc s'on redisons nous protégeons notre nature afin de vivre en paix et en société [translation] : In today's world, there is significant inequality in the system, so our leaders must take into account those who are unable to provide for themselves and who find themselves in very difficult situations. We also see the wasteful treatment of nature by humans, who act without regard for future generations; therefore, let us reiterate that we must protect our environment so that we may live in peace and harmony as a society.*" (18 year old, Senegal).

For some participants, the abuse of power in the system was seen in the use of violence against environmental rights defenders:

- "*Creo que un gran problema en Colombia, es la violencia, ya que aunque puedan estar las reservas naturales, muchas de las personas que luchan contra las problemáticas ambientales son asesinadas, por querer proteger estas reservas, ya que los grupos armados estan alli.* [*translation: I think a major problem in Colombia is violence, because even though there may be nature reserves, many of the people fighting against environmental issues are murdered for trying to protect these reserves, since armed groups are present there*]" (19 year old, Colombia).

For others, this frustration manifested itself as self-blame:

- "T*he obvious answer to that question would be: It's the big companies, for example those in the meat industry - the animal cruelty, the medication that finds its way into our bodies etc. Obviously those are valid points that I'm not going to disagree with but in my opinion it's mostly our fold [sic : fault]. Our fold [sic : fault] as the consumers who keep the industry alive, who keep the demand high and who are mainly responsible for this cruelty.*" (18 year old, Germany).

Similarly to the aforementioned point about children and young people's visceral and embodied experiences of food systems, these quotes highlight that, far from abstract or distant, their understandings of food systems elicit strong emotional responses in children

and young people. Duty bearer efforts to address food systems must take this aspect into consideration.

Section 2: Knowledge of Problems

2.1. Children's Knowledge of Problems

2.1.1 Knowledge of Food Systems

Children's knowledge of food systems are grounded in daily life, sensory experience, and observation. They often describe food systems through personal, familial, and community lenses, highlighting both challenges and resilience.

Children who lived closer to food systems described the characteristics of food production and distribution in their communities:

- *"On cultive les légumes, le mil, le riz la canne à sucre. La canne à sucre est transformée par l'usine. Mil, maïs transformé en farine. On fait de l'élevage. On transforme le lait en poudre . Des les légumes sont conservés dans des boite ou cartons ou sac. Les produits sont vendus dans les marchés dans les boutiques" [translation: We grow vegetables, millet, rice, and sugarcane. The sugarcane is processed at the factory. Millet and corn are ground into flour. We raise livestock. We process milk into powder. Some of the vegetables are stored in cans, boxes, or bags. The products are sold at markets and in stores."]* (10 years old, Senegal).

Some children, particularly younger ones and those whose lives were further removed from food production, initially expressed little knowledge of food systems:

- *"I am not sure as I do not know much about the food systems where I live"* (13 year old, UK).

However, the same children then went on to describe certain issues / dynamics, even if they were far from home, such as palm oil (which illustrates that there is quite widespread knowledge about the harmful nature of cultivation of palm oil):

- *"Large production chain companies who produce things like palm oil and as a result of this there is vast deforestation and other environmental damage" (*13 year old, UK).

One teenage respondent in Europe demonstrated thorough knowledge of legislation around food systems, which may be explained by their involvement in civil society initiatives:

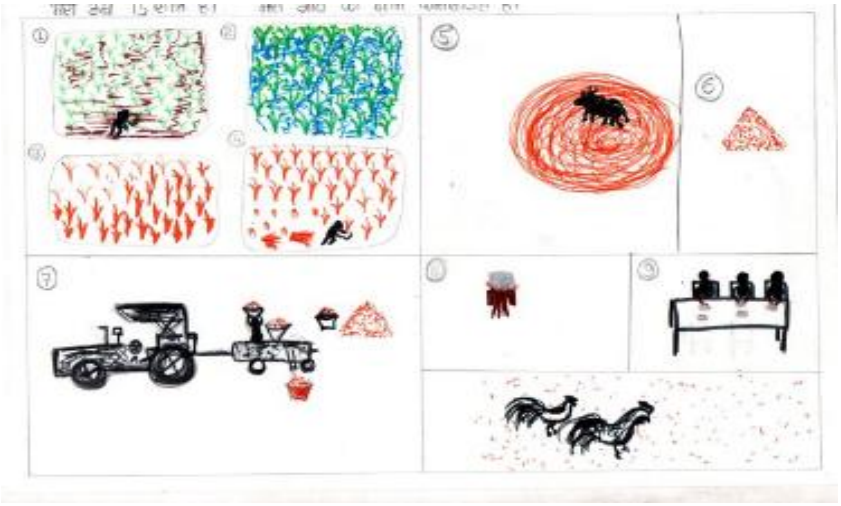
- "*When thinking about food systems that support the protection of human rights the first thing that comes to my mind is the in 2024 adopted CS3D. This EU law basically states that bigger companies have to be able to track and document their entire supply chain while making sure that there are no human right violations*

like child- or forced labour but also check for any environmental damage that might be happening. Violations of the law can lead to high fines and civil liability - meaning those affected are able to sue the companies. In my opinion this is an incredibly important law which is definitely capable of development but still a big step into the right direction." (16 year old, Germany).

A group of school children in India, displayed a deep knowledge of stages of food production, while highlighting the urban-rural divide and the role that education plays in knowledge of food production:

- "*...the food we eat in cities actually comes from nearby rural areas. Many of us felt that people in cities should be more aware of the journey food takes before it reaches our plates…staple foods like rice and wheat are grown by farmers using irrigation, fertilizers, and farm machinery.. Farmers grow paddy during the monsoon season in fields that remain filled with water. We suggested that students should learn more about these farming practices so that they can better appreciate the effort that goes into producing food.*" (Group of children between 14 to 16 years old, India)

A 15-year-old child from a village in India also portrayed the food cycle artistically through a drawing portraying the different stages of food cycle including sowing, plowing, harvesting (through the use of tractors), processing and consumption as well as using food-waste as fodder for animals:



2.1.2 Personal experiences of having access to food

Both children and young people who responded to the questionnaire mentioned that, for the most part, they had access to sufficient food. Many respondents recognised that their ability to access good quality food depended on the family's economic status:

- *"Oui, j'ai accès à une bonne alimentation. Ma famille arrive à décaisser pour subvenir à nos besoins pour une alimentation saine et de qualité." [translation:*

"Yes, I have access to good food. My family is able to afford healthy, high-quality food."] (17 year old, Senegal).

Some children shared very physical / visceral and embodied examples of their personal relationships with food. This is a reminder of the way in which experiences of food systems are not just abstract ideas about things that happen 'far away' / in industry, but that children and young people feel closely in their own bodies, eliciting strong emotional responses including disgust and fear.

- "*Because of the rising prices, when I go out to buy food for my house I also look for the best value or lowest priced items in supermarkets. The other day when I brought home Sainsbury's own cheddar cheese and ate it right after eating the last of a Cheddar brand the difference was so palpableI [sic] keep bringing it up!*" (16 year old, UK).

- "*A veces tengo miedo que la comida esté envenen ada, y que me haga daño. Tampoco me gustan los incendios en donde vivo. Pasamos con mi mamá con unos pajaritos cerca del humo y uno se murió" [translation: Sometimes I'm afraid the food is poisoned and will make me sick. I also don't like the fires where I live. My mom and I walked past some little birds near the smoke, and one of them died.]"* (7 year old, Mexico).

2.1.3 Food systems and inequality

Children also showed an awareness that some groups had less food than others and that this was linked to individual and family economic status. This is expressed in different ways according to different age groups:

- "*Local food banks for people who may not have enough money for food*" (Younger children (aged 5-11, UK).

- **"***India, being a developing country, doesn't not have equity. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. To overcome that, our government has built ration-shops every 5 kms (government buys food grains and vegetables from farmers and subsidises it for poor people)*." (17 year old, India).

Children also reject narratives that frame hunger as a matter of insufficient global production. Instead, they identify socioeconomic status, race, geography, migration status, and historical marginalisation as the primary determinants of who eats well and who does not.

- *"I understand that worse quality food is what you're signing up for when you go for the cheaper option, but I feel for people who have to go for the cheaper option. Basically in the UK the poorer you are the worse you'll eat.*" *(16-year-old, UK)*

This statement encapsulates a broader understanding: poverty forces trade-offs between cost and nutrition, and this trade-off is not emerging out of a personal choice but a structural condition.

2.1.4 Impact of fossil fuels, chemical fertilisers and plastics

Children expressed their concern over pollution emerging from fossil fuel emissions, industrial wastes and plastic.

Children were particularly concerned over the excessive use of fertilisers in farming:

- "Je pense que peut-être l'engrais est utilisé pour aider les plantes à pousser plus vite et avoir plus de récolte. *Mais une utilisation excessive peut détruire les sols (translation: I think that fertilizer is perhaps used to help plants grow faster and produce a bigger harvest. But overuse can destroy the soil)*" (17 year old, Senegal)

- "*We understood that these fertilizers supply important nutrients... However, a few of us expressed concerns... excessive use could harm soil quality, contaminate water sources...*" (Group of children between 14 to 16 years old, India)

- *"Where I live fossil fuels are used mainly to support transportation and operational activities while chemical fertilizers are used to increase yields and plastic for packaging."* (15 year old, Nigeria).

Children also expressed concern over the use of plastics in packaging food:

- "*Single use plastic is everywhere…all fruits and vegetables are packaged in single use plastic...I can only think of two or three food items that aren't packaged in single use plastic*" (16 Year Old, UK)

Children also expressed concerns over pollution caused due to emissions from tractors, but also through brick kilns, as seen in this drawing by a 15-year-old girl from a village in India:



Another drawing from a 13-year-old girl from an Indian village illustrated pollution from medical waste from hospitals:



2.1.5 Attitudes around agribusiness

Responses from children reflected on the role that agrobusinesses play in factors like greenwashing and market monopiles:

- A 15-year-old from the UK, states: "*Bigoted billionaires have a monopoly on most produce and will only fund what benefits them*."

- Another 15 year old from the UK linked the phenomenon of greenwashing with reduced public awareness about the fossil fuel emissions of these companies: "*Companies engage in "greenwashing. They promote environmental projects or sustainability goals to improve their image while still producing large amounts of*

fossil fuels. This makes it harder for the public to grasp the full environmental impact of these industries."

- "*...the efforts of many big companies to avoid negative impacts on the environment and human rights sound a lot like greenwashing to me…*" (16 year old, Germany)

2.2. Young People's Knowledge of Problems

2.2.1 Knowledge of food systems

For young people who were a part of the consultations, knowledge of food systems was systemic and structural. They view food systems as a complex web where environmental, economic, and social factors are inextricably linked:

- "*So food systems help bring food to us, but climate change and poverty make it difficult for everyone to enjoy their rights. ... Soil damage/ erosion; Deforestation... [and] Poor quality of life for farmed animals" all stem from the same system*." (22 years old from Uganda)
- "*In my region, access to nutritious and affordable food is uneven. Students and low income families often face difficulties obtaining sufficient food due to high prices and climate-related disruptions such as droughts and floods. This affects the right to food and health*." (22 year old from Iraq)

Young people also tied food to geography:

- "*...because we are a landlocked country, almost all of our seafood is imported from neighbouring coastal countries. We also rely heavily on Thailand for processed and packaged foods, as our local manufacturing for these items is still developing. This means our daily meals are a mix of fresh, local ingredients and imported goods that travel across the border by road*" (21 years old from Lao PDR)

Small-scale farming was largely identified as main source of income for many families, particularly by respondents from Africa:

- "*Where I live in Uganda, food systems help some people, but they also cause problems for others. one example is small farmers. many families grow food like maize, beans and vegetables. this helps them eat and earn money. it supports their right to food and work."* (22, Uganda).

Palm oil was also mentioned by participants who experience the negative impacts of the industry locally:

- "*A situation that I encounter directly is the way in which palm oil cultivation, especially illegal extraction, during summer, negatively impacts on availability of water for people in the local community*." (19 year old, Colombia).

- "*In this part of Colombia, there are different problems like intensive agriculture and monocultures (rice and palm oil). Areas of pastoralism are being burnt. They use pesticides, which contaminate rivers."* (18 year old, Colombia).

2.2.2 Climate change and food systems

Young people showed strong knowledge and understanding of the impact of climate change on food systems. They spoke about how climate change, such as droughts, soil erosion etc, negatively impact on access to food.

- **"***Drought: The word means famine and we can say the crop is destroyed or there is no proper crop production. It is seen in our area and we hear also that due to too much heat when crops are planted in Summer when there is less rain the crops due to lack of water the crops start to die."* (25 year old, country not specified).

- *"La commune de Yoff, une commune située près de la mer est très affectée par le changement climatique notamment l'élévation du niveau de la mer entrainant une baisse de production alimentaire en même temps une diminution de la qualité et de la quantité des aliments." [translation: The town of Yoff, located near the sea, is severely affected by climate change, particularly rising sea levels, which are leading to a decline in food production as well as a decrease in both the quality and quantity of food.]* (22 year old, Senegal).

Some young participants also made links between the effects of climate change and human rights (ie right to education).

- *"Before, climate was predictable, but the abrupt changes are making things unpredictable. We are observing the impacts. Many schools in the public sector are getting flooded in strong rain (10-12 centimetres of water). Some are able to provide classes, but not all are able to provide education in these conditions. Many educational spaces in the public system are not equipped to cope with these types of problems."* (19 year old, Colombia).

Responses received from young people also draw links between climate change, economic injustice and supply chain vulnerability:

- "*a majority of fruit and vegetables consumed in the UK are imported. recently heatwaves in countries that produce the food we import have made it less available and a lot more expensive. Example: heatwaves in Spain and France ruining harvests of fruit and vegetables. This led to people on lower incomes*

having restricted access to varied and healthy food types, affecting their health negatively." (19 year old, UK).

From Uganda to Iraq, unpredictable weather is devastating local harvests.

- *"When rain does not come, crops fail, farmers lose food and income" (22 years old, Uganda).*

These testimonies reflect awareness of the global nature of climate impacts on food. They illustrate how climate change, while disrupting food systems, also harms children's rights to education, health, and safety.

2.2.3 Food systems and inequality

Young people demonstrated a structural understanding of the inequalities and vulnerabilities arising out of the effect of climate change on food systems:

- "*in my community access to food is not the same for everyone. the biggest difference is between people who produce food and people who only buy food. farmers in villages can sometimes grow their own food. even if they are not rich they may have something to eat from their gardens. but people in towns depend only on buying food. when prices increase because of drought or floods they suffer more young people without jobs also struggle. without income it is hard to buy healthy food. Some eat only cheap food that is not very nutritious."* (22 years old, Uganda).

- "*Without income it is hard to buy healthy food.*" (22-year-old, Uganda).

Young people also highlight that access to food is stratified not just by income, but by other complex factors such as land ownership, urban-rural divides and systemic exclusion.

- "*In Yola, access to food is deeply stratified, with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and female-headed households facing the most severe barriers due to a lack of land ownership and reliance on inconsistent humanitarian aid."* (23 year old, Nigeria).

- "*refugees and displaced people also face problems. they often depend on food aid and when support is reduced they do not have enough. so where a person lives and whether they have income or land makes a big difference in access to food."* (22 year old, Uganda).

In Buffalo, USA, a young person (23 years old) links structural racism directly to food insecurity:

- *"Food systems are impacted by structural and historic racism in my city, despite being a majority minority city. Red lining has led to one half of Buffalo being mostly white and well resourced, and the other half being black and people of color with little resources. Buffalo's East Side is a food desert, where nutritional food is hard to access and transport to food centers is limited. A few years ago, a racially-driven shooter killed black people in one of the East Side's only grocery stores, so the spaces that do exist do not feel safe.*"

This testimony also reveals a psychological and emotional side to food security and access. The fear and trauma associated with accessing food in racially targeted spaces underscores how violence and discrimination are embedded in food systems.

In their responses, young people also distinguish between those who produce food and those who buy it by geography.

- A 22-year-old from Uganda explains: *"In my community access to food is not the same for everyone. The biggest difference is between people who produce food and people who only buy food. Farmers in villages can sometimes grow their own food. Even if they are not rich they may have something to eat from their gardens. But people in towns depend only on buying food. When prices increase because of drought or floods they suffer more."*

This distinction also highlights an important vulnerability; urban populations are entirely dependent on market systems, making them vulnerable to inflation, speculation, and supply chain disruptions.

2.2.4 Impact of fossil fuels, chemical fertilisers and plastics

Fossil fuels were referenced by young people as being used in farm machinery, in terms of food miles, and food production/storage. Pesticides were described as being commonly used and can cause major environmental damage; plastics also capable of perpetuating similar harm, as well as pollution.

- *"Je sais que J'ai le droit à une alimentation saine alors qu'avec les méthodes conventionnelles et l'utilisation non modérée d'engrais, ce droit est remis en question." [translation: "I know I have the right to healthy food, yet with conventional methods and the excessive use of fertilizers, that right is being called into question."]* (24 year old, Senegal).

- *"Plastics are everywhere in our food system. Farmers use plastic sheets to cover crops, and almost all food in our markets is sold in single-use plastic bags. Since we import many processed foods from Thailand, there is also a lot of plastic packaging that often ends up as waste in our rivers because we lack enough recycling facilities."* (21 year old, Laos PDR).

- *Les commerçants qui utilisent beaucoup de plastique pour emballer les aliments : ces plastiques polluent l'environnement et mettent longtemps à se décomposer, ce qui nuit aux océans et aux espaces naturels. [translation: Retailers who use a lot of plastic to package food: this plastic pollutes the environment and takes a long time to break down, which harms the oceans and natural habitats.]* (22 year old, Senegal).

Some young people also spoke about how the use of fossil fuels and chemical fertilisers in food systems has negative impacts on health and could cause disease:

- "*J'ai constaté que les poulets consomment des aliments avec de l'engrais chimique ; ce qui donne des maladies comme le diabète et l'hypertension. [translation: I have noticed that chickens are fed food containing chemical fertilizers, which can lead to diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure.]"* (25 year old, Senegal).

- " *Ici, les combustibles fossiles comme le charbon et le gaz sont utilisés pour cuisiner nos repas tous les jours et cela peut avoir un impact sur l'environnement sachant qu'on coupe les arbres pour en faire du charbon ce qui peut favoriser la déforestation et ,même à long terme, des maladies respiratoires car s'il y'a plus d'arbres, qu'est ce qui va absorber le CO2 ? [translation: Here, fossil fuels like coal and gas are used to cook our meals every day, and this can have an impact on the environment, given that trees are cut down to make charcoal, which can contribute to deforestation and, in the long run, respiratory diseases—because if there are fewer trees, what will absorb the CO2?]* (23-year-old, Senegal).

Even though some of the causal links here might not be scientifically proven (ie, not necessarily a link between the food that chickens eat and diabetes), the fact that young people are making these links highlights their awareness and concern about the link between food production and physical health.

Section 3: Knowledge of Solutions

3.1 Children's knowledge of solutions

Children demonstrated a keen knowledge of community-based positive practices and solutions around mitigating harmful impacts of climate change on food systems.

Some children highlighted promoting organic farming as a strong positive practice:

- "*There are also many positive examples where communities are protecting nature while producing food. Some farmers are adopting organic farming methods, reducing chemical use and conserving soil health*." (Group of children 14-16 years old from India)

- "*Dans ma localité, il existe des associations agricoles qui promeuvent l'agriculture biologique et l'utilisation d'engrais organiques pour protéger l'environnement tout en garantissant une production alimentaire saine. Ces initiatives impliquent souvent des adultes et des jeunes, y compris des enfants (dans des programmes éducatifs), qui participent à des ateliers de jardinage durable ou à des actions de sensibilisation sur le climat*." (17 year old from Senegal)

Children also pointed towards community-led initiatives, tree plantation drives and community/terrace gardens as positive practices:

- "*Many of us appreciated school campaigns that promote tree planting and environmental awareness, as such initiatives help people understand the importance of protecting nature while producing food…Some of us mentioned that families in our neighbourhoods grow vegetables in kitchen or terrace gardens, which helps them access fresh food and reduces dependence on markets…A few of us also spoke about community vegetable gardens where local residents work together to grow and share produce."* (Group of children 14-16 years old from India)

- *My neighborhood has numerous river and beach cleanup days, where people gather and help clear the litter from the bridges. People of all ages attend to it.* (14 year old from the United States)

- "*We have a youth council in place we also have local farms that produce on a small scale and an allotment that involves the community*" (13 year old, UK).

- Drawing by a *14-year-old boy in India, showing 2 people carrying a poster with a slogan: 'save trees, plant trees'*

-



At the same time, responses from children also reflect a skepticism toward technologies that serve industrial agriculture and corporate interests, particularly when they deepen dependency, harm the environment, or bypass community consent:

- There is particular concern about genetically modified foods and untested seed technologies: A 15-year-old from the UK states: "*Currently I am not aware about any technology, but I have a very huge concern for Genetic Modified Food as I feel they would lead to a whole lot of natural imbalances*."

Children also actively addressed structural issues and recommended solutions that are rooted in human rights.

- A teenager from the UK, highlighted the link between human rights and creating decent working conditions for those who labour in food systems: "*it is important to build knowledge about human rights and fairness in food systems. Understanding issues such as fair wages for farmers, and environmental protection can help communities support policies and initiatives that make the food system more sustainable and fair for everyone.*" (15 year old, UK)
- A teenage participant in the UK highlighted the importance of their local "Right to Food" campaign: "I also agree with the "Right to Food" campaign as I think that it is extremely important that everyone has an easy access to healthy, nutritious food"

Children also highlighted the role of schools and school-based curriculum and career development as a source of seeking solutions:

- " *I belong to a group of schools that have representation at the UN in Geneva. We work with the Sustainable Goals. For any growth in sustainability or climate change, we feel that the most important goal is education*" (17 year old, India)

- A 14-year-old from India, also recommends integrating food systems into school subjects: "I *believe the report should emphasize that children must be included in discussions about climate change and food systems because our future will be affected by the decisions made today. Governments and international organizations should support education about sustainable food systems in schools*."

- A 15 year old from the UK emphasised the importance of linking awareness in schools with opportunities for young people to engage with decision-makers to influence local policies and practices: "*Schools should be able to provide more education on these topics so that young people understand how food systems work and how that can affect the climate and environmental health. Also having opportunities to use this knowledge , This may be in debates with local decision makers or in a youth council that can give advice to the school on how the student body would like to help contribute to a cleaner school.*"

- A 15 year old from the UK requested : "*I think it was mentioned but I would love if you could possibly write about the harmful effects of food waste, as I think that many people do not understand how harmful it is."*

- A group of students from India (aged 14-16) listed some of the solutions as "*Teaching children about food systems, climate change, and nutrition; Organizing school gardens where children can grow vegetables; Conducting awareness programmes on reducing food waste and plastic use*."

- As a 16 year old from the UK puts it: "*Recommandations for a food systems topic in PSHE lessons… If you created opportunities secondary school/sixth form children could add to CVs/Personal Statements that would be epic because then they could use that to get jobs in your field to protect nature, climate and children as well!*"

Research being done by educational institutions also emerged as a source of solutions highlighted by children:

- In the UK, a teenager spoke about an initiative in partnership with the University of Liverpool: "T*he University of Liverpool works with Keenan Recycling, and they send waste to anaerobic digestion plants, which converts food waste into renewable energy*." (15 year old)

3.2 Young people's knowledge of solutions

Solutions proposed by young people entail coherent approaches that combine individual initiatives alongside broader action to address the structural barriers in place that prevent equal access to food. The responses highlight an awareness about the need to restructure the food systems so that they can serve everyone without discrimination.

- "*Promote organic farming and agroecology. Use modern irrigation techniques to save water and energy. Reduce food waste through community programs. Encourage renewable energy powered transport for food delivery*" (22 year old, Iraq).

Similar to children, responses from young people also highlight the importance of education:

- "*Sugerir métodos de educación para que más personas puedan comprender, participar y estar interesados en ello, y que se garantice la participación en políticas públicas. [translation] Suggesting educational approaches so that more people can understand, participate, and take an interest in these issues, and ensuring their involvement in public policy."* (18 year old, Colombia).

In addition, young people expressed strong, consistent support for renewable energy technologies, particularly solar power, which is seen as a just and sustainable alternative to fossil fuel-dependent systems.

- In Nigeria, a respondent notes: "*The World Food Programme (WFP) and local cooperatives have introduced solar powered irrigation and milling machines*."

In the responses received, this is not presented as a top-down intervention, but as a co-created solution with youth and women's groups, emphasising that the value of technology lies not just in its function, but in how it is developed and governed.

Similarly, responses advocate for precision irrigation, energy-efficient machinery, and renewable-powered food processing as ways to reduce emissions and increase resilience.

- A 22-year-old from Iraq recommends: "*Use modern irrigation techniques to save water and energy*."

These proposals reflect a practical, science-informed approach to adaptation that integrates technical innovation with environmental and social responsibility.

- In the U.S., a 22-year old respondent described how they are experimenting with bioremediation technologies: "*We are working with a university to develop methods using specific mycelium to remove heavy metals from contaminated urban soils.*"

This example illustrates how young people are not just consumers of science, but also active participants in scientific problem-solving, applying ecological knowledge to repair damaged urban food systems.

Responses from young people also critique the over-reliance on chemical inputs and fossil-fuel-powered machinery, which they see as outdated and harmful.

- A 23-year-old from Senegal observes: "*Ici, les combustibles fossiles comme le charbon et le gaz sont utilisés pour cuisiner nos repas tous les jours… les tracteurs détruisent les micro-organismes dans le sol. (translation: Here, fossil fuels like coal and gas are used to cook our meals every day… tractors destroy the microorganisms in the soil)*".

Importantly, young people do not position modern science and technology as the only form of valid knowledge. Instead, they advocate for integrating scientific innovation with Indigenous and traditional practices.

- A 21-year-old from Laos argues: "We should focus on combining this wisdom with modern sustainable practices to ensure no child goes hungry."
- This vision is echoed in calls to revive "demi-lune" farming in the Sahel or adopt the "three sisters" growing method (corn, beans, squash), showing that young people value hybrid knowledge systems where science supports, rather than replaces, local wisdom. (23 Years Old, USA).

They also stress the need for digital technologies to be accessible and equitable.

- A 23-year-old from Nigeria calls for: "*digital marketing training so young farmers can bypass middlemen and sell directly to consumers*."

Perhaps the most compelling solutions pushed by young people is the demand for meaningful youth participation in food system governance.

- A 22-year-old from India states: "*Children deserve a future where everyone has access to healthy food and where nature is protected. Listening to the voices of young people is important because we will live with the consequences of today's choices*."

Young people also articulate their demands and vision for holistic and informed participation:

- "*First I need reliable information. This means facts about farming, climate change, nutrition and human rights that are true and easy to understand. Schools, community programs and online resources can help provide this. Second, I need spaces to share my ideas and be listened to at youth forums, community meetings and school clubs where young people can speak and give suggestions are important. adults should respect our opinions and include them in decisions.*

Third, I need skills and training. Learning how to research, plan and solve problems can help me take part in projects that improve food systems and protect the environment. Finally I need support from mentors and networks. Teachers, community leaders and youth organizations can guide us, connect us with others and give opportunities to take action. With these things, young people like me can contribute to better food systems, protect the climate and ensure human rights are respected."

But young people do not see education as confined to classrooms. They advocate for hands-on, community-rooted learning that links knowledge to action.

- A 23-year-old from Iraq stresses skill-building: "*Training in sustainable farming and agroecology, Awareness of human rights in food systems, Digital skills to monitor, track, and report environmental impacts*."

There is also a strong call for education that centres traditional and Indigenous knowledge.

- A 21-year-old from Laos argues: "*In a country like Laos, our traditional knowledge is a great strength. We should focus on combining this wisdom with modern sustainable practices to ensure no child goes hungry*."

This reflects a broader desire to decolonise knowledge systems and validate local ways of knowing.

This is paired with a recognition of the digital divide, as one respondent notes, meaningful participation requires not just skills, but "access to low-cost internet" (22 years old, Nigeria, EN2) and "transparent data" (22 years old, Nigeria, EN2). Without equity in access, technology can deepen existing inequalities.