



53rd Session of the Human Rights Council
Annual Panel Discussion on the adverse impacts of climate change on human rights:
The adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food

July 3, 2023

Thank you, Chair.

On behalf of the Center for International Environmental Law, we would like to thank the OHCHR for organizing this panel discussion on the right to food and climate change, as well as the panelists for their insights.

The question of the right to food in the context of climate change is a complex one. As panelists have shown, it is important to look at the ways in which climate change is affecting weather patterns and crops and, thus, people's ability to enjoy their right to food. At the same time, the food sector's contribution to climate change is often overlooked, despite current industrial food production systems being deeply intertwined with the fossil fuel industry. Agriculture alone accounts for around a third of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, collectively referred to as agrochemicals, contribute to this stark figure. Their production through synthesizing of fossil fuels and their consequent use for agricultural soils both release enormous amounts of emissions into the atmosphere. Moreover, continued overuse of pesticides and fertilizers might impair the soil's own ability to absorb and sequester carbon. According to the International Energy Agency, fertilizers represent the greatest near-term growth sector for non-energy use of fossil gas.

Beyond the threats it poses to biodiversity, human health, human rights, and the global climate, the deep integration of fossil fuels and industrial agrochemicals deeply jeopardizes global food security. As the food sector so heavily relies on agrochemical use, shocks in fossil fuel prices lead to increased costs associated with agrochemicals and thus lead to food prices increase. The 2022 market shocks are a stark reminder of this perverse relationship. The high prices and sudden lack of supply in some countries caused farmers to cut fertilizer use, thereby reducing production levels and contributing to an alarming rise in global food insecurity. The high prices also pushed many farmers deeper into debt. And in countries where fertilizers are heavily subsidized, the price spike has saddled governments with huge debts.

In order to tackle the climate crisis and increase food security, States must rapidly end reliance on fossil fuels and transition to resilient and regenerative agricultural models that will enhance food and energy sovereignty while protecting human rights.