It has been estimated that by 2030, climate change could push an additional 132 million people deeper into poverty, disproportionately affecting smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and fisherfolk. The cycle of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition that undermines the health and development of individuals and nations must be broken.

Agrifood systems are pivotal in the fight against poverty. But they are facing unprecedented challenges due to economic instability and conflicts; they are vulnerable to and exacerbators of climate change.

To change this, we must transform our agrifood systems into engines of sustainable development, with robust investments that will make food systems resilient to climate change and reverse biodiversity loss. But inclusive transformation must also include actions explicitly targeted to those in situations of vulnerability, including effective and well targeted social protection systems. Women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples must be at the forefront of this transformation. Their active participation in policy dialogues and decision-making processes is essential for achieving a just and inclusive transition.

As now, agrifood systems receive a mere fraction of global climate finance. Redirecting funds towards sustainable practices, such as improved cropland management and agroforestry, and explicit focus on contextually appropriate, diverse food crops can yield significant co-benefits, including poverty reduction and enhanced ecosystem services.

Colleagues, there is no longer a question of whether to transform our food systems, but only a question of how to do it in. Inclusive and sustainable food systems transformation can help build a future where poverty is eradicated, and every person has access to a healthy diet.

For additional information, please see FAO key messages for the 2024 HLPF.