

## QUESTION 2

### **Ali Aslan, International TV Presenter and Journalist**

Yes, I can imagine it is a very intense discussion and one that the world is following. It has already been said that energy accounts for two thirds of total greenhouse gas, but many people might not know this – global food supply actually accounts for nearly a third of global emissions and will be, from what I understand, a major focus of COP28 as well.

### **Mariam Al Mheiri, Minister of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates**

Yes.

### **Ali Aslan**

I know you are very passionate about trying to create sustainable agriculture that will be resilient to changes in climate. That is something that you will put at the forefront in a few weeks.

### **Mariam Al Mheiri**

Absolutely. As you rightly said, food systems account for the second largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions after the energy sector. Many people do not realize that, and that is why we need to fix our food systems, fix our agriculture, fix our behavior when it comes to food, fix the food loss and food waste problems. So much goes into it.

Before getting the position of Minister of Climate Change and Environment, where food security is also embedded in our ministry, I was the Minister of State for Food Security and already in 2017/18, we embarked as a country, we have the national strategy for the country. We have invested heavily in technologies.

In those days, when I started, we did not have any ag-tech companies. Now, we have nearly 200 ag-tech companies – these are companies that basically recirculate the water in a closed environment and were able to grow many high-value foods in the desert. I do not know if any of you have tried any of the blueberries, blackberries, raspberries – they are most probably grown here in the desert. This is something we could not have done without the power of innovation and technology. Companies now are seeing it is commercially viable to do that, and this is the excitement of changing our food system.

Why also mention behavior? It really comes down to us as people, as well. How much edible food is going into the bin at the end of the day? Now, I have been a big advocate of food systems and I promised everyone I would make sure that food systems have center stage at COP28. Thankfully, also supporting the COP28 presidency, I am the food lead and food will have center stage on the first day of the Leaders' Summit.



We are so excited because I have worked with many of you as partner countries, as experts, on the food systems agenda and there were two things that I was hearing from everyone – we need an agenda; and we need political will.

I announced the agenda in July, in Rome, at the UN Food Systems Summit. What is the agenda? It is basically four pillars – getting political will; getting non-State actors on-board; scaling up finance into food systems; and focusing on innovations. Those are the main four pillars.

On pillar one – political will – we have managed, as many partners countries, to put together a declaration. This declaration is called the Emirates Declaration for Resilient Food Systems, Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Action. I know it is long, but this is what the partners wanted. It has already been sent out to all the countries a week ago to get endorsement – and I hope, and I plan, that at COP28, I will be able to announce many countries who have endorsed this, meaning that their countries have said, 'Yes, the political will is there. I am going to make sure food systems is part of my NDC' – which is what Laurent spoke about, the nationally determined contributions. 'My food systems, I am going to make sure it is in our national biodiversity strategies; and I am going to make sure my food systems is also part of our national adaptation programs.' This is what the declaration is about. It is a two-pager and it is just building that political will that we need to transform food systems.

I also just want to add something about the energy. You were talking about a switch. I often ask people, 'Do you know how much energy you need to build a solar panel? Do you know how much energy you need to build a turbine for a wind turbine?'. It is so much energy.

You cannot do that with the renewable energy you have today. Therefore, it is so important you use the energy systems of today to build the energy systems of tomorrow. That is why the UAE is on a pathway to treble its renewable energy by 2030, however, other countries need help. They need technical help, they need financial help.

It is really important that, at COP28, we all support each other to treble renewable energy globally, but everyone has their own challenges and that is why we need to step up. That is why you have seen Masdar now and so many countries really stepping up their knowledge, their financial means that they can put into this.

However, that part is so important and that is why I always say this needs a just transition because you need so much energy and power to build the future energy systems of tomorrow.

### **Ali Aslan**

The importance, of course, of multilateralism in this regard and building synergies to align these responses to climate change, as you just pointed out, are very, very critical indeed.