



Food, Climate & Participation

Insights from the Global Citizens' Assembly
on Food Systems and Climate

Executive summary

The Global Citizens' Assembly

The Global Citizens' Assembly connects people across the world to take part in shared decision-making on the issues that shape our future.

It combines engagement of citizens at two levels:

- global assemblies, where a representative group of citizens selected by lottery deliberate in depth on complex global challenges; and
- with a growing ecosystem of local assemblies rooted in communities around the world.

Together, these processes create opportunities for people to engage with evidence, navigate trade-offs and contribute to decisions that affect their lives.

The Global Citizens' Assembly is designed not simply as a single deliberative process, but as part of a broader effort to strengthen the role of citizens in climate governance and collective decision-making. As climate impacts become increasingly interconnected with everyday questions of food, health, livelihoods, cities and nature, creating meaningful ways for people to shape these transitions becomes increasingly important.

Why participation matters now

Across the world, people are already using participatory processes to navigate transition in the context of a changing climate.

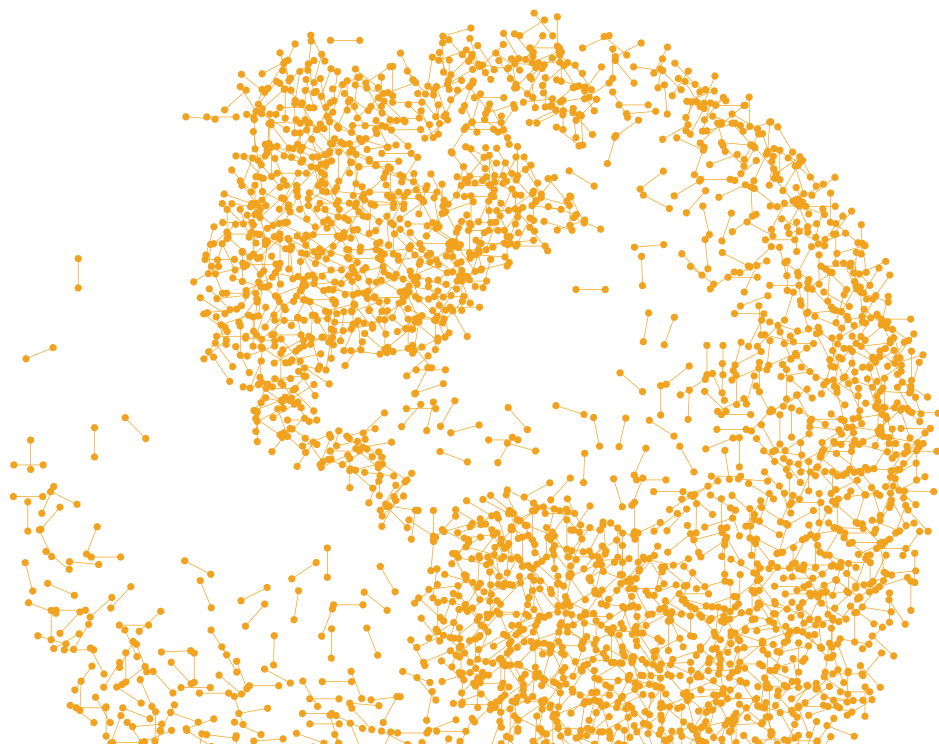
From local communities and citizen assemblies to participatory budgeting, community forums and civic dialogues, people are coming together to work through difficult questions, identify shared priorities and shape collective responses to increasingly complex challenges.

The challenge facing climate action today is not simply a lack of technical knowledge. Many of the solutions needed to build more resilient, equitable and sustainable futures are already well understood.

The challenge is building the legitimacy, public trust and collective mandate needed to act at the scale required.

Participatory processes cannot resolve every tension or disagreement. But they can help make visible where people across different realities are prepared to support change, navigate trade-offs and move collectively towards shared priorities. They can also help communities arrive at solutions they would not have reached alone, transforming individual experiences and perspectives into collective direction.

At a moment when individual interests increasingly eclipse collective ones and public debates are shaped by zero-sum narratives, participatory processes reconnect expertise with lived experience, creating spaces for listening and empathy that build understanding, counter misinformation, and bridge polarization. While distrust in political systems grows, such processes suggest that people are ready for difficult conversations and to shape long-term transitions, way more than institutions assume.



About the Deep Dives

The Deep Dives explore what emerges when citizen deliberation, lived experience and wider participatory practice are brought into conversation with one another.

Their central insights draw on four complementary sources:

- The 2026 Global Assembly on Food and Climate, where 105 people from 60 countries and territories deliberated over seven weeks on the future of food systems and climate change.
- Contributions from local assemblies organised by communities around the world.
- Analysis of more than 7,000 documented participatory processes globally.
- Exchanges with practitioners, researchers and systems leaders working across food systems, climate, governance and systems change.

Together, these sources help identify emerging public priorities, tensions and directions for action.

The Deep Dives should not be read as technical policy blueprints or statistical surveys. Their value lies in what emerges when people from very different realities are brought into conversation with one another. **They are not designed to generate radically new solutions, but, after a careful consideration of acceptable trade-offs, to help identify which policy pathways** people from different contexts collectively consider **meaningful, legitimate and actionable.**

Four Deep Dives, four directions for action

Food systems are the focus for 2026 because they cut across climate, health, equity and livelihoods. They are where planetary pressures and everyday realities meet, from extreme weather and rising costs to trade disruption, energy shocks and growing concerns about deforestation and food security. This makes food systems a powerful entry point into climate governance.

Together, the four Deep Dives explore different dimensions of food systems transformation and identify strategic directions for action that emerged repeatedly across the Global Assembly on Food and Climate, local assemblies, wider participatory processes and expert review.

These directions are intended to inform decision-makers as well as organisations working across food, agriculture, health, urban development and environmental governance, on what people collectively consider as their priorities to tackle the food and climate nexus at the local, national and

1

Food + Climate + Farming

Direction for action: Put farming communities at the centre of transition

Food system transformation is more likely to succeed where farmers and rural communities are active participants in shaping change, supported through fairer conditions, stronger local economies and long-term investment in resilience.

2

Food + Climate + Cities

Direction for action: Embed food, nature and participation into urban development

Cities are increasingly important spaces for climate action. Food systems, green spaces and citizen participation should be embedded within the way cities are planned, governed and developed.

3

Food + Climate + Identity

Direction for action: Recognise food as culture, rights and community knowledge

Food systems are not only economic systems. Protecting the right to food, strengthening community knowledge and supporting participatory governance can help ensure transitions are rooted in local realities, cultures and lived experience.

4

Food + Climate + Health

Direction for action: Connect health, food and environmental decision-making

Healthier and more resilient societies depend on healthier food systems. This requires closer integration between food, health and environmental policy, alongside greater public participation in decisions that affect wellbeing.



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