

News Release: Improved Food Systems Essential for Achieving Sustainable Nutrition Security



ILSI Research Foundation Defines the Essential Role of Food Systems in Achieving Sustainable Nutrition Security and Announces a New Public-Private Partnership, in Support of the White House Climate Data Initiative

The ILSI Research Foundation, Center for Integrated Modeling of Sustainable Agriculture & Nutrition Security CIMSANS, has released its plan for assessing the role of food systems in helping to achieve sustainable nutrition security (SNS).

Also today, in response to the President's call to action via the Climate Data Initiative, CIMSANS announces a new collaboration with the Agricultural Model Intercomparison & Improvement Program (AgMIP) and others to secure the resources and expertise necessary to evaluate a novel set of nutrition and sustainability metrics of global food systems. This will strengthen the scientific foundation for building resilience to and mitigating the adverse impact of climate change so that human nutrition needs can be met in more sustainable ways.

Today's food systems are challenged to provide nourishing diets by the accelerating demands of a growing population, complicated by climate change and competition for scarce resources. Perhaps only half of the world's population consumes appropriate quantities of calories and nutrients, while billions consume too few or too many. In addition to providing better nutrition, food systems must also reduce their environmental impacts. Recent reports from the United Nations IPCC and the US government's Third National Climate Assessment indicate major threats to food and water supplies are already occurring and will intensify.

Sustainability considerations have largely been absent from food security assessments so far, despite the tremendous economic, environmental, and social implications of meeting food demand amidst changes to climate and freshwater availability. In addition, previous food security work has generally focused on caloric availability, rather than addressing issues like dietary diversity, over-consumption, and micronutrient deficiencies (so-called "hidden hunger"), all of which are absolutely critical to maintaining health.

In response to these limitations, CIMSANS's new SNS assessment methodology defines seven metrics for characterizing sustainability and dietary quality outcomes of food systems. These are: (1) caloric and nutrient adequacy; (2) dietary quality; (3) dietary diversity; (4) dietary sustainability; (5) consumer choice; (6) resiliency of the food system; and (7) overall food system sustainability. CIMSANS is also working to develop mechanisms for publicly accessible data that support and improve the reliability of predictions generated from crop production and agricultural economics models that are part of the improved methodology.

Once completed, this novel assessment methodology can be deployed to evaluate the impact of potential food system interventions intended to improve sustainability and human nutrition. Public- and private-sector stakeholders will be enabled to make better-informed decisions.

"Addressing the challenges of climate change, rising long-term food prices, and poor progress in improving food security will require increased food production without further damage to the environment," said Dr. Mark Rosegrant, International Food Policy Research Institute and Chair of the CIMSANS Advisory Council.

"CIMSANS represents a unique environment for bringing together public- and private-sector scientists to work on these important issues," said Dr. Jim Jones, University of Florida and CIMSANS Advisory Council. Dr. Anne Roulin, Nutrition, Health & Wellness and Sustainability, Nestlé and also of the advisory council, agrees: "we are firmly committed to engaging in such public-private partnerships to enhance the resilience of food systems."

[RESOURCES](#)

CIMSANS' SNS working paper: [SNS](#)

Agricultural Model Intercomparison & Improvement Program website: [AgMIP](#)

The President's Climate Data Initiative: www.whitehouse.gov

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: [IPCC](#)

Third National Climate Assessment: www.GlobalChange.gov

Dave Gustafson, PhD
Director, CIMSANS
dgustafson@ilsii.org

Marie Latulippe, MS, RD
Sr. Scientific Program Manager, CIMSANS
mlatulippe@ilsii.org

For Press inquiries contact Michael Shirreffs, ILSI Director of Communications, at mshirreffs@ilsii.org