



Foresight4Food

International Collaborative Initiative

**Enhancing
Foresight and
Scenario Analysis
for Global
Food Systems**



Foresight is a key tool that governments, private sector and civil society can jointly use to better understand future risks and opportunities in food systems, explore possible futures and to adapt - before crises hit

In consultation with key actors, the Foresight4Food Initiative is being established to support enhanced foresight and scenario analysis for global food systems. Foresight4Food aims to provide a mechanism for better analysis and synthesis of key trends and possible futures in global food systems and to support more informed and strategic dialogue between the private sector, government, science and civil society.

Development of the Initiative was encouraged by key international organisations, leading research institutes, development agencies and business representatives who participated in a scoping meeting in Oxford in March 2017¹.

It will support, and not duplicate, the work of existing institutions and platforms dealing with food and agriculture issues by coordinated efforts providing foresight services and analysis to serve multiple purposes and groups.

Resources have been secured to help mobilise the initiative and consult more extensively with a full range of actors, platforms and networks who have an interest in food systems foresight. A follow up workshop will be held in early 2018, a Foresight4Food website is being developed to support a community of practice and a Foresight4Food Science and Policy Dialogue is anticipated for late 2018 or early 2019.

Start-up funding for the Initiative is being provided through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), The Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR)², French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD)/University of Montpellier, and Oxford University³. The initiative has support from key global institutions including FAO and the CGIAR.

Development of the Initiative is being guided by a steering group of representatives from the Oxford meeting chaired by Dr Patrick Caron and Professor Tim Benton. An initial support unit for the initiative is being hosted by the Food Systems Group of the Environmental Change Institute of Oxford University led by Dr Jim Woodhill.



The initiative will

- improve coordination between existing research efforts;
- strengthen foresight capabilities;
- assist in information synthesis and science communication; and
- support better linkages between science and processes of policy dialogue and societal learning.

1] Organisations and initiatives represented at Oxford workshop: ACIAR, AgMip, Agrimonde & Agrimonde-Terra, Australian National University, BANAHPROVI, Honduras, CAADP, CCAFS, CIRAD, CORAF, DFID, Oxford University, European Union, FAO, CGIAR (including ISPC and IFPRI), FARA, Gates Foundation, University of Queensland, GFAR, ICASEPS, IDRC, IIASA/GLOBIOM, IISD, INRA, OXFAM, Oxford Martin School, RUFORUM, The Syngenta Foundation, University of Leeds, USAID, Wageningen University, WBCSD, World Bank.

2] The initiative is recognized as a GFAR Collective Action and GFAR is directly supporting the startup knowledge sharing and partner engagement of foresight for food systems.

3] Through funding from the Global Challenges Research Fund.

Foresight for Food in an uncertain world

Multiple drivers are emerging that may radically affect global food systems. Collectively, these issues suggest the future of food systems is more uncertain than typically considered.

This uncertainty calls for more forward-looking analysis, as “business as usual” projections of trends may not well forecast future conditions. This is the role of foresight and scenario analyses.

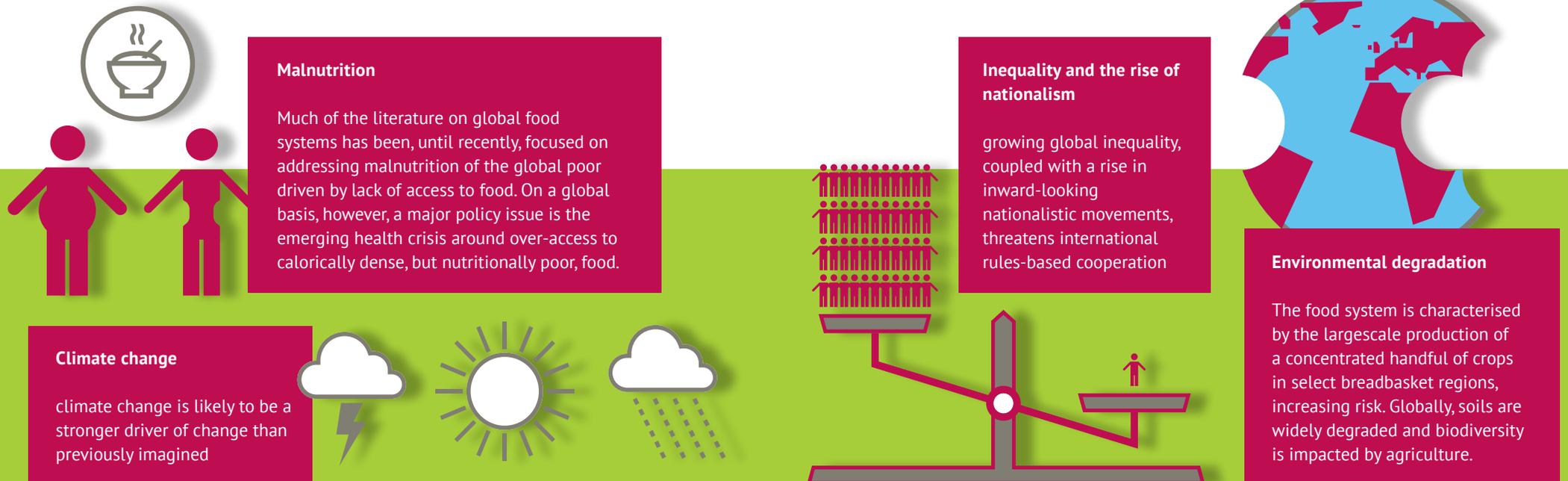
There have been many recent exercises looking to the future, yet making sense of them is difficult. They can paint a confused picture that does not aid policy analysis or societal understanding. There is, therefore, a critical need to collate, synthesise and promote best practice in this area. Foresight is a key tool that governments, private sector and civil society can jointly use to better understand future risks and opportunities in food systems, explore possible futures and to adapt – before crises hit. Yet, current foresight efforts are often fragmented or one-off and do not take full advantage of the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Further, the science of foresight requires much better connecting with societal debate and policy dialogue to support change.

Background

In March 22-23, 2017, international experts on food and agriculture gathered in Oxford to explore how foresight and scenario analysis for food systems could be improved. The workshop concluded that to support achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals there is a need to substantially strengthen food systems foresight analysis at all scales and to improve the linkages between scientific analysis and policy dialogue with stakeholders. Participants noted that much valuable work is currently underway but recognised that this is often fragmented or one-off and lacks coordination.

In the Oxford workshop, participants identified that an **ideal approach** to food systems foresight should:

- Be based on a shared understanding of foresight needs and definitions;
- Engage the right stakeholders in open dialogue;
- Have legitimate governance;
- Support differing purposes;
- Integrate different methodologies and approaches.



Developing the Foresight4Food Initiative

Participants in the Oxford Workshop saw value in enhancing food systems foresight through a globally coordinated initiative and agreed to support its development. Five areas of action for the initiative were identified and are summarised in the list below.

Focus of the Foresight4Food Initiative:

- 1. Global Mechanism:** Establish a global mechanism to support ongoing food systems foresight guided by institutions and platforms with mandates for working on food and agriculture.
- 2. Dialogue:** Strengthen global and national level dialogue that is informed by foresight studies between foresight providers and users, i.e. policy makers, business, civil society and science
- 3. Community of Practice:** Strengthen and broaden the community of practice of science institutions and private sector research groups working on food systems foresight, with special interest for looking at the diversity of approaches and promoting best practice.
- 4. Dashboard and One-Stop Shop:** Create a food systems foresight resource portal that enables easy access to key foresight studies, information and syntheses, and which provides an updated “dashboard” of key concepts, methods, indicators and trends.
- 5. Capacity Development:** Develop the capacity of key providers and users of foresight information at local, national, regional and global levels, and across a range of time frames and jurisdictions.

The focus of the initiative is a global food systems perspective, which considers food issues from production to consumption and the connections between environmental, health and economic outcomes. The initiative will integrate food systems foresight work that is relevant to both low and middle-income countries and OECD countries.

This recognises that increasingly climate change, disease risks, environmental degradation, diet, trade and investment are food systems issues that will affect all countries and need to be tackled in an integrated way across global, regional, national and local levels. The principles for developing the initiative are presented in the list below.

Principles for developing the initiative:

- 1. An open collaborative mechanism** that is not seen as being ‘owned’ by any one stakeholder, group or institution.
- 2. Strong connections** with existing decision-making processes and institutions.
- 3. Optimising the value added** from better coordination between existing initiatives and efforts and promoting effective use and integration of differing approaches and methodologies.
- 4. Sufficient central coordination and resourcing** to ensure an initiative that can deliver added value.
- 5. Linking new foresight events/dialogues** to existing forums and meetings.
- 6. Driven by user demand** with strong science policy linkages and integration of differing approaches and methodologies.



Key activities planned from Nov 2017 to July 2018 are:

- Consultation with stakeholders
- Follow-up workshop in March 2018, hosted by CIRAD and University of Montpellier, to formally launch the Initiative, develop a shared conceptual and methodological framework, identify key food systems parameters for analysis and to identify priority areas for additional foresight work
- Mobilisation of the community of practice comprised of researchers and providers
- Establishment of Foresight4Food website that is a home for the community of practice, provides links to key foresight work and reports, and starts to develop a “dashboard” of key trends and indicators of food systems changes
- Development of resources on foresight approaches and methodologies
- Preparation of an international science and policy dialogue on global food systems
- Fund raising to support the initiative over the longer term

Initial resources to mobilise Foresight4Food are being provided by:

- The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR),
- The Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR),
- French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD),
- University of Montpellier, and
- Oxford University

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