

Announcements

Announcing the 59th Annual IRAS Summer Conference
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Silver Bay, New York
July 27 to August 3, 2013

SCIENTIFIC, SPIRITUAL, AND MORAL CHALLENGES IN SOLVING THE WORLD FOOD CRISIS

Food occupies a central place in human life. Not only are its nutrients necessary for our survival, but feasting, fasting, and sharing are integral to our history, cultural identity, and religious traditions. Yet, today, and for the foreseeable future, nearly half of the world's people cannot enjoy the fullness of their potential due to problems with food affordability, safety, and access. Serious problems with food production and price increases currently leave about one billion people experiencing hunger, and many of them facing starvation. Another billion spend over half their entire income on food, but still have only marginally enough to eat. Yet, concurrently, at least another billion people in the world are experiencing problems from consuming too much food and/or from dietary imbalances and safety problems that result in serious chronic diseases and infections.

Among the questions to be addressed at this conference are the following:

What are the origins and evolution of human diet and the food system, and how does this knowledge provide new insights about our contemporary food problems?

What is the status of world food resources? How does it relate to macro and micro food problems locally and nationally in the United States and throughout the world?

How does food serve as a symbol and a substance of various religious traditions? Has the loss of social traditions surrounding food production, preparation and consumption contributed to the problems noted above?

How can the human food system be made more sustainable? How can healthy diets be safely and economically made available to all humanity? How can new scientific and medical knowledge optimally help with sustainability, safety, and access?

What are the tensions created by climate change, population growth; demographic change; global trade and commodity pricing; market and business forces; water management; energy resources; food to fuel; new GMO technologies; agricultural practices; land use and agricultural practices; increased meat; dairy and egg production; food sovereignty at local, national, and international levels; increased sociopolitical interests; and the demands for human rights and just food policies?

What secular and religious ethics and values can help to balance and/or solve food problems at all levels of the food system? What human and institutional resources are now available or need to be developed to catalyze meaningful solutions to food problems?

One of the conference's aims is to derive, develop, and disseminate a statement of principles for achieving sustainable solutions to some of these issues, and an accompanying call to appropriate action at personal and communal levels.

Submissions for poster presentations related to the themes are invited from emerging scholars and professionals. Some partial fellowships, awarded on a competitive basis, will be available to support these. Further details will be available on the IRAS website (<http://www.iras.org>) in December 2012.