

**ABSTRACT
PARALLEL WORKING SESSION**

ELIMINATION OF HUNGER

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Addressing food security and hunger - a multi-disciplinary research initiative

By definition, "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, economic and social access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 2002).

Recent food price increases and a time of economic vulnerability have drawn the attention of the world's policy-makers as well as the news media to the issue of global food security, which is closely linked to several MDGs. The University of Stellenbosch (SU) has embarked upon a new and exciting research Food Security Initiative (FSI) which focuses on the three key domains of food security: food access, availability and utilisation.

The FSI is closely aligned with the South African government's priority to address the issue of food security, particularly in the light of a changing climate and to address issues of human dignity. It is estimated that in South Africa approximately 14 million people are food insecure and that 1.5 million children suffer from malnutrition (Report to the Office of the Presidency, June 2007).

These concerning trends and data are the platform from which nine research projects within the FSI have developed, spanning different faculties and departments including the health sciences, agricultural sciences, engineering, and the social sciences. The projects address the following goals:

1. Improve knowledge of the social, economic and political aspects of food & nutritional insecurity in Southern Africa
2. Promote the utilization of safe and nutritious food
3. Empower small scale farmers through appropriate new technologies
4. Reduce food losses in the farm to fork chain
5. Improve crop production and water use efficiency
6. Understand environmental and climatic changes and their implications for agricultural policy and practice

The FSI incorporates research synthesis, appropriate communication of results, and other knowledge translation activities to ensure that research findings are actually used to motivate and justify policy change and evidence-based practice. The FSI projects were launched in January 2010.