

Food Security - IUFoST President's Message

Food Security and Safety is of major worldwide concern, where IUFoST is making a major input. The vision of IUFoST is 'to Strengthen Global Food Science and Technology for Humanity'. At our 1995 World Congress, IUFoST developed and adopted the Budapest Declaration, in which: 'We declare our determination to work for the elimination of hunger and reduction of all forms of malnutrition throughout the world'.

This worthwhile, positive objective in a world subject to natural, man-made and, now, financial disasters, will not be achieved with quick-fix, instant, ready-made solutions. Rather, IUFoST leadership wants to demonstrate its long-term commitment to helping improve world food security and safety. IUFoST's mission includes providing education and training to food scientists and technologists around the world. This occurs through our World Congresses, Regional conferences, symposia and workshops, Scientific Information Bulletins, along with World of Food Science and International Review of Food Science and Technology, and other publications. Our commitment to future generations of food scientists and technologists is through our new University textbook 'Food Science and Technology', and Distance Education programmes, being trialled in Africa, as well as sponsoring young scientists to attend our World Congresses.

Food Security is so important that it was the subject of the Global Summit for Heads of State and Governments at FAO in Rome in June 2008, which we attended. This meeting particularly addressed the Food Security – biofuels debate, at a time of record high world food and fuel prices, a situation which is predicted to return when the world economy recovers. World leaders at the G8 Summit in Scotland agreed to eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) designed to improve economic and health standards in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Recognising that four of the eight MDGs were directly affected by foodborne disease, the UN World Health Organisation (WHO) has established the Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (FERG) in which IUFoST is a stakeholder, participating in meetings in Geneva, Switzerland. This expert international group of scientists, including our own International Academy Fellows, Dr John Pitt of Australia and Dr Xiumei Liu of China, is working on estimating the global burden of foodborne diseases, using Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs), which can then inform policy makers and funding agencies in resourcing priority areas for support and action.

The development of IUFoST's ongoing commitment to Food Security was harnessed in a pre-Congress internet discussion and round-table at our recent World Congress in Shanghai. We have constituted a Task Force on Food Security under the leadership of our IUFoST Past President, Prof Walter Spiess that includes two World Food Prize Laureates, International Academy Fellows M.S. Swaminathan from India, and Philip Nelson from the USA. This will continue to explore further ways in which we can help improve Food Security. We will welcome your inputs, as we move towards holding our 15th World Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, in August 2010. This, in a timely way, will be our first World Congress in Africa, our very appropriate focus region!

Geoffrey Campbell-Platt, President