

Seven projects to make progress on ethics and global food security in five years

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Johns Hopkins experts lead an international group that has issued an ambitious five-year agenda to tackle some of the most complex ethical issues involved in ensuring the global population has enough sustainably produced safe and nutritious food.

"With the world's population likely to exceed 9.5 billion by 2050, the global community faces an enormous challenge - how to ensure everyone will have enough nutritious and safe food to secure a desirable level of health."—So begins a landmark report issued from an international working group with expertise ranging from agronomy to bioethics to climate science, outlining the initial steps they believe must be taken toward solving one of society's most fundamental public policy challenges, and doing so ethically.

"Today over 800 million people are undernourished and two billion are obese or overweight, all of them at risk of poor health and quality of life," says Ruth Faden, PhD, MPH, Director of the Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics, which spearheaded the ambitious project. "There is wide agreement that this state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue, but making real progress, progress that lasts and is fair, requires confronting some extremely difficult [ethical issues](#)."

"The challenge of global food security is too urgent to ignore these ethical issues, but deciding which issues are the most important, and which ones can actually be resolved, is not obvious," Faden says.

The report is the product of a 2014 meeting of 23 diverse subject-matter experts in Ranco, Italy. It outlines distinct next steps: seven projects that reflect the breadth and complexity of global food ethics. While ambitious, each pointedly has a practical five-year timeline.

The report, titled "7 by 5 Agenda for Ethics and Global Food Security: 7 Projects to Make Progress on Ethics and Global Food Security in 5 Years," details motivation and plans for each project, which in brief are:

1. Ethical Challenges in Projections of Global Food Demand, Supply, and Prices

Identify and make concrete recommendations to decrease bias, increase accuracy, and enhance the integrity of projections of food demand, supply, and prices upon which food and agricultural policy decisions are based.

2. The Food Sovereignty Movement and the Exceptionality of Food and Agriculture

Identify and narrow disagreements over the rights of peoples to democratic control over food, agricultural, and resource policy that are specifically rooted in different views about what makes food and agriculture distinct from other economic sectors.

3. The Case for the Professionalization of Farming

Reframe farming as a service-oriented profession in which farmers as professionals have obligations to the public to use their specialized skills to meet legitimate expectations for food safety and environmental, worker, and farm animal protection.

4. Global Agricultural Research and Development: Ethics, Priorities, and Funders

Develop reform-oriented recommendations to help ensure that a fair share of agricultural research and development is directly responsive to the needs and preferences of disadvantaged farmers in low-income countries.

5. Climate-Smart and Climate-Just Agriculture

Demonstrate why and how "climate-smart agriculture" must also be "climate-just," distributing its benefits and burdens fairly across geographic regions and generations.

6. Ethics of Meat Consumption in High-Income and Middle-Income Countries

Make specific recommendations about the ethics of public and private interventions to alter meat-consumption patterns in high- and middle-income countries.

7. Consumers, Certifications, and Labels: Ethically Benchmarking Food Systems

Develop the first integrated labeling system that will offer consumers easy access to trustworthy ethical information on environmental sustainability, animal welfare, labor standards, public health, and food safety.

"We are committed to making these projects a reality. It is possible to make progress on divisive ethical issues in global [food security](#) and food

systems by focusing on a set of problems that are both significant and tractable," says Yashar Saghai, PhD, the project director. "Our group presents a cohesive research and policy agenda that paves the way for a new approach to [food](#) and agricultural ethics on a global scale."

"This is just the beginning, and while the challenge is huge, so is the moral obligation," says Alan Goldberg, PhD, a member of the Global Food Ethics Project leadership team and the founding director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing.

The 7 by 5 Agenda is a collaboration between faculty of the Berman Institute, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and was funded by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation.

More information: Full Report: [www.bioethicsinstitute.org/wp-...y-5-report_FINAL.pdf](http://www.bioethicsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/7-by-5-report_FINAL.pdf)

Two-page report summary: [www.bioethicsinstitute.org/wp-...rt-version_FINAL.pdf](http://www.bioethicsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/7-by-5-report_summary_FINAL.pdf)

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