

## In this issue

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In this first issue of the second volume of Food Security it is perhaps appropriate to revisit the meaning of the two words food security. As defined by the World Food Summit of 1996, food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life (FAO 1996). All the papers in this issue impinge on one or several of the words or phrases in this concentrated and inclusive definition.

David Fullbrook, in the succinct title of his paper “Food as Security”, neatly makes the point that a prerequisite for the security of a country and its people, is that its food supply must be secure. He then contrasts this with the situation in Cambodia in which the land and skills required for farming productively have been compromised by appropriation of land for dams, mines and rubber plantations. Although these three endeavours may increase the GNP of the country, will the increase be sufficient to raise living standards so that all Cambodians will be able to purchase enough food to satisfy their requirements?

Mohanty and co-authors examine the food situation in the Kandhamal District of Orissa, an area which is notorious for food insufficiency. They found that in only two of the 14 years of the study (1993–2006) was there sufficient food. Here, the main constraint identified was

lack of water, rainfall being erratic and there being insufficient use made of irrigation. Production constraints for six major food crops, identified in a large survey involving over 600 experts, are the theme of the paper by Waddington and co-workers. Constraints were classified as abiotic, biotic, management and socio-economic. The contribution of each depended on the crop and farming system but, in some instances, they were responsible for average yields on smallholder farms being less than half of those attained on the best of such farms. Plant pests are very important constraints to production and these are the subject of the paper by MacLeod and co-workers who report on legislation to restrict their movement and the challenges that will arise in the future owing to increased transport. Here, a balance has to be struck between an appropriate level of plant protection and undue interference with trade.

Food production is often seasonal, with periods of glut being followed by times of scarcity. The ability to conserve food between seasons is therefore vital. Following their paper in the first volume of Food Security (Nonclercq et al. 2009), in which a simply constructed apparatus was successfully used to dry and preserve tomatoes in Mali, Nonclercq and co-workers have turned their attention to drying fish in that country where fishing is a widespread activity and presumably the catch forms an important part of the diet. Again, a simply constructed apparatus was successful and was enthusiastically taken up by local fishermen.

A sad commentary on several countries of the world is the discrepancy between the nutrition of the genders with the female invariably being worse off than the male. This state of affairs may be taken as the backdrop to the paper by Coates and co-workers. Although a report by the National Research Council, 2005 (Rahimi et al. 2009) concluded

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that, “the concepts of food uncertainty and food insufficiency are really household-level concepts”, Coates and her co-workers report wide discrepancies between genders in their responses to questions about food security in Bangladesh strongly suggesting that food security should be evaluated at the individual level.

Safety of food is a critical element of food security. In the first volume of *Food Security*, Rahimi and co-workers drew attention to the natural contamination of milk in Iran by the mycotoxin derivative aflatoxin M<sub>1</sub> (Rahimi et al. 2009) but in this issue Sharma and Paradakar report the scandal of the purposeful adulteration with melamine of milk, milk products, such as formula for babies, and other food and feed materials in China. Here, quality control checks were not applied with the result that some 300,000 babies were affected and six died.

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**Richard Strange, Editor-in-Chief of Food Security** Richard Strange’s background is in Plant Pathology, a subject to which he was attracted by its relevance to food security and in which he has published over 90 papers and two books. He currently holds an Honorary Chair at University College London and an Honorary Fellowship at Birkbeck College, University of London. He has been involved with numerous overseas projects, several of which were located in different African countries, and has supervised Ph.D.

students from these and other countries of the Developing World in topics directly concerned with plant disease problems affecting their food security.