

# **Who Will Be Fed in the 21st Century?**

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## **Challenges for Science and Policy**

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**EDITED BY KEITH WIEBE, NICOLE BALLENGER,  
AND PER PINSTRUP-ANDERSEN**

International Food Policy Research Institute  
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# Foreword

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**G**lobal food production has more than doubled over the past 40 years, growing faster even than population, and will likely continue to keep pace into the 21st century. Yet one-eighth of the world's people today lack secure access to the food they need to live active and healthy lives. Given the persistence of food insecurity amidst increased per capita food production, the critical question for researchers and policymakers today is not so much *whether* the world can be fed, but rather *who* in the world *will* be fed?

In February 2000, a group of physical scientists, social scientists, and policymakers gathered in a symposium at the annual meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C., to discuss the roles of science and policy in addressing these challenges. This report distills the conclusions of that group. The authors argue that markets will continue to respond to the demands of those with incomes to spend, in terms of both quantity and quality of food produced and supplied. By contrast, meeting the needs of the poor will require public policies and investments to supplement the operation of markets in three critical areas where private incentives are insufficient: protecting the natural resources on which agriculture depends; focusing the benefits of agricultural research, including biotechnology, on the needs of small-scale farmers in developing countries; and ensuring that access to food, resources, and income-generating opportunities is equitable and secure.

In the absence of appropriate policy measures to address these challenges, food insecurity and child malnutrition will remain widespread in the coming decades. If these three broad policy challenges can be met, however, a food-secure and environmentally sustainable world will be within our reach. We have already made great strides in reducing the burden of food insecurity around the world. Building on the progress made and taking the actions described here should enable us to finally realize a food-secure world in the 21st century.

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