

AGNR

FIVE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Establish a Healthy Food System and Ensure Global Food and Nutritional Security



- **Improve human health and well-being by increasing availability and access of safe and nutritious food with the goal of healthy food consumption.**
- **Encourage creativity and entrepreneurship in the production and processing of safe and nutritious food.**
- **Inform food safety and food security policy based on sound basic and applied research.**
- **Utilize food resource management education as a mechanism to increase food access and healthy food consumption.**

OVERVIEW

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development spearheaded by the United Nations lists seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which call on the commitment and action of all countries. The second goal addresses hunger, calling for food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. Food insecurity is a growing worldwide challenge that must be addressed locally, nationally, and globally. Food security “exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.” Nutritional security is defined as “access by all people at all times to the adequate utilization and absorption of nutrients in food, in order to be able to live a healthy and active life.” Food safety supports food and nutritional goals by ensuring availability and access to food free of contaminants that can compromise health.

Increased food availability and access to nutritious and safe foods are fundamental human necessities. In the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR), we have the expertise to identify issues pertaining to inequality in food and nutritional security and the ability and creativity to explore innovative solutions. Our research, academics, and Extension (UME) programs are educating the next generation of food systems researchers, professionals, and educators. Our wide-ranging research and UME activities help devise innovative and creative solutions to guarantee a healthy food system in Maryland. Moreover, our existing expertise, partnerships, programs, and geographic location place us in a unique position to assess needs, provide solutions, and have an impact on a global scale.

AREAS OF FOCUS

Food and nutritional security and safety are complex issues that depend on a healthy food system. Healthy food systems encompass all the processes that are required to produce and deliver food in a socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable manner to promote human health. This is achieved through sustainable production, adequate processing, and accessibility, and requires knowledge, access, resources, education, innovative technologies, and entrepreneurship. With an ever-increasing world population, unpredictable climate variability, and enhanced pressure on land use and water resources, the need to research new solutions and educate the next generation of experts is more critical than ever. Community level engagement such as food banks, farmers’ markets and families is vital to ensure we are meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in Maryland..



To learn more about this strategic initiative or to connect with an initiative team leader, please visit go.umd.edu/AGNR_FoodSec

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Organized a workshop titled “University as an Incubator for Solutions to Combat Hunger and Food Access” at the Maryland Food Access and Nutrition Network in September 2019 where we presented various ongoing research and educational projects in the university around reducing food insecurity and waste.

Hosted a “Sustainable Food Systems” lecture series in collaboration with the Institute of Applied Agriculture. In this lecture series, we invited diverse speakers engaged in the areas of food access, security and safety. The lecture series is open to the campus, Extension, and general community, and has had 14 speakers since 2020.

Launched the Healthy Food Systems Emerging Innovators Grants program to support research and Extension project ideas from students in the area of food and nutrition access, security, and safety (three awards funded).

Partnered with Maryland State Department of Education to develop a Healthy Food Systems curriculum for a Farm to School initiative within the state.

TAKING ACTION

We will:

1. Create a comprehensive database for AGNR faculty, administrators, and staff to share information about active research and Extension projects in Maryland and around the world. This database will be a go-to resource for highlighting accomplishments, announcing opportunities, and/or available positions. It will serve to better connect faculty across AGNR through an accessible and organized network that promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, knowledge exchange and strategic project management.
2. Create fact sheets to drive the message of the strategic initiative. The fact sheets will define what a healthy food system is. Other fact sheets will emphasize key points about food security, nutritional security, and food safety.
3. Conduct a series of needs assessments in all focus areas and throughout stakeholder groups, including the community and industry. We will also identify target audiences and their needs as they relate to this topic.
4. Develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders to enhance research and Extension impacts.
5. Develop a seminar series and organize training to educate students and bring faculty together around issues pertaining to healthy food systems.
6. Expand our international programs addressing needs in developing countries.
7. Develop an undergraduate, cross-listed ‘Healthy Food Systems’ course.
8. Explore internships, collaborative research, and study abroad opportunities in healthy food systems for graduate students..
9. Develop a healthy food system train the trainer workshop and online tool kit.
10. Promote global engagement within the college through increased opportunities or international research, teaching and Extension, focusing on cross-cultural competencies, virtual learning and institutional collaboration.

