

# 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) that call for 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.” Nutrition 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 nutrition security 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. At the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR), we have the expertise to identify inequality in food and nutritional security, and the ability and creativity to explore innovative solutions. Our research, academics, and Extension programs are creating the next generation of food systems researchers, professionals, and educators. Our research and Extension activities help devise innovative and creative solutions for a healthy food system in Maryland. Our 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 with food banks, farmers’ markets, and families is vital to ensure we are meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations in Maryland.



## Healthy Food Systems

### Co-Chairs

#### Rohan Tikekar

Associate Professor  
Nutrition & Food Science

#### Lisa Lachenmayr

Director  
Food Supplement  
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## Healthy Food Systems

### Team Members

#### Taryn Devereux

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#### Nidhi Rawat

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Plant Science & Landscape  
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#### Margaret Udahogra

Director  
Dietetics Program  
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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Planned and launched AGNR's inaugural Cornerstone Event, **Global Challenges: Building Healthy Food Systems**, which drew over 600 participants to campus to celebrate and build partnerships surrounding our work related to food safety and security. The initiative team welcomed Dr. Gebisa Ejeta as keynote speaker, the 2009 World Food Prize winner and major player in the industry from Ethiopia.
2. 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 of Maryland around reducing food insecurity and waste.
3. Launched **Sustainable Food Systems** lecture series in collaboration with Ms. Meredith Epstein. In this series, we invited diverse speakers engaged in the areas of food access, security, and safety. The series was live webcasted allowing remote participation.
4. Launched **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.

## 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 for international research, teaching, and Extension, focusing on cross-cultural competencies, virtual learning, and institutional collaboration.

