

PRESS RELEASE



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Improving Investments, Policies, and Productivity Is Critical to Combating Hunger and Malnutrition

St. Louis, MO—Global demand for major grains, such as maize, rice, and wheat, is projected to increase by nearly 48 percent from 2000-2025 and by 70 percent between 2000 and 2050, according to research presented by Mark Rosegrant, who delivered the Ag Economic Forum Keynote during the 2011 Ag Innovation Showcase held at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis on the opening day of the two-day conference, May 23-24. Rosegrant is director of Environment and Production Technology at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Per capita meat consumption will also increase in many developing regions of the world and it will more than double in Sub-Saharan Africa from 2000-2050, leading to a doubling of total meat consumption by 2050, the research shows. At the same time, the growth in production of staple foods is expected to decline significantly in most of the world if business continues as usual.

“Climate change, high and volatile food and energy prices, population and income growth, changing diets, and increased urbanization will put intense pressure on land and water and challenge global food security as never before,” said Rosegrant. “If agricultural production and policymaking continues down its present course, there could be severe consequences for many poor people in developing countries.”

Using state-of-the-art economic modeling based on alternative future scenarios for agricultural supply and demand that take into account the potential harmful impact of climate change, IFPRI projects crop yields, food prices, and child malnutrition through 2050 and beyond. Even without climate change, the prices of rice, maize, and wheat are projected to increase by 25 percent, 48 percent, and 75 percent, respectively, by 2050, in a business-as-usual scenario. Climate change will further slow productivity growth, increasing staple food prices and reducing progress on food security and childhood malnutrition.

“Although the threats to food and nutrition security are very real, these outcomes are by no means inevitable,” said Rosegrant. “The myriad challenges underscore the importance of agricultural research, better policies, new technologies, and social investments to feeding the world’s burgeoning population while protecting critical natural resources.”

According to IFPRI's sophisticated computer model, developed by Rosegrant, with US\$7 billion of additional annual investments in research to improve crop and livestock productivity, nearly 25 million less children in developing countries would be malnourished in 2050 compared to a business-as-usual scenario. If projected business-as-usual investments in agricultural research are increased along with greater spending on irrigation, rural roads, safe drinking water, and girls’ education, for a total additional increase of US\$22 billion per year, the number of malnourished children in the developing world—currently projected to be 103 million in 2050—would drop substantially to 45 million.

“Spending in these areas would particularly help farmers to boost their yields, improve their market access, increase their incomes, and improve the health and wellbeing of their families,” added Rosegrant. “Greater crop productivity also means that more of the growing demand for food could be satisfied from existing land, limiting environmental damage and ensuring that progress in the fight against hunger and poverty is sustainable.”

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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations. www.ifpri.org

About the Ag Innovation Showcase

Established in 2009, the Ag Innovation Showcase has quickly become the leading annual global event for agriculture’s industry leaders, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists and investors. It promotes emerging technologies in ag-bio, food and nutrition, biofuels, sustainable materials, clean-tech, information technology and animal health. Held at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, MO, the largest independent plant science research institute in the world, the Ag Innovation Showcase is a joint effort of BRDG (“bridge”) Park at the Danforth Plant Science Center (a research campus for plant and life sciences enterprises) and the Larta Institute, as well as a number of sponsors. More information is available at www.agshowcase.com