

Climate Change Risks to Food Security: A Cure?

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs

WASHINGTON DC — U.S. government action can curb the risks climate change poses to global food security, says a new [report](#) [1] released today by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

Building on the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change report and National Climate Assessment, The Chicago Council's study explains how higher temperatures, changes in rainfall and natural disasters caused by climate change could undermine food production and put food supplies at risk. In total, climate change could reduce food production growth by 2 percent each decade for the rest of this century.

The [report](#) [1] calls on the U.S. government to integrate climate change adaptation into its global food security strategy. Recommendations include:

- Passing legislation for a long-term global food and nutrition security strategy.
- Increasing funding for agricultural research on climate change adaptation. Research priorities should include improving crop and livestock tolerance to higher temperatures and volatile weather, combating pests and disease and reducing food waste.
- Collecting better data and making information on weather more widely available to farmers. There are significant global data gaps right now on weather; water availability, quality and future requirements; crop performance; land use; and consumer preferences.
- Increasing funding for partnerships between U.S. universities and universities and research institutions in low-income countries, to train the next generation of agricultural leaders.
- Advancing international action through urging that food security be addressed through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

“As a global leader in agriculture, the United States should act now,” said Dan Glickman, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and co-chair of the study. “It has much to gain by doing so: the continued productivity of the U.S. farm sector, strong international agricultural markets, more stable societies and demonstration of its national commitment to food and nutrition security for the world’s people.”

A [bipartisan group](#) [2] of scientific, business, and policy leaders led by former Congressmen Glickman (D), and Doug Bereuter, president emeritus of The Asia Foundation (R), have endorsed the report's recommendations. Gerald C. Nelson, a leading expert on climate change and food security, was the principal author.

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Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

“History has shown that with adequate resources and support, agriculture can meet growing production demands and adapt to some changes in climate,” said Bereuter. “But greater emphasis on adaptation must begin now.”

Without action, the effects of climate change could reduce global food production and availability, which puts U.S. national security and economic interests at risk. Water shortages and agricultural degradation spurred by climate change increase the risk of civil unrest, according to the U.S. Department of Defense and National Intelligence Council. Efforts to decrease the number of chronically hungry, which currently number more than 840 million people, could also be hampered.

The U.S. global food security strategy is strong, the study finds, because it focuses on smallscale farmers in developing countries, whose productivity must be increased if the world is to raise food production by 60 percent by 2050. But these efforts do not do enough to counteract the effects of climate change.

“Since 2009 the US government has taken steps to confront these challenges through agricultural development,” said Ambassador Ivo H. Daalder, president of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. “For the first time since the Green Revolution, empowering the world's poorest to improve their livelihoods is a high priority on the international agenda. But climate change puts the success of these efforts at risk.”

More than 500 policymakers, corporate executives, scientists, and senior leaders from international and nongovernmental organizations are gathered to discuss the report, [Advancing Global Food Security in the Face of a Changing Climate](#) [1] (PDF), today at the Council's [Global Food Security Symposium 2014](#) [3] in Washington DC. U.S. National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah are delivering keynote addresses. Watch live streaming video of the event at YouTube.com/TheChicagoCouncil [4].

Abbott is providing support as lead sponsor of the symposium and PepsiCo is a sponsor of the report. Other symposium sponsors include DuPont, Monsanto Company, The Good Growth Plan, Cargill, Land O'Lakes, Inc. and Novus International, Inc. The report and symposium would not be possible without support from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation each year.

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