

Syngenta Foundation sponsors conference on food security at McGill University.

The global economic and financial crisis has had a devastating impact on the world's hungry. In the past year, approximately 100 million people have been added to the ranks of the roughly 1 billion people worldwide considered by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization to be undernourished. This is the theme of the second annual McGill Conference on Global Food Security, Oct. 5-7, 2009, which the Syngenta Foundation will support together with other sponsors.

The conference, which draws on leading experts from around the world on various aspects of food supply and production, is focused on questions related to the effect the economic crisis has had on supplies, demand and prices and what can be done to alleviate nutrition problems that are particularly acute in the developing world, although not uncommon in the developed world.

"We know the economic downturn has punished the developing world in particular," said Chandra Madramootoo, Dean of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at McGill University's Macdonald Campus in Ste. Anne de Bellevue. "While we in the West have seen some decreases in commodity prices, that hasn't resulted in lower food prices in other parts of the world. On top of that, there have been far-reaching effects on nutrition as people have lost jobs or had income reduced and can no longer afford a balanced diet."

Topics on the preliminary conference program (see the link below) include: food security in a challenging economic environment, the effects of the global recession, access to farm credit, the investments needed in agricultural research, and the response of international agencies to challenges of food security. As well, conference participants will examine the effects of climate change, markets and trade, and biofuels.

Representatives of developing and emerging-market countries attending the conference will come from Ethiopia, Guatemala, Brazil, Russia, India, China, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico and Vietnam. They will speak on their specific country experiences and the effects of the financial crisis on food supplies. Marco Ferroni, Executive Director of the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, speak as a member of a panel on agricultural research priorities.

Conference participants will be joined by officials from a range of international agencies devoted to food issues, including the World Bank, the United Nations, the Canadian International Development Agency, the United Nations World Food Program, the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, as well as leading academics from McGill and other universities.

The conference, which is open to the public, takes place October 5-7, 2009, at McGill's New Residence Hall, 3625 Avenue du Parc, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

For more information on the conference, please visit: <http://www.mcgill.ca/globalfoodsecurity/>

Contact:

Douglas Sweet
Director, Media Relations
McGill University
514-398-6752

514-294-7268 (mobile)
douglas.sweet@mcgill.ca

Julie Fortier
Associate Director, Media Relations
McGill University
514-398-6751
514-884-1587 (mobile)
julie.c.fortier@mcgill.ca