

Overview: Addressing critical needs

The UC Global Food Initiative addresses one of the critical issues of our time: how to sustainably and nutritiously feed a world population expected to reach eight billion by 2025.

The Global Food Initiative aligns the university's research, outreach and operations in a sustained effort to develop, demonstrate and export solutions — throughout California, the United States and the world — for food security, health and sustainability.

Launched in 2014 by UC President Janet Napolitano, together with UC's 10 chancellors, GFI involves all 10 UC campuses, UC Agriculture and Natural Resources and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. GFI has formed more than 30 working groups that are identifying and sharing best practices on food issues.

Here are some ways that UC and its Global Food Initiative are making an impact:

CAMPUS LEVEL

- **Ensuring food security:** Guided by the findings of an in-depth UC survey, President Napolitano has allocated \$4 million across UC's 10 campuses for location-specific action plans aimed at ensuring all students are food secure. UC aims to be a resource and model for other universities and colleges as they grapple with this national issue.
- **Building healthy communities:** UC is building on successful practices at individual campuses to develop a Healthy Campus Network across the university system. The effort is inspired by UCLA's Healthy Campus Initiative, a wellness movement that is working to make UCLA the healthiest university campus in America, and UC San Francisco's Healthy Beverage Initiative, which has phased out the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages at UCSF. The goal of the Healthy Campus Network is to create a central hub at each UC campus that brings together food, health and wellness-related activities.
- **Cultivating student leaders:** The Global Food Initiative Student Fellowship Program has supported more than 150 fellowships since 2014. Undergraduate and graduate student fellows receive stipends to work on research, internships or other projects that support the goals of GFI.

COMMUNITY AND STATE LEVEL

- **Improving school nutrition:** UC research has helped lead to laws that limit the sale of unhealthy foods and beverages in K-12 schools and require healthy beverages in child care. An array of UC experts works with preK-12 students to provide nutrition education, build school gardens and teach lessons around growing food. To broaden these efforts, a GFI subcommittee is developing a website with resources for supporting healthy, sustainable food in preK-12 schools.

- **Food policy in the public interest:** The UCLA Resnick Program for Food Law and Policy – the first program of its kind at a top-tier law school – studies and advances breakthrough solutions for improving the modern food system. GFI is supporting UCLA Law’s development of a food law clinic that will be dedicated to providing law and policy support to organizations working to advance healthy food access and sustainable food production.
- **Fostering urban agriculture:** UC ANR has launched a website to provide practical, science-based information for urban agriculture, with information on raising livestock, crop production, marketing and policies. In southeastern San Diego, local residents are transforming a vacant urban lot into a thriving community garden. Neighbors active at the Ocean View Growing Grounds are partnering with nonprofit groups, UC San Diego researchers and students to address public health problems.

NATIONAL LEVEL

- **Shaping the sugar debate:** UCSF’s SugarScience initiative informs the public about sugar and its impact on health, and UCSF’s ban on the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages is setting an example for other institutions. Meanwhile, UC Berkeley research is providing insights into how Berkeley’s first-in-the-nation soda tax is affecting consumer behavior.
- **Putting water first for thirst:** UC’s Nutrition Policy Institute is the hub of the new National Drinking Water Alliance, which works on issues in drinking water safety, access and consumption. The alliance aims to make water a convenient and appealing substitute for sugary beverages. The alliance also is working on the safety of tap water in schools and child care centers around the nation.
- **Creating a dialogue:** GFI is helping to inform the national discussion around food issues through its UC Food Observer blog and Mark Bittman: California Matters video series.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

- **Addressing global hunger:** UC leads six federal Feed the Future Innovation Labs — five at UC Davis and one at UC Riverside. The labs work to develop climate-resilient crops, with a focus on foods that are staples in the developing world, such as chickpea, cowpea and millet. The labs also are working to improve poultry and produce and increase food access around the globe.
- **Tackling development projects:** Research and Innovation Fellowship in Agriculture (RIFA) fellows spend two to six months working with partner organizations to address pressing ag development challenges having global impact. Originally funded by a grant from U.S. Agency for International Development to UC Davis, RIFA is now receiving GFI support to scale the program. It will now include grad-level scholars from all 10 UC campuses working under the mentorship of members of their faculty.
- **Addressing sustainable food solutions:** As part of GFI, UC Santa Barbara researchers analyzed alternatives for meeting the growing global demand for animal protein. The surprise: Fish farming floated above the rest for ecologic and economic reasons. At UC Santa Cruz’s Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture, more than 1,400 students have graduated, with many starting their own organic farms and gardens, and a number working in international programs in sustainable agriculture.