

Columbia Law School

## Scholarship Archive

---

Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment  
Staff Publications

Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment

---

11-2015

### Exploring the Link Between Food Security and Climate Change

Kaitlin Y. Cordes

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/sustainable\\_investment\\_staffpubs](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/sustainable_investment_staffpubs)



Part of the Agriculture Law Commons, Environmental Law Commons, Food and Drug Law Commons, International Law Commons, Natural Resources Law Commons, Securities Law Commons, and the Transnational Law Commons

---

# Exploring the Link Between Food Security And Climate Change

**HUNGER** Our growing global population is demanding a more resource-intensive and so-called “Western” diet. And that change in demand has drastic impact on how we must change our supply.



**FOSSIL FOODS:** Despite food insecurity, food is wasted and thrown out in excess, and despite global warming, food is used as sources of fuel, contributing to a deteriorating landscape.

Increased investment in agriculture is crucial in the fight against hunger. To meet expected demand by 2050, the world will need to significantly increase agricultural production.

## **Chasing the goal**

Climate change will complicate this, potentially requiring billions of dollars per year in investment to address the challenges it poses for agriculture.

Yet investing solely to increase agricultural production in a climate-variable world will not suffice. Consider this: although 795 million people in the world are undernourished, global food production is currently more than enough to feed every man, woman and child on earth. Globally, we waste an estimated 30-50 percent of all food produced. We also divert large amounts of food for use as biofuels, despite their questionable environmental impacts.

## **Where do we begin?**

*"Food expiration date labeling laws, for example, drive us to throw out edible food, while the renewable fuel standard program helps divert food for non-food uses."*

What happens on the world stage is mirrored here at home. Nearly 1 in 5 American households are food insecure, yet we throw away about a third of our nation’s food supply, while approximately 40 percent of the corn we grow goes into gas tanks rather than onto dinner plates. The prevalence of hunger in the context of wasted food shows that we need to do more than simply produce more food.

If we want to alleviate hunger, then we need more public and private investments that seek to tackle the causes of food insecurity, of food waste and of other inefficiencies in our food systems. This might include, for example, investment that supports the livelihoods of food-insecure individuals, or investment in storage and transport infrastructure in low-income countries to reduce food waste and improve the distribution of food. These types of investments, combined with investments in sustainable agricultural production, would help address both current and future food insecurity, at home and abroad.

### **You have a say**

Through our purchases, consumers can incentivize better investments that reshape the food system. But let's not forget that through our voice as citizens, we also have the power to seek solutions for hunger.

Investments are shaped by legal rules, which in turn have significant implications for our food system. Food expiration date labeling laws, for example, drive us to throw out edible food, while the renewable fuel standard program helps divert food for non-food uses. Educating ourselves about the impacts of laws and policies, and then asking for better ones, is something we can all do to build a more sensible and equitable food system.

**KAITLIN Y. CORDES, HEAD OF LAND AND AGRICULTURE, COLUMBIA CENTER,  
SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT, [editorial@mediaplanet.com](mailto:editorial@mediaplanet.com)**