

## Fact Sheet: The University of California Global Food Initiative

### OVERVIEW

The University of California Global Food Initiative seeks to address 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 initiative will align 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.

UC President Janet Napolitano and chancellors from all 10 campuses are united in this goal. The initiative draws on UC's leadership in the fields of agriculture, medicine, nutrition, climate science, public policy, social science, biological science, humanities, arts and law, among others. Its focus is both external, such as how UC translates research into policy and helps communities eat more sustainably, and internal, such as how UC leverages its collective buying power and dining practices to create desirable policies and outcomes.

### BACKGROUND

The quest to establish global food security and address related challenges of nutrition and sustainability has never been so important. A billion people – most of them in the developing world – suffer from chronic hunger or serious nutritional deficiencies. More than half a billion – primarily in industrialized nations – are obese. Against this backdrop, climate change and population growth fuel additional uncertainty and urgency. Recognizing that UC is uniquely positioned to play a leading role in addressing the related challenges of nutrition and sustainability, President Napolitano, together with UC's 10 chancellors, launched the UC Global Food Initiative.

### WHY UC

- *Public commitment:* As the premier public research university in the world, UC is deeply engaged in the knowledge export business – rooted in California, but with global reach – a passion shared by students and faculty. UC's campuses also set examples as living laboratories for sustainable operations.
- *Multidisciplinary expertise:* UC is California's land-grant university and has played a key part in helping California become the nation's leading agricultural state. Its campuses, agricultural division and labs are equipped to tackle the food challenge across multiple disciplines.
- *Trusted convener:* Building on its intellectual and technical firepower, UC seeks to find common ground to help communities in California and around the world find their way to a sustainable food future.

### HOW

Rally the broad UC community across a wide range of disciplines to work toward putting the world on a path to sustainably and nutritiously feed itself. The initiative aims to:

- Identify best practices and share widely within UC, California, the nation and the world;
- Use the power of UC research and extension to help individuals and communities access safe, affordable and nutritious food while sustaining our natural resources; and
- Deploy UC's research to shape, impact and drive policy discussions around food issues at the local, statewide, national and international levels.

## EXPANDING EFFORTS ALREADY UNDER WAY

UC already does much in the food arena, from cutting-edge research to innovative reforms in campus operations, including:

- In the late 1800s, UC research showed how to remove salts from the alkali soils in the Central Valley, turning what was once barren land into one of the world's most productive farming regions;
- About 65 percent of the strawberries produced in California and about 40 percent of the world's strawberries are from UC-developed varieties;
- UC researchers have bred more than 40 citrus varieties;
- UC researchers found that blueberries could thrive in California by acidifying the soils and maintaining acidic conditions in irrigation water, helping the state become one of the top fresh blueberry producers;
- UC scientists have helped developed flood-tolerant rice, benefiting rice farmers in flood-prone countries, and are making progress toward developing drought-tolerant crops;
- UC students are revolutionizing the field of agroecology and have taken a leadership role in advancing the university's sustainable food policy;
- UC researchers have developed a highly efficient cookstove to address food security issues posed by displaced persons in Darfur and decrease women's exposure to violence while collecting firewood;
- UC scientists have developed a system for removing arsenic from groundwater that is helping to provide safe drinking water for people in India and Bangladesh, and is being tested in California; and
- UC's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources works with more than 130 countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe to conduct research and provide expert agricultural advice.

The UC Global Food Initiative will build on these efforts and expand them locally, nationally and internationally.

## ORGANIZATION

The UC Global Food Initiative involves all 10 UC campuses, UC's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, with guidance from a systemwide working group appointed by President Napolitano and the chancellors. Campuses will assume leadership roles for the system in pursuing one or more components of the initiative, drawing on the efforts of faculty, students and staff, as well as engagement with the community. These components will encompass matters related to campus operations, curriculum and research, and outreach and policy. To support these efforts, the Office of the President is creating a student fellowship program, which will fund three undergraduate or graduate students on each campus to work on research projects or internships related to the initiative.

## FIRST PHASE

In the first phase, UC Global Food Initiative leadership will develop best practices, and the toolkits to implement them, that, once successfully deployed systemwide at UC, can be offered to schools and communities nationwide. These projects include:

- Expanding experiential learning, including demonstration gardens;
- Leveraging food purchasing power to encourage sustainable farming practices and to serve nutritious fare in dining halls and cafeterias;
- Data mining of existing information to help develop insights and action plans for agriculture and responses to climate change;
- Developing policies to better enable small growers to become suppliers;
- Integrating food issues into more undergraduate and graduate courses; and
- Reforming vending machines practices to enhance the availability of healthy choices.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about the UC Global Food Initiative, visit <http://ucop.edu/initiatives/global-food-initiative.html>. For media inquiries, call (510) 987-9200.