
Preface

The United Nations estimated that, on Thursday 11 July 2013, the world population reached 7.2 billion people. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), a subsidiary of the UN, estimated that, during 2010–12 870 million, or one in eight, people were chronically hungry. Of these, 852 million lived in developing countries (and comprised 15 per cent of their population). Looking forward, the United States Census Bureau predicts a global population of 9.4 billion by 2050. Much of this increase will be concentrated in developing regions.

For the first time in human history, more than one-half of the world's population is living in cities. This trend is global. Yet, it is most prevalent in the developing world. The United Nations estimates that by 2050, the world's population will exceed nine billion. That will be 2.3 billion more than 30 years earlier. The urban population in developing countries is set to rise from 2 to 4 billion over the same period. That means virtually all of the growth in global population in the decades ahead will take place in cities in the developing world. This adds an important new dimension to food security as faster growth of urban incomes and more diversified diets call for higher food yields and different composition of food production, and integration of smallholders into high-value chains.

Ensuring adequate food and nourishment to this large population is a pressing economic and even security challenge. Asymmetric distribution of population growth, rapid urbanization and changes in diets are all occurring concurrently with strains on the supply of food as evidenced, among others, by the challenge of climate change with associated impact on productivity of agriculture, particularly in developing countries. Addressing this multi-dimensional challenge requires research (and action) from a multi-disciplinary perspective going beyond economics.

The present volume is designed to provide the first such integrated approach. It includes chapters written by leading experts and promising young scholars in several areas including, among others, the political economy of food, the transmission of global food price shocks, the implications of financialization of food markets, the impacts of prosperity on food demand and on non-communicable diseases, the role of international trade in addressing food insecurity, the challenge posed by greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and land degradation, labour market implications of severe under-nutrition, viability of small scale farms (where most of the food in developing countries is grown) and strategies to augment food availability.

In compiling such a *Handbook*, one is liable to run up a long list of debts. Our thanks are due to the various authors of this volume who took the time and effort to write such insightful chapters and revise them in light of comments from editors and others. We are grateful to management and staff at Edward Elgar Publishing, particularly Alex Pettifer, for their consistent support and understanding. At the ANU we are grateful to Stephanie Hancock for her administrative support.

Finally, all views expressed in this volume are those of the respective authors.