



GLOBAL
FLAGSHIP
INITIATIVE
FOR FOOD
SECURITY



Members Newsletter

Issue #1

20 April 2026

Welcome to the Members newsletter!

Welcome to the first monthly members newsletter of the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security. Through this newsletter, you will be able to stay updated on past and upcoming Flagship engagements, our newest members, member achievements, webinars, and more!

Want to be featured in our upcoming newsletters? Please contact us by sending an email to:

lina.khoury@croptrust.org

Important Updates

The Annual Members' Meeting will take place during the UN Science Summit 21-22 September.

Member Events

- MENA Youth Agrivation: looking for panel members, investors, attendees (Arabic speaking - see p.5 for more information)
- MENA Youth AgriVation closing event - 17 May 2026. More information to follow.
- [GCSAYN is holding its first Annual Forum in Kenya - August 11-12, 2026](#)

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Important updates, member events, and upcoming webinars
- 2 Welcoming our Newest Members!
- 3 The Initiative in Action
- 4 Our Upcoming Engagements
- 5 Members Spotlight
- 6 Global Food Security Snapshot: Impacts of the Middle East Conflict
- 7 Past Webinars

Welcoming our Newest Members!



IRRI's strategy is focused on collaboratively transforming rice-based agrifood systems to enhance nutrition, improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, and boost climate resilience, particularly in areas that are most vulnerable to food insecurity. To bring this vision to life, strong partnerships are crucial for mobilizing scientific knowledge, attracting investment, and facilitating large-scale implementation.

IRRI is pleased to be part of the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security (GFIFS), a multilateral platform that unites development financiers, research institutions, and private-sector partners to advance impactful food security investments across Africa. Through this initiative, IRRI aims to support the important goal of GFIFS by leveraging its scientific expertise and system approach while working alongside partners to develop flagship programs that can improve smallholder productivity and income and contribute to more resilient food systems. Visit [IRRI's website](#) to learn more.



The Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network Global (GCSAYN) is a dynamic, youth-led organization dedicated to advancing sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, and youth empowerment across Africa and beyond. Through capacity-building initiatives, advocacy, and community-driven projects, GCSAYN equips young people with the knowledge and skills needed to promote climate-smart agricultural practices. Our decision to join the Flagship is driven by our commitment to strengthening partnerships, amplifying youth voices in global food systems, and contributing innovative solutions toward achieving food security and sustainable development.

GCSAYN now has operations across 196 countries, with activities being led by 96 approved Centres of Excellence globally, which includes primary and secondary schools, universities, as well as TVETs. You can read more about GCSAYN's activities [here](#).

Reach out to the Mr Divine Ntiokam for more information or collaborations: ntiokam.divine@csaynglobal.org

The Initiative in Action

In March, Dr. Conrad Rein attended the CONVERGEFOOD Joint program launch event in Yaoundé, Cameroon. This marks a significant milestone in advancing country-led food systems transformation.

Central to this project is the mobilization and de-risking of private sector funding through a Blended Finance Mechanism. Through this, Cooperatives and SMEs will benefit from increased financial flows.

The Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security plays a catalytic role by aligning partners around national goals. Through supporting the development of investment-ready programs and unlocking additional resources, Cameroon can strengthen value chains, deliver real improvements to food security, and scale up impact.

As the first country to apply this model, Cameroon shows us how such coordination can transform ambitions into action, while offering a replicable blueprint to accelerate progress towards SDG2. Read more about the [CONVERGEFOOD project here](#).



World Bank Group and IMF Spring Meetings - Washington DC - 13-18 April 2026

We are happy to share that we co-hosted a high-level event alongside Action Against Hunger USA and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) on “Scaling Innovative Financing for Food Security” in Washington, DC.

This event aimed to bring together key partners to advance strategic co-financing, blended finance solutions, and investment pipelines to address growing food security challenges.

The poster features logos for the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security, Action Against Hunger, and GAFSP. It includes a photograph of a woman in a blue shirt and green hat holding a wooden staff in a field. The text on the poster provides event details: 'SCALING INNOVATIVE FINANCING FOR FOOD SECURITY', 'A High-Level Event on Strategic Co-Financing and Partnerships', 'TUESDAY APRIL 14, 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM', 'ACTION AGAINST HUNGER, 999 E Street, NW, Washington, DC', and a QR code to register. Contact information for Maria Barrios is also provided at the bottom.

SCALING INNOVATIVE FINANCING FOR FOOD SECURITY
A High-Level Event on Strategic Co-Financing and Partnerships

**TUESDAY
APRIL 14**
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

ACTION AGAINST HUNGER
999 E Street, NW, Washington, DC

A light reception will follow. Registration and ID required for building entry.

REGISTER HERE: 

CONTACT: MARIA BARRIOS
MBARRIOS@ACTIONAGAINSTHUNGER.ORG



**Managing Climate Risk to Unlock Agricultural Investment:
The Role of Crop Insurance and Blended Finance**

Wednesday, April 15, 10am – 1pm EST, USA

This discussion will bring together leaders from development, finance, insurance, and agriculture to explore the role of crop insurance and blended finance in strengthening resilience, expanding access to finance, and advancing food security.

We also co-hosted a high-level roundtable looking at how to manage climate risk to unlock greater investments in Agriculture. Together with Partners of the Americas and the National US Arab Chamber of Commerce, we brought together players from development, finance, insurance, and agriculture to explore the role of crop insurance and blended finance in strengthening resilience, expanding access to finance, and advancing food security.

The session also featured insights from ACRE Crop Insurance and the GROW Program in Mauritania as practical examples of integrated risk mitigation in action.

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

13th Africa-Europe Science Collaboration Forum - Brussels, Belgium

Investing in Innovation for Food Security Catalysing Scalable Impact and Driving Resilient Food Futures Dialogue - 21 April, 2026 - 9:00-11:00 CEST

AEARAP Forum

21 April 2026, 09h00 – 11h00

The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) of South Africa, and Africa-Europe Science Collaboration Platform (AERAP), in partnership with the Global Flagship Initiative for Food Security Efforts will host a high level dialogue on **"Investing in Innovation for Food Security: Catalysing Scalable Impact and Driving Resilient Food Futures"** during the 13th AEARAP Forum taking place in Brussels this week.

The dialogue, taking place on 21st April 2026, 0900-1100hrs at the South African Embassy in Brussels will discuss models for targeted innovation investments and scale driven AU-EU partnerships to unlock resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems. Speakers will include **Mr Leonard Mizzi Senior Advisor, DG International Partnerships, European Commission, Dr Litha Magingxa (ARC) and Dr Conrad Rein (Global Flagship Initiative).**



Members Spotlight

GCSAYN Welcomes its 5th cohort of interns!



GCSAYN recently launched its 5th Internship Cohort, a milestone initiative that brings together young change-makers from diverse backgrounds to build capacity in climate-smart agriculture, leadership, and sustainable development. The program provides participants with practical knowledge, mentorship, and hands-on experience aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in food security and climate action.

This cohort reflects GCSAYN's ongoing commitment to empowering youth as key drivers of transformation in agriculture and environmental sustainability.

Cooperation with the Private Sector and CIMMYT

Wheat is vital for Africa's food security but production depends on synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, which are costly, energy-intensive, and a major source of global greenhouse emissions.

Soil microbes like *Azospirillum* and *Azotobacter* can help wheat access or use nitrogen from the air or soil more efficiently. Combined with advances in wheat breeding such as varieties better able to interact with beneficial microbes, these approaches can stabilise & accelerate yields while lowering production costs and environmental impact.

By deepening our understanding of and strengthening natural microbiome partnerships, scientists are developing microbiomebased nitrogen solutions ranging from soil inoculants and seed treatments to plant-level modifications that can significantly reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers.

The Crop Trust's work to conserve and make available diverse wheat genetic resources through global gene banks provides the foundation for identifying and developing wheat varieties best suited for microbiomebased innovation.

MENA Youth AgriVation is looking for specialists in entrepreneurship and those working in agrifood system innovation

MENA Youth AgriVation is a youth-driven initiative designed to strengthen agrifood innovation and leadership across the MENA region. It is built around two core pillars:

- The Training of Trainers (ToT)
- Innovation Hub

The Innovation Hub supports early-stage startups by providing mentorship, technical guidance, and business development support. Together, the program creates a ripple effect by empowering youth not only to build solutions, but also to transfer knowledge and drive impact at the community level.

For more information, reach out to: ypbnena@gmail.com

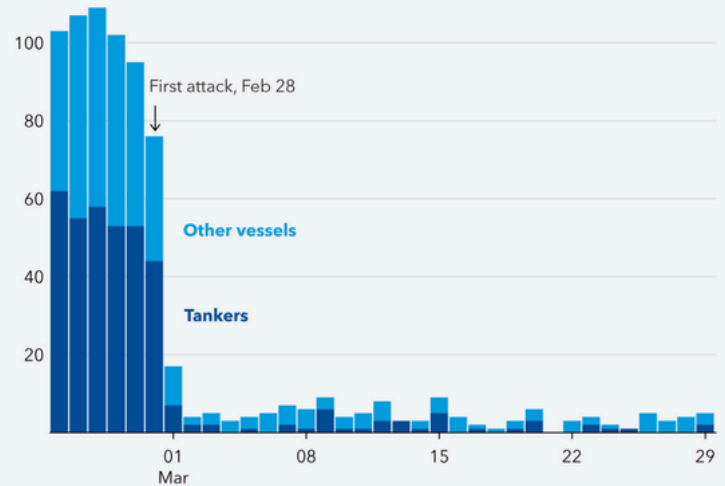
Global Food Security Snapshot

Overview

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries - comprising of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman - as well as Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran, produce significant shares of the world's crude oil, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), and refined petroleum products. In fact, around $\frac{1}{4}$ of seaborne oil trade and $\frac{1}{3}$ of global fertiliser shipments pass through the Strait of Hormuz. The conflict in the Middle East has led to the destruction of regional infrastructure and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, making it the largest disruption to the global oil market in history, with a decrease in tanker traffic of around 90%. Increased energy prices and disrupted deliveries are leading to a ripple effect to food pricing.

Strait of Hormuz tanker traffic plunges

Number of ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz



Source: IMF PortWatch, UN Global Platform. Note: Regional conflict may impair AIS reliability through GPS interference, signal spoofing, and intentional transponder shutdowns. PortWatch vessels include tankers, containers, dry bulk, roll-on/roll-off, and general cargo.

IMF



Food Security Overview (GCC Area)

The GCC countries are net exporters of energy, and net importers of food - for example, Saudi Arabia imports 80-85% of its food, with a similar amount of food imports in the UAE. GCC countries have staple food stockpiles to last from a period ranging from 2-4 months (Saudi Arabia) up to 4-6 months (UAE). Qatar however, has a food security terminal at the Hamad port where silos of rice, oil, and sugar stored in a controlled environment, could cover national demand for 2 years. Some GCC countries are 100% self-sufficient in dairy production, with others having high self-sufficiency rates for certain vegetables, poultry, and eggs.

Emergency measures such as relaxed truck movement restrictions, the expansion of airfreight for perishables, and the subsidisation of meat imports are also implemented to reduce the impact of war on food security. Other measures, such as the temporary prohibition of food exports and rerouting to internal markets, are implemented in Iran to try to counteract inflation rates of food.

Impacts on Food Security (Global)

FAO reports that world food commodity prices rose in March for the the second month in a row, with the FAO Food Price Index indicating an increase in 2.4% from that in February. If the conflict is to go on beyond 40 days, farmer decisions will impact future crop yields and commodity prices. The most vulnerable populations for acute food insecurity are located in regions with vulnerable economies that have suffered multiple shocks and crises, with limited buffer. Food purchases will make up a much larger portion of their budgets.

Considering the multitude of conflicts occurring at the moment in the Middle East, displaced and refugee populations are in particularly vulnerable positions with regards to food access. Many such families are cut off from their livelihoods, while areas receiving displaced people are becoming increasingly overcrowded. The current war is only exacerbating the economic crises and worsening food security outcomes.

Region	Projected Increase (%)
Asia	24%
East & Southern Africa	17.70%
Latin America & the Caribbean	16%
Middle East & Northern Africa	14%
West and Central Africa	21%

Table 1. Displays the projected (%) increase in food insecurity levels in regions analysed by WFP (source: [WFP, 2026](#))

Closing Remarks

This war will have far reaching, cross-border impacts on food security if it continues, especially in lower-income regions, where increased food pricing will take up an even higher proportion of household costs, making basic diets unaffordable. Farmers in Africa and parts of Asia heavily rely on fertiliser imports passing through the Strait of Hormuz. This disruption will impact their ability to treat their crops, leading to reduced crop yield. The World Food Program estimates that an additional 45 million people might be pushed into acute hunger - reaching a record high of 363 million hungry people globally - if this war continues.

Sources:

[IMF: How the War in the Middle East Is Affecting Energy, Trade, and Finance](#)

[Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security, and Nature of the Netherlands: Impact of the Middle East war on food systems in the GCC An overview](#)

[FAO Food Price Index rises in March as Near East conflict raises energy costs](#)

[Global Agrifood Implications of the 2026 Conflict in the Middle East: Impacts on energy and fertilizer trade, and food security](#)

[IFPRI: The Iran war's impacts on global fertilizer markets and food production](#)

[IFPRI Food Security Portal](#)

[WFP: Projected increase in acute food insecurity due to the Middle East conflict March 23, 2026](#)

[WFP: Why the Middle East conflict threatens record levels of hunger](#)

World Food Forum Youth Assembly Europe and Central Asia Youth Consultative Dialogue for the 35th FAO Regional Conference for Europe

“As part of the preparatory process for ERC35 and aligned with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031, this dialogue aims to ensure that the voices, priorities and lived experiences of young people across Europe and Central Asia are meaningfully reflected in FAO’s regional priorities for the 2026–2027 biennium.”

This dialogue:

- Discussed key subregional challenges and opportunities experienced by youth in agri-food systems
- Co-developed actionable policy and technical recommendations aligned with FAO regional priorities
- Highlighted youth-led solutions and innovations across agri-food systems

Regenerative Sourcing: Building Resilient Supply Chains through System-Level Thinking

Global brand and regenerative farmer perspectives were highlighted to explore how regenerative sourcing is being implemented in business strategies. What needs to change in purchasing practices, supplier relationships, and incentive alignment along the value chain were discussed.

Challenges:

Regenerative practices are not well-defined. Financial incentives for farmers to switch over to these practices without proper training can come with high risks. Farmers also expressed the need for direct purchasing for more fair pricing. For brands, scalability is difficult due to the lack of data management systems, a lack of a regulatory and certification system, and the difficulties around setting performance indicators.

What can be done?

Understand unique farmer needs, focus on tangible outcomes like improved soil health, provide farmer training, focus on storytelling to highlight benefits, and create data management systems.

Webinars Attended

Informational Webinar: African Women in Agricultural Research and Development Fellowship (AWARD)

AWARD, founded in 2008, aims to widen the pipeline for women in agriculture. Since its establishment, there have been 18 fellowship cycles, with 2,214 beneficiaries from over 460 institutions.

The goals of the fellowship are to:

- Strengthen leadership skills and influences in climate-resilient agricultural research
- Enhance technical skills
- Foster collaborative networks across Africa and Australia to support leadership, learning and research collaboration

The fellowship is targeting women from Egypt, Morocco, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Senegal. It will last for a period of 24-months where in the first year the fellow will participate in both in-person and virtual trainings, and in the second year, the fellow will be assigned a mentee with the goal of applying leadership skills gained, and the passing over of knowledge.

The selection criteria are:

- Females from aforementioned countries
- Must hold Masters degree
- 7 years of experience OR early career researcher if capabilities can be demonstrated
- Cannot have participated in another AWARD fellowship

Applications close on 26 April. Please share this with your networks!