

# ILLINOIS FOOD SECURITY INSTITUTE (IFSI)

Through its international engagements, the College of ACES is finding solutions to the challenge of delivering access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for all people at all times. Our efforts to bring innovations to food systems in order to address hunger have borne tremendous results in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and here in the U.S. These results have helped us build unique global partnerships for research, teaching, and engagement, and have raised the stature of the College of ACES around the world. Current programs include AgReach, which is revitalizing extension systems in low-income countries; The Soybean Innovation Lab (SIL), which is building inclusive soybean value chains in Africa; and the ADM Institute for Prevention of Postharvest Loss (ADMI), working to reduce food deterioration, loss, and waste around the world.



## OPPORTUNITY:

Our many activities addressing food insecurity are currently coordinated in the College of ACES Office of International Programs (OIP), which works to build synergies among projects that are supported by fixed-term grants and awards. OIP uses these programs as a platform to mobilize our faculty, engage students, and draw additional resources to ACES activities. However, these efforts are constrained by the priorities of the external agencies that provide funding. Establishing an independently-resourced Illinois Food Security Institute (IFSI) will enable us to expand our efforts to end hunger in a way that can be sustained and fits the vision and capacity of the University of Illinois.

From partnering to establish leading agricultural universities in Asia and Africa, to mapping hunger in Illinois, sponsored projects have allowed ACES faculty to have significant impact on hunger problems, but those projects (1) are vulnerable to changes in federal funding priorities; (2) bring restrictions that limit the ability to integrate student learning experiences; and (3) do not consistently present opportunities that match our unique strengths and historical ties. An endowment will build on the over \$70 million in external funding that has come to the college for food security activities since 2010 to institutionalize and expand the successes of our work.



IFSI will focus on problems of resource-poor producers around the world as well as low-income consumers in our local communities and across the globe. With an endowment, IFSI can develop high-impact initiatives on specific themes. For example, an endowment can ensure continuous capacity for engagement in Sustainable Smallholder Agricultural Production as is currently delivered through AgReach, SIL, and ADMI. Similarly, an endowment can support a strand of related activity in the area of International Food Safety and Food Standards, as capacity of smallholders abroad to meet sanitary standards can help them grow out of poverty and help protect consumers, crops, and animals in the U.S. A third thematic initiative well-suited to Illinois capacities is Data Analytics for Food Security and the Environment, through which advanced data science could be used to identify and address bottlenecks in food systems at home and abroad.



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All of these IFSI initiatives imply multi-departmental involvement within ACES and cooperation with other colleges, as well. Each would engage in research as well as public service and outreach through training of participants from around the world. Additionally, IFSI initiatives will enrich on-campus education through student engagement in projects and programs. IFSI will thereby allow an ACES model of work to address hunger that draws on our unique research capacities, our motivated students, and our external partnerships.

## RESOURCES NEEDED:

IFSI requires a staff made up of a director, a grant writer, and support staff. The support staff and grant writer will be provided through existing college units (e.g. OIP, Office of Research). The director would ensure engagement with all departments in the college while maintaining external relations for the unit.

Other funding is needed to support the following:

- **Program Core Endowment**
- **IFSI Initiatives**
- **IFSI Student Awards:** to provide students experiential learning related to food security in our community or across the globe
- **IFSI Training Awards:** to support training programs for food producers, processors, policy makers, and researchers who can be enabled through degree or non-degree training in ACES to improve food systems for greater food security)



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