



Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development  
in Transition Economies

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### **Agricultural strategies in the face of pandemics and climate change**

Panelists from politics, industry and academia came together to discuss food security

**Halle (Saale), 9 February 2021 – Fluctuating rainfall patterns, extreme temperatures and soil degradation pose significant challenges to agriculture. Climate change as well as regional and international crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and African swine fever, are increasingly causing uncertainty among both producers and consumers. With this in mind, close to 500 audience members logged on to join the online panel discussion on 22 January 2021 on “How to better cope with change: New approaches for food system resilience to pandemic and climatic shocks”. The event was part of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA), organised by the German Agribusiness Alliance (GAA) in cooperation with IAMO.**

The expert panel was opened by moderator **Julia Harnal**, Co-Chair of the German Agribusiness Alliance and Vice President of Sustainability and Governmental Affairs, Agricultural Solutions, BASF SE. In her opening speech, she pointed to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how vulnerable food systems are, especially in emerging countries. Not to mention the effects of climate change, which are increasingly affecting agriculture. International representatives from politics, industry and academia came together to discuss this and how the agricultural sector can be made more resilient and sustainable in the future.

In his keynote speech, **Dr Daniel Müller**, deputy head of the Structural Change Department at IAMO, discussed how crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change create major uncertainties in the agricultural sector. Climate change in particular, including weather extremes such as heavy rainfall and drought, are intensifying “production shocks”, which in turn have a significant impact on food systems. These uncertainties affect consumers, returns, investments, inputs and, therefore, agricultural output. Skill sets and technologies need to be improved to respond to this situation appropriately. Müller suggested diversifying production portfolios so as not to be dependent on a limited number of staple crops. Agronomic innovations, including improvements in land management and biotechnologies, should be disseminated and international food trade promoted. In many regions, there is a need to invest more in infrastructure and to expand food storage facilities. It is also important to improve early warning systems

for extreme weather events and risk management through digital data gathering and index insurance. Müller recommended that governments create framework conditions and incentives for farmers to produce in climate-friendly and sustainable ways.

Deputy Minister **Taras Kachka**, Ministry for Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine, said that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, Ukraine had faced numerous challenges over the past year. Prolonged droughts in the south of the country led to low crop yields, placing pressure on food prices and exports. Nevertheless, Ukraine continues to pursue its goal of doubling exports in the next decade. Currently, Ukraine's two largest trading partners are the European Union (EU), which accounts for 70 per cent of Ukraine's exports, and China. To achieve its export goal, Ukraine is developing policies for irrigation, logistics systems and the use of inputs, such as fertilisers and pesticides, which adheres to EU specifications. In addition, organic farming is to be expanded in Ukraine and strategic partnerships with the EU in the areas of knowledge and technology transfer are to be intensified. Deputy Minister Kachka stressed that the focus was on securing the domestic supply of basic foodstuffs and stabilising food prices.

**Dr Thomas Kirchberg**, member of the executive board of Südzucker AG, pointed out that it is already common practice in the sugar industry to utilise all components of the sugar beet, such as water, fibre and protein, in addition to the end product, sugar. There is also close collaboration with farmers and researchers within the value chain. The focus is on efficient, sustainable and environmentally friendly production through the use of resistant plant varieties, weather and soil analyses, alternative energy concepts on farms, and the development of appropriate water and pest management. Dr Kirchberg added that Südzucker, together with farmers' associations and sugar beet research, was continuously developing concepts for the practical implementation of these on farms.

Representing The Nature Conservancy, one of the largest conservation organisations in the world, **Michael Wironen**, TNC Center for Sustainability Science, spoke about the importance of resilient soils within a regenerative food system. Improved soil quality, for example, has a decisive influence on agricultural production and better human nutrition. Cooperation projects for soil improvement exist in particular in countries that are referred to as "breadbaskets for the world". For example, targeted policy measures were able to counteract growing soil degradation in the North China Plain and strengthen long-term food production. In India, it is mainly the Punjab region in the northwest of the country where the soil fertility of rice and wheat fields is affected by groundwater depletion and crop residues. Wironen concluded by saying that the challenges of food security, climate resilience and public health can only be addressed by looking at the system as a whole and using innovative technologies.

The recording of the panel 17 GAA/IAMO can be found here: [www.gffa-berlin.de/en/aufzeichnungen](http://www.gffa-berlin.de/en/aufzeichnungen)

*Text: 5,700 characters (incl. spaces)*

### **About GFFA**

The 13th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) entitled “How to Feed the World in Times of Pandemics and Climate Change?” was held virtual from 18 to 22 January 2021. The GFFA is an international conference on central future issues of agri-food policy. It was organised by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in cooperation with the Senate of Berlin, Messe Berlin GmbH and GFFA Berlin e.V. General information on the GFFA 2021 can be found on the conference website: [www.gffa-berlin.de/en](http://www.gffa-berlin.de/en).

### **About IAMO**

The Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO) analyses economic, social and political processes of change in the agricultural and food sector, and in rural areas. The geographic focus covers the enlarging EU, transition regions of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, as well as Central and Eastern Asia. IAMO works to enhance the understanding of institutional, structural and technological changes. Moreover, IAMO studies the resulting impacts on the agricultural and food sector as well as the living conditions of rural populations. The outcomes of our work are used to derive and analyze strategies and options for enterprises, agricultural markets and politics. Since its founding in 1994, IAMO has been part of the Leibniz Association, a German community of independent research institutes.

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