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## UNESCO Chair in Food, Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies to be launched at Balsillie School event

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University Professor [Alison Blay-Palmer](#), who was recently named [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\) Chair in Food, Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies](#), will formally launch the UNESCO Chair at an event on **Tuesday, Jan. 28**.

At the launch event at the [Balsillie School of International Affairs](#) (BSIA), Blay-Palmer and **Sébastien Goupil**, secretary-general of the [Canadian Commission for UNESCO](#), will speak about the prestigious international UNESCO Chairs Program and the research Blay-Palmer plans to do with her partners. **Deborah MacLachy**, Laurier's president and vice-chancellor; **Jonathan Newman**, Laurier's vice-president: research; and **Ann Fitzgerald**, director of the BSIA, will also speak.

"The UNESCO Chair in Food, Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies allows us to work together to use food as a lever to help address climate change, provide more access to healthy and fair food, protect biodiversity, and regenerate the environment," said Blay-Palmer, director of the [Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems](#) and the [Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged](#) (FLEdGE) partnership, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Blay-Palmer has been working on developing more sustainable global food systems for years. Her partnership-building research was [nationally recognized by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada](#) in 2012 and 2019. She is also a member of the prestigious [College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists of the Royal Society of Canada](#). The UNESCO chair will help her and her team build even more partnerships internationally, particularly in the global south.

Blay-Palmer and some of her partners recently launched an open-access book, [Sustainable Food System Assessment: Lessons from Global Practice](#), which provides insights into measuring food system sustainability. The book is co-edited by Blay-Palmer, FLEdGE project coordinator [Amanda Di Battista](#), Laurier PhD candidate [Carla Johnston](#), **Damien Conaré**, secretary-general for the France-based UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems, and **Ken Meter**, a U.S.-based food systems expert. Laurier Adjunct Professor [Andrew Spring](#) and Associate Professor [Jennifer Baltzer](#) also contributed to the book.

"The book provides practical, tested insights from around the world about the challenges and solutions in assessing change and sustainability in food systems," said Blay-Palmer. "It is open access so practitioners, policy makers, students and academics can all use the book freely."

Doors open for the launch event at **6:30 p.m.**, remarks start at **7 p.m.** and will be followed by a reception. The event is free and open to all, but attendees are asked to register through [Eventbrite](#). To learn more about Blay-Palmer and the UNESCO Chair, see the [video on YouTube](#).