



Liam Riley, Adjunct Faculty Member
 Wilfrid Laurier University
lriley@balsillieschool.ca

Lori Chalmers Morrison, Director: Integrated Communications
 External Relations, Wilfrid Laurier University
lchalmersmorrison@wlu.ca

MAY 6, 2021 | 053-21

Laurier researchers host international workshop to address food security in growing African cities

WATERLOO – Countries across Africa are rapidly transitioning from rural to urban societies. Urban expansion is largely taking place in secondary cities, broadly defined as cities with fewer than half a million people that are not national political or economic centres, and secondary urbanization is creating new food security challenges for the continent.

To address these emerging issues, scholars at Wilfrid Laurier University and the Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA) are hosting the [Transforming Food Systems in African Secondary Cities Workshop](#). The virtual conference will take place on Zoom from May 13 to 14 and will bring together international researchers from various disciplines including food studies, urban studies, sustainability studies and global governance.

“Secondary urbanization poses new intellectual and governance challenges for academics and policymakers, so we are heeding the call for further research into its implications for food security,” said Liam Riley, adjunct faculty member at Laurier and BSIA. “We must advance our knowledge because these cities are already facing chronic hunger and malnutrition, poor housing, inadequate planning for sustainable and inclusive growth, and loss of highly productive agricultural land.”

A key focus for the Transforming Food Systems conference will be sharing the perspectives and research of African scholars. Participants will see case studies presented from twelve countries: Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

“It is important to include academics living and working in Africa – often in the very secondary cities we are studying – because they know about these situations from their firsthand experience, as well as from their academic research,” said Riley. “They also play an important role in influencing local policy. Interdisciplinary research exposes the multiple dimensions of an issue, in this case ranging from nutrition to economic development to political science to climate change.”

Those same principles guided the formation of the [Hungry Cities Partnership](#) (HCP), an international research collaboration co-directed by Laurier and BSIA Professor [Jonathan Crush](#). HCP’s network of cities and city-based partner organizations conducts research, training and advocacy to help build sustainable cities and food systems in the Global South. HCP currently operates in China, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Mozambique and South Africa. The Transforming Food Systems conference extends the core research questions of the HCP beyond capital cities and major economic centres.

Crush co-edited a book, *Handbook on Urban Food Security in the Global South*, which will have its international launch at the Transforming Food Systems workshop. On May 14 at 10:20 a.m., Crush will be joined by a panel of the book’s authors to discuss the issues of food access and food systems that are inadequately prepared for rapid urbanization.

...more

Transforming Food Systems/Page 2

“The book aims to bring about policy responses to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda that move beyond the pervasive idea that urban households can feed themselves or will be fed by their impoverished elderly relatives on small plots in rural areas,” said Crush.

Academics, students, journalists and other interested parties are welcome to register, free of charge, for the [Transforming Food Systems in African Secondary Cities Workshop](#) on May 13 and 14, and for the *Handbook on Urban Food Security in the Global South* [book launch](#) on May 14 at 10:20 a.m.

- 30 -