Growing enough food for a booming world population as the climate changes is often cited as being among the greatest challenges to face humanity. Shrinking levels of surplus food supplies in the face of this growing demand (particularly from the large, emerging economies of Asia) are grim signals that the future of food is not as secure as we think.

Compounding the food crisis further are issues equally complex and interlocking. Biofuel policies, world trade rules, high fuel prices, dietary shifts and climate change remain formidable obstacles facing scientists, economists, policy makers and governments in the burgeoning challenge to fix the global food system.

Building a healthy and sustainable food system requires a comprehensive adjustment between the haves and the have-nots and sustained global cooperation. From the field to the table, agricultural products undergo an elaborate system made up of farmers, traders, transporters, scientists, food processors, retail chains and food markets. Unfortunately, one-third of food products, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), is discarded or lost annually through this complex journey of distribution. Scientists estimate that if one-quarter of all lost or wasted food could be indeed saved, it would be sufficient to feed the world’s undernourished of nearly 850 million.

In a recent article examining the world’s looming food crisis, National Geographic Executive Editor for the Environment, Dennis Dimick proposed a simple yet potent resolution: “Not only must the world grow more food; we must grow more people interested in growing more food.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT AND ACTION:
MICHAEL FAM
CHAIR PROFESSORSHIP
IN FOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

A menu of solutions is essential to sustainably close the widening food gap.
There are already too many warning signs that we simply cannot ignore and the time to do something about it is now.”

In 2013, the United Nations projected that the world’s population would reach 9.6 billion by 2050, up from today’s nearly 7.2 billion. Scientists warn that this will in turn double today’s global food requirement and outstrip growth in food output. The need to thus feed more than 9 billion people by mid-century, of which an estimate of 60 per cent will be living in Asia, poses a serious problem for our planet. The deputy director-general of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) suggests that agricultural production will need to increase by 70 per cent worldwide, and by almost 100 per cent in developing countries, in order to meet the growing food demand.

Asia is by far the fastest growing region in the world in terms of population increase, and remains home to 67 per cent of the world’s hungry of over 550 million people, according to the Asian Development Bank. Urbanisation, land constraints, and the widening gap between the rich and poor remain prime culprits contributing to this condition, signalling a tremendous need for Asian countries to sit up and take the lead in improving the lives of their citizens, and to face the challenges ahead.

While no one solution can create a sustainable food future, the message is clear. A menu of solutions is essential to sustainably close the widening food gap. But the world must act quickly, solutions is essential to sustainably close the widening food gap. The world faces – the challenge to feed our citizens equitably, healthily and sustainably.

Last year, NTU also introduced a second major in Food Science and Technology for undergraduates majoring in Biological Sciences, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, and Chemistry and Biological Chemistry. While there is no one silver bullet to tackle global food insecurity, Professor Andersson is confident of NTU’s prominent role in addressing the food crisis throughout the developing world. “The Professorship will propel NTU and Singapore onto the international table of much needed solutions for the global food crisis.”

In 2013, the Michael Fam Chair Professorship in Food Science and Technology was established in August at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) to provide cutting edge solutions and research on critical issues in the areas of food processing, security, technology and safety. With an aim to become a top Asian education institution in food science and technology, the University’s establishment of the Professorship is a signature dish served on the international table of much needed solutions for the global food crisis.

Said NTU President Professor Bertil Andersson: “The Michael Fam Chair Professorship in Food Science and Technology plays a very important role in helping to solve a very real and critical challenge which Asian countries, and indeed the world faces – the challenge to feed our citizens equitably, healthily and sustainably.”

In light of this global urgency, the Michael Fam Chair Professorship in Food Science and Technology was established in August 2013 at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) to provide cutting edge solutions and research on critical issues in the areas of food processing, security, technology and safety. With an aim to become a top Asian education institution in food science and technology, the University’s establishment of the Professorship is a signature dish served on the international table of much needed solutions for the global food crisis.

Dr Michael Fam Yue Onn was perhaps best recognised as a visionary leader and philanthropist who had made immense contributions to education, corporations, society and the nation.

Since Nanyang Technological Institute’s inception in 1981, Dr Fam had led its Council as its Chairman until 1993. Under his leadership and guidance, the Institute developed vigorously. Within the first five years, all of the Institute’s engineering degrees were fully recognised by the respective professional bodies in Singapore and the United Kingdom. In 1985, the Institute’s course was rated by the Commonwealth Engineering Council as one of the best in the world.

In 1998, the Michael Fam Visiting Professorship was established by NTU in honour of Dr Michael Fam, to enable NTU to appoint international experts in engineering to teach and to undertake research in any of the Schools under the College of Engineering.

In 2013, Dr Fam once again demonstrated his support towards education and research by making a gift of $1.9 million to top up the Michael Fam Visiting Professorship in Engineering endowed fund, restructuring and elevating it to the Michael Fam Chair Professorship in Food Science and Technology. The Chair Professorship serves as an enduring tribute to Dr Fam’s belief in intellectual values and social responsibility as well as the holder’s commitment to increasing knowledge and understanding.

Leadership philanthropic support as demonstrated by Dr Michael Fam is a vital cornerstone to building a great global university – where students are given every opportunity to be taught by renowned academics, to be engaged in cutting-edge research, and to be inspired to make a meaningful impact to the world.