

Food Safety and Hygiene

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The 21st Century Challenge: To feed 10 billion people safely, securely and sustainably

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In 1970, when Norman Borlaug, “The Man Who Fed the World”, accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, he observed that “Most people still fail to comprehend the magnitude and menace of ‘the population monster’. If the world’s population continues to increase at the estimated present rate of two per cent a year it will reach 6.5 billion by the year 2,000 unless man becomes more realistic about his impending doom”. He observed that “it is time that the tide of the battle against hunger was changed for the better - but ebb tide could soon set in if we become complacent”. The harsh reality of this warning was recognized in 2008 when the price of wheat and maize doubled and that of rice tripled, leading to food riots in twenty countries. The rate of increase of the world’s population has not been reduced and in October 2011 it reached 7 Billion of whom some 948 million were chronically malnourished. As

the global population continues to rise, we must confront the question “how will we feed 10 billion people safely, securely and sustainably”. We will need to grow more food on less land, using less water, less labour and fewer agrochemicals while we confront global climate change and avoid further dramatic reductions of biodiversity. Norman Borlaug was in no doubt that the problems could be resolved so long as the whole range of scientific advances is deployed at the earliest opportunity. Borlaug was particularly concerned that the campaigns of “anti-science zealots” are causing the potential benefits of molecular approaches to crop and animal improvement to be missed. The regulations that are applied to food safety will be discussed with emphasis on these issues.

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