Food security is a multi-faceted concept, variously defined and interpreted. At one end of the spectrum food security implies the availability of adequate supplies at a global and national level; at the other end, the concern is with adequate nutrition and well-being. Respecting policies constraints specific to domestic markets, many countries are still uncertain whether regional trade integration would enhance their national food security status. Despite opportunities for mutually beneficial cross-border trade, some countries impose export or import barriers in times of food shortages, in an effort to protect domestic producers or consumers.

Food security is ultimately affected by a wide range of interventions that operate on many different types of sub-systems. Improvements in many different areas can ultimately improve the availability, affordability and sustainable access to food. Food security interventions can be divided into those that help prevent (ie. governance reform and pro-poor growth policies); treat (ie. social protection) or help households better manage (ie. better financial markets, food storage, activity diversification) the risk of food insecurity.

Public Private Partnerships facilitated by academia and monitored by civil Society must address the balance of the effort that is invested in measures aimed at “preventing”, “treating” and “helping households better manage” food insecurity. Support should be provided to strengthen the analytical capabilities of these assorted “food security” policy analysis bodies. Several of these organizations are quite new, and they will need to build competence and capability quickly if they are to play an effective role in the public policy debates.

Eradicating food insecurity makes good economic sense. Food insecurity reduces the ability of those affected to learn, weakens disease resistance, hampers work productivity and limits the ability to innovate and participate in economic progress. At a national level, food insecurity is intimately linked to political instability and the dis-empowerment of the poor. When food insecurity leads to infant malnutrition, the vicious cycle of poverty is passed on from generation to generation.