

SIN Convened Influential UK-US Task Force Highlights Food Security Climate Risks



SIN worked with the UK Global Food Security Programme to establish an independent expert taskforce to assess risks of climate change causing disruption to the global food system. The multidisciplinary group from the UK and US outlined key recommendations to help safeguard against threats to global food supplies. This work directly informed FCO's climate change risk assessment report, played a key role in highlighting the threat to food supplies caused by climate change ahead of Paris COP21 and will influence business practices in the food and insurance sectors.

A Global Threat to Supply

Extreme weather threatens to disrupt the food system in unprecedented ways, but little is known about the global consequences of this disruption. SIN teamed up with the UK's Global Food Security Programme^[1] to assemble a UK-US multidisciplinary taskforce^[2] from academia, industry, and policy to analyse plausible worst case scenarios of climate-related disruption to the global food system. Taskforce reports^[3] attracted significant international attention and media coverage^[4] generated over 150 articles published online and on BBC Radio. Evidence raised international awareness of the risks to the global food system and build the argument for concerted action ahead of the crucial climate talks in Paris.



Substantive Thinking

SIN used its convening ability to bring together experts on climate, trade, international development, food, and the environment to build a plausible worst case disruption scenario and gain a full understanding of its impacts on food, business, and geopolitics. Over 30 experts came together at two intensive three day workshops in Chicago and London with high-level support from FCO Chief Scientific Adviser Professor Robin Grimes and Sir David King, the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative on Climate Change. Support from the FCO Prosperity Fund enabled the taskforce to perform substantive research and analysis. Recommendations were further promoted by the UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser at the Milan EXPO, at COP21 in Paris and with stakeholders in policy and industry, including discussion with officials in US, Canadian and European governments and will brief US Congress early next year.



Global Reach

SIN's rare ability to reach across multiple sectors and to fund, organise and guide this taskforce brought together an exceptional, diverse group of partners to perform substantial research and produce an influential report with a truly global reach. The taskforce found that risk of severe food 'production shocks' and multiple breadbasket failure caused by extreme weather will increase threefold over the next three decades compared to the last four. Taskforce policy recommendations to international governments will increase understanding of risk, boost coordinated risk management and bolster national resilience to market shocks. Input to industry added scientific grounding to help insurance underwriters identify unconsidered food security impacts on insurance and risk^[5]. The work directly informed a major strand of the new £14M Research Council food system resilience programme^[6]

SIN Chicago Contact: Jack.Westwood@fco.gov.uk

^[1] <http://www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/>

^[2] <http://www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/blog/2015/08/future-shocks-how-resilient-is-uk-food-system/>

^[3] <http://www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/news-events/news/2015/150814-pr-taskforce-reports-weather-food-supplies.html>

^[4] <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/14/food-production-shocks-will-happen-more-often-extreme-weather>

^[5] <http://www.lloyds.com/news-and-insight/risk-insight/library/society-and-security/food-system-shock>

^[6] <http://www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/news-events/news/2015/150914-n-first-gfs-food-system-resilience-call-opens.html>