

**Call for Papers:**

**Revisiting the Historical Connections between  
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Development:  
The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in a Global Context**

**Organizers:**

Prof. Corinne A. Pernet, Ph.D., Institute for European Global Studies, University of Basel

Dr. Amalia Ribí-Forclaz, Graduate Institute, Geneva

Conference Date: 28 to 30 August, 2014

Place University of Basel, Switzerland

Abstract Submission 31 January 2014

The history of international organisations has become one of the most rapidly growing fields of historical research in the past decade, moving from mostly institutional accounts to analyses of networks, flows of ideas and persons and, in general, more constructivist approaches. The Food and Agriculture Organisation FAO, however, has not yet been examined under these new lights, perhaps also because even FAO itself has referred to its attempts at eradicating hunger as “a tragic failure.” Accounts of FAO’s foundation and its trajectories remain almost exclusively limited to an institutional perspective and often present a one-dimensional description of the organisation’s aims to raise levels of nutrition, improve production and secure the welfare of rural populations, all with the ultimate goal to stop hunger in the world.

The workshop posits that after 1945, the interconnectedness of questions of nutrition, agriculture and poverty became a central aspect of international governance, and that issues of food and agriculture posed particular challenges to national sovereignty. We thus approach the history of FAO as a history of the ideas and practices of economic and social ‘development’ embedded in local, regional, national, and global contexts and with implications on all these levels. We propose to examine the process by which the FAO facilitated the institutionalisation and globalisation of debates on agricultural production and food security, how it integrated previous international and transnational networks, and how it navigated the tension between agrarian commercialisation and rural welfare during the Cold War and Decolonisation. That said, we are also interested in putting FAO’s activities in perspective by exploring the limits imposed on FAO’s scope of action both through its institutional set-up, the allocation of resources, and the co-operations with other (and sometimes rivalling) international as well as national organizations.

This workshop invites scholars to:

- Re-examine the conventional periodization of the history of the FAO, especially with regard to Cold War and Decolonisation, from the perspective of non-European actors.
- Consider how the norms and practices of the FAO as a novel institution were forged from the architecture of international and transnational relations that preceded it (International Institute of Agriculture, League of Nations, ILO).
- Focus on the role of a variety of actors, including member states, national delegates, non-governmental organisations, experts, commissions, lobbies, regional organisations. Reconsider the FAO as platform/facilitator for exchanges between national and international stakeholders, and examine the emergence of new international actors, and new forms of transnational cooperation.

- Analyze the processes of negotiation and cooperation on sensitive agricultural, nutritional and environmental questions within FAO, with particular attention to processes of standardisation, collection and circulation of scientific data, relations with other organisations, the formulation of international standards and the implementation of these standards in local contexts through technical assistance programmes.
- Describe the shifts, ruptures and continuities in the formulation of FAO policies since 1960; in what respect did decolonisation engender new models of transnational food politics and inform current debates on food security?
- Examine key figures at FAO in terms of their personal and scientific trajectories, or the circulation of experts also in networks that extend well beyond FAO.

Revisiting the history of the FAO will significantly contribute not only to the field of the history of international organisations, but also to the scholarship on economic and social policy, food security, and international development.

We hope to be able to cover travel and accommodation costs, depending on the number of participants.

Abstracts of 300-400- words as well as a short CV should be submitted to **both** organizers, [amalia.ribi@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:amalia.ribi@graduateinstitute.ch) and [corinne.pernet@unibas.ch](mailto:corinne.pernet@unibas.ch) by January 31, 2014.