

## CCRDA Workshop 2020 SPEAKERS & PANELISTS



### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

#### *Food & Faith*

**Dr. Norman Wirzba, Duke University**

*October 7 at 9:00 am MT*

Eating is the means and medium of life. This makes it one of God's most important and visceral ways of communicating his love and nurture of creatures. Strangely, many Christians rarely think

of their eating as of little spiritual significance, having been captivated by the idea that food is simply fuel. The commodification of food has been a disaster for the health of people and the well-being of God's planet. In this presentation we will consider what it means to think about food and eating as expressions of faith. How do farming, cooking, and sharing change when understood in this way? More specifically, how do they witness to God's love for people and all of creation?

***BONUS PUBLIC EVENT: October 8 at 7:00 pm MT***

In this public event, Norman will share how the Christian faith has something significant to say about the way we ought to grow, ship, and eat food. Together we will explore the intersections of theology, ecology, and environmental studies—discovering ways to nudge us towards a more Christ-like way of producing, consuming, and sharing food.

Brought to you in collaboration with the CCRDA, Samaritan's Purse, and Food for the Hungry Canada.

*Raised on a farm in Southern Alberta, Norman went on to study history at the University of Lethbridge, theology at Yale University Divinity School, and philosophy at Loyola University Chicago. Since then he has taught at Saint Thomas More College/University of Saskatchewan, Georgetown College (KY), and Duke University Divinity School. He's the father of four children and is married to Gretchen Ziegenhals. He has written many books and articles including "Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating".*



[Learn more about Norman and his work here.](#)



## ***Domestic Food Security*** **Gisèle Yasmeen, Food Secure Canada**

COVID-19 has drawn attention to the precariousness and interdependence of our food system. Many around the world, including Canadians, are having difficulty feeding their families, and are forced to choose between paying rent or putting food on the table. This particularly affects specific communities that already experience food insecurity, including Indigenous, Black and persons of colour communities.

This crisis demands that we ask serious questions about the structural inequalities in our food system, both at home and abroad. While providing urgent support is essential, COVID-19 could provide an opening for the long-term change that is needed. Now is the time to respond by strengthening local, regional and domestic food supply chains and building more robust social protection to ensure people can access the basics. The current food system is also over reliant on industrial production and producing for exports. How can we transform our food system in a way that also addresses the climate crisis, in addition to providing healthy diets and supporting sustainable livelihoods?

This presentation will delve into how food policies and associated programming such as institutional procurement, which could provide the kind of levers to transition Canada toward a healthier, more just and sustainable food system.

*Gisèle Yasmeen joined Food Secure Canada as Executive Director in May 2019, and has 20 years of leadership experience in knowledge organizations, having served as a not-for-profit and government executive at Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Elections Canada, and the Centre for Research and Information on Canada. Gisèle brings a deep food systems lens to her work, and started working on agri-food issues in both Asia and Canada in the early 1990s. She has published widely in the field, including two books, several scholarly articles, and media commentary in both English and French. Gisèle has held faculty appointments at the University of British Columbia, Royal Roads University, and Dawson College in Montréal.*



## ***Global Food Systems*** **Professor Tony Weis, University of Western Ontario**

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, it is safe to assume that many Canadians paid little heed to the mounting ecological and

health problems associated with the dominant agro-food system. Like other commodities, the social and ecological relations behind our daily encounters with food are largely shrouded in mystery; it is hard to know much about where food comes from and how it is produced due to the increasing consolidation of corporate control at every turn and the shrinking number and growing scale of farms and livestock operations. Problems can also be hard to sense when supermarkets are filled with so much cheap food (without diminishing the considerable level of food insecurity in Canada and the fact that many rely on food banks).

The COVID-19 crisis is cracking the prevailing faith – or stupor – that pervades the dominant agro-food system. Many chronic inequalities and instabilities have suddenly become more apparent, including the brutal conditions in industrial slaughterhouses, the amplification of infectious disease risks in industrial livestock production, the heavy reliance on seasonal farmworkers, the preponderance of low-wage jobs in food services, the vulnerability of long-distance and highly centralized supply chains, the accessibility barriers of ‘food deserts’ – most of which have powerful racial as well as class dimensions.

*Tony Weis is an Associate Professor of Geography at the University of Western Ontario, where he has worked since 2004, and was a Rachel Carson Fellow at the LMU of Munich in 2017-18. Tony has authored two books, *The Ecological Hoofprint: The Global Burden of Industrial Livestock* (2013) and *The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming* (2007), and is presently at work updating the latter. He has also co-edited two books, *Critical Perspectives on Food Sovereignty* (2015) and *A Line in the Tar Sands: Struggles for Environmental Justice* (2014), and has published in a range of journals, including the *Journal of Agrarian Change*, the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Global Environmental Change*, and *Global Environmental Politics*.*

*Tony’s research is broadly located in the field of political ecology, with a focus on the power, inequalities, and biophysical instabilities associated with globalized agriculture and food systems, including the explicit and implicit (environmental externalities) subsidies that brace the competitiveness of industrial production. Over the past decade this work has centered most of all on the soaring scale of industrial livestock production and consumption, its momentous implications for the environment, food security, and inter-species relations, and the urgent need to confront this trajectory.*



## PANELISTS

### ***The Future of Food Security: Smallholder Success***

Abram J. Bicksler, Aaron Larsen, and Mike Salomons

There are an estimated 500 million smallholder farming households globally, amounting to upwards of two billion people depending on them for their livelihoods. Cultivating less than five acres, these small farms produce a large portion of the food consumed globally and yet they

often do not earn sufficient income to feed themselves. This group comprises a large proportion of the world's poor living on less than \$2 a day.

Improving the lives of smallholder farming households is key to eliminating global poverty and tackling the Zero Hunger Challenge. Smallholder farmers can play a significant role in the solution to global food security, helping to feed the world. But they face numerous challenges from climatic threats, rising input costs, and market access. Smallholders need help, and the future of food will be shaped by how successfully countries, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs invest in and support agricultural and rural development.

Through short presentations and panelist interaction, this session will take a look at the challenges and opportunities with small-scale production and local food systems. Acknowledging that agriculture is necessarily context-specific, this session will help you avoid food ideology, a dualism of pitting one method of production against another. Furthermore, principles of agroecology will be explained while participatory approaches to successfully engage smallholders and examples of moving from theory to practice will be shared.



**Abram J. Bicksler** is an Agricultural Officer with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) based in Rome. He works with the Ecosystem Services and Agroecology Team within the Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP) on various initiatives related to the scaling-up of Agroecology, provision of ecosystem services, and is also the focal point for Pollinators within the division. Prior to joining FAO in July, 2018, Abram was the director of the ECHO Asia Impact Center in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 2013-2018, where he led an international team to gather, verify, and disseminate innovations and ideas related to sustainable agricultural and community development best practices to intermediaries working with smallholder farmers throughout Asia. From 2009-2013, he was an instructor and research director at the International Sustainable Development Studies Institute (ISDSI), a study-abroad school for American undergraduate students to engage in the nexus of social and natural sciences related to sustainability through experiential education in Thailand. Prior to moving overseas, Abram completed his M.S. and Ph.D. in Natural Resources and Environmental Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and conducted field experiments in agroecological approaches for weed control on sustainable and organic farms in the Midwestern United States.



**Aaron Larsen** is the global technical advisor for Agriculture & Livelihoods for Samaritan's Purse (SP), based in Boone, NC. As such, he provides technical support and oversight to over 40 projects in 13 countries around the world covering a wide variety of sector activities ranging from crop production to livestock and vocational preparation. Additionally, he is serving as co-chair of

*the Agriculture working group of the global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) led by FAO and WFP. Prior to joining SP in 2018, he served as Farm Manager for a non-profit farmer training program in SE Tanzania. His international experience is rounded out in northeastern DRC, where he spent much of his childhood and worked for two years in partnership with the local Church, setting up and initiating an agriculture program at a vocational training center. Aaron earned his Master's degree from Cornell University in International Agriculture and Rural Development where he researched crop-livestock integration and extension approaches in central Africa. Aaron also has experience in US agriculture having served from 2007-2010 as an Agriculture Conservation Technician, working in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to advise farmers in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on issues related to soil erosion and nutrient management.*



**Mike Salomons** has worked with Canadian Foodgrains Bank since 2012, and is currently their Agriculture and Livelihoods Technical Advisor. His academic background includes a M.Sc. in Conservation Biology from the University of Alberta and a M.Sc. in Plant Sciences from the University of Manitoba. His career has focused on sustainable development that meets the needs of both people and the planet, and he has worked in this area both domestically (Northwest Territories, Alberta) and internationally (DR Congo, Kenya, Tanzania).



***The Future of Farming: Engaging Youth in Agriculture***  
**Professor Ben White, Erasmus University, FAO Consultant**

Despite predictions that they are destined to disappear, smallholder or family farms still number more than 500 million worldwide, and account for more than 90 percent of all the world's farm units and 80 percent of the world's food. However, the world over, smallholder farmer populations are aging. Many young rural men and women are turning away from farming, but others, who would like to farm, are confronted by the narrowing and sometimes complete closure of access to land, along with other barriers to their entry into farming. This points to the need for support for the intergenerational sustainability of family farming. Professor White will discuss these issues and provide recommendations on promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems.

*Ben White is Professor Emeritus of Rural Sociology at the International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. His research has focused on rural change processes and the anthropology*

*and history of childhood and youth, especially in Indonesia. He is the author of Agriculture and the Generation Problem (Fernwood Publishing 2020) and Rights and Wrongs of Children's Work (Rutgers U. Press 2010), and editor of Gender and Generation in Southeast Asian Agrarian Transformations (Routledge 2018).*



## PANELISTS

### ***Community of Practice: Women, Nutrition and Agriculture***

Cecilia Gonzalez and Eunice Pax

Globally, women make up nearly half the agricultural workforce. Particularly in developing countries, they are the labourers, the entrepreneurs, and the caregivers responsible for the nutritional needs of their families. This panel session will present experiences, lessons learned, and best practices from experts in livelihoods, food security, and nutrition. Cecilia Gonzalez will present "Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Programs: A Summary of Principles and Pathways" which will discuss some of the complex causes of malnutrition and evidence-based solutions. Eunice Pax will present "The Benefits and Impacts of Women's Inclusion in Agriculture Programs for Food Security" which will provide program-specific examples of empowering women in agriculture and nutrition in Guatemala, and the significant impact achieved in increasing productivity, reducing hunger and malnutrition, and improving rural livelihoods. After the presentations there will be time for small group discussion and open Q&A.



***Cecilia Gonzalez*** has focused on the nexus of food, agriculture, and nutrition for many years. Her desire is to contribute to the efforts to end hunger and see the most vulnerable empowered to overcome it and thrive. She is a co-leader of the Agriculture-Nutrition Community of Practice ([www.Ag2Nut.org](http://www.Ag2Nut.org)), a global network of 7,500 professionals from 129 countries working on agriculture and nutrition linkages. Cecilia has also served with ECHO's Latin America/Caribbean Regional Network, World Relief's Haiti Earthquake Rehabilitation Program, Catholic Relief Services' Integrated Nutrition Conference, and Mercy Ships' Off-Shore Team. She obtained a BS in Food Science from the

*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and did post-graduate studies in International Food Science and Nutrition at Cornell University.*

***Eunice Pax*** is currently the Livelihood Specialists for Food for the Hungry Guatemala. She has her bachelor's degree in Agriculture and a master's degree in environment management and audits. She has working knowledge and experience of how agriculture can be a path for enhancing food security and income generation and transform communities, especially for the



*most vulnerable ones. Eunice has also worked as a volunteer for a nun's congregation called "Carmelitas Descalzas" to help them build a kitchen garden for their own consumption.*