



PRESS RELEASE

INVITATION TO THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON FOOD STUDIES IN AFRICA

Theme: Food, Politics, and Society in Africa

Food security, defined as access to sufficient and nutritious food for all people at all times, is a basic human right. Unfortunately, more than 800 million people worldwide, including 278 million in Africa, do not have access to food. This problem poses a significant challenge to achieving sustainable development goals. In order to address this matter, we are planning to hold a seminar that will centre on African cuisine with the intention of encouraging the development of indigenous diets that are sustainable and nutritious to meet body requirements. In addition, the seminar will explore how power and politics influence food security policies and food choices for the majority of the population in Africa and the construction of staple foods/diets. One of the primary areas of our attention is the relevance of food in African culture. Food plays an essential role in shaping individual and collective identities and contributes to the rich tapestry of traditions and beliefs that make up the continent. Therefore, it is crucial to study the indigenous food systems and culinary traditions of different African communities to gain a deeper understanding of their culture. By analysing the rituals and traditions related to food, we can find ways to improve food security policies. We need to prioritise the cultivation of indigenous foods that are climate-resilient and culturally acceptable. This would mitigate the problem of food insecurity in households and deepen the links that already exist between food and the community.

Rationale

The culinary traditions of Africa are incredibly varied and predominantly feature plant-based staples such as maize, root vegetables, millet, sorghum, leafy greens, fruits, and legumes. This high-fibre diet is associated with high prebiotic composition which helps to cultivate good gut bacteria, promoting optimal digestion, a bolstered immune system, and overall improved health and vitality. Unfortunately, there is a low consumption of animal source protein in most African populations, especially among the vulnerable people in rural communities. Globalisation has led to the adaptation of Western diets that are often energy-dense and nutrient-poor. These diets are frequently processed and have been associated with poor health outcomes. It has been observed that there is an increase in the cultivation of crops that are not well-suited to the climates of various African communities. As a result, the yields are diminishing, causing significant consequences for household food security. It is imperative to promote the cultivation of indigenous crops that are resilient to climate change. At the moment, there is not much research that has been conducted on African cuisine, its positive effects on nutrition, and its part in mitigating household food insecurity amidst climate change. We aim to create a space for conversation and analysis by examining the ways in which culinary practices intersect with politics, power, culture, and society. Thus, we invite papers that investigate how African cuisine, health, politics, and food security in Africa interact with one another.

We, therefore, encourage submissions that take a transdisciplinary approach to the interconnectedness of food, culture, politics, and society in Africa. We welcome collaborative research that includes academics, stakeholders, and other local partners to engage in meaningful discussions on various sub-topics related to food, such as:

- Commensality, Food Choice, and Society
- Gastronomic Photography
- Food in Literature: Humour, Wit, Irony, Lampooning
- Food in Contemporary Culture: Entertainment, Fine Arts, and Theater
- Food and Colonialism
- Food and Ethnicity
- Food and nutrition Security Policies
- Food - Human Rights Perspective
- Food and Agriculture Systems
- Behavioural and Social Factors that Affect Food Choices
- Food and Advocacy for Social Justice

- Food and Gender
- Political and Technical Dilemmas in Addressing Food Insecurity
- Food and Power/Authority
- Politics of Food Security
- Food Ritual and Religious Practices
- Food Taboos and Morality

Submission procedure

Scholars and researchers are invited to submit a 300-word abstract. Authors of accepted proposals will be notified and sent paper guidelines. All submitted abstracts will be double-blind peer-reviewed.

Please send your abstracts (word format only) through email at foodsecurityseminar@unima.ac.mw copied to dtembo@unima.ac.mw

Timeline

Deadline for the submission of abstracts is 10 June 2024

Notification of abstract decision by 24 June 2024

Paper submission by 26 September 2024

Seminar will take place on 24 October 2024

Seminar Organisers:

Dr. Dorothy Tembo, Research Fellow, Future Africa, University of Pretoria & Senior Lecturer, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Malawi

Prof. Happy Kayuni, Executive Dean, School of Law, Economics, and Government

Prof. Bryson Nkhoma, Department of History and Heritage Studies, Mzuzu University

Dr Michael Chasukwa, Associate Professor, Department of Politics and Government, University of Malawi

Dr Yankho Kaimila, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Food and Nutrition Department, University of Reading; & Lecturer in the Biological Sciences Department, University of Malawi

Ms Maureen Kapanga, Lecturer, Department of Politics and Government, University of Malawi