



JOHNS HOPKINS  
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ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



# FACTS OVER MYTHS

*Food Policy for Old & New Challenges*

**International Workshop on Food Policy**

April 2026 · Bologna

Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe | University of Bologna

# FACTS OVER MYTHS

International Workshop on Food Policy

April 2026 · Bologna

This event is organized by:

Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe

Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna

We gratefully acknowledge the support that made this conference possible. This event is convened under the auspices of the collaboration agreement between Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna and Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe, reflecting our shared commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and engagement.

# PROGRAM

## **Day 1 - Monday, 20 April, 2026**

### **Open Conference “Facts Over Myths – Food Policy for Old and New Challenges”**

@ Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe (Via B. Andreatta 3 – Auditorium)

- 13:45-14:20 **Participant Registration and Welcome Coffee** (SAIS Europe Penthouse)
- 14:30-15:00 **Opening Session** (SAIS Europe Auditorium)  
**Institutional Greetings**
- Renaud Dehousse, Rector, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe  
Giovanni Molari, Rector, University of Bologna
- Welcome: Bologna as a City of Food Policy**  
Andrea Segré, Special Counsellor to the Mayor of Bologna for Food Policy;  
Chair, Casa Artusi Foundation
- Workshop Introduction and Objectives**  
Mario Mazzocchi, University of Bologna
- 15:00-16:30 **Keynote Sessions** followed by Q&A  
Jessica Fanzo, Johns Hopkins University  
Benjamin Davis, Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- 16:30-16:45 **Coffee Break**
- 16:45-17:45 **Roundtable Discussion**  
Lynnda Kiess, Emergency Food Expert  
William A. Masters, Tufts University  
Lucia Reisch, University of Cambridge  
Bhavani Shankar, University of Sheffield  
*Moderated discussion also with keynote speakers*
- 19:30 Participants will meet in the **Savhotel Aemilia** lobby to walk to dinner
- 20:00 **Social Dinner – Cantina Bentivoglio** (Via Mascarella, 4/b)

## Day 2 - Tuesday, 21 April, 2026

### Closed kick-off meeting of the “Bologna International Group on Food Policy”

@ University of Bologna (Via Zamboni 33 – Sala del Consiglio)

8:45-9:00

#### **Welcome Coffee**

9:00-9:10

#### **Welcome and Opening**

Raffaella Campaner, Vice Rector for International Relations

9:10-9:20

#### **Workshop Structure, Objectives, and Mission**

Jessica Fanzo, Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe

Mario Mazzocchi, University of Bologna

*Each thematic session will feature short interventions (approximately 10 minutes each) followed by open discussions focused on the following guiding questions:*

- What are the core current and emerging policy challenges?
- What evidence exists on current policies, and how strong is that evidence?
- Which data, methods, and approaches can strengthen credible policy evaluation?
- How should researchers communicate scientific uncertainty and disagreement?
- What drives the uptake, or lack of uptake, of high-quality food policy research?

9:20-10:20

#### **Nutrition and Food Security**

Bhavani Shankar, University of Sheffield

Lynnda Kiess, Emergency Food Expert

Elisabetta Gotor, CGIAR

10:20-10:50

#### **Coffee Break**

10:50-11:50

#### **Prices, Inflation, and Food Costs**

Mario Mazzocchi, University of Bologna

William Masters, Tufts University

Franco Sassi, Imperial College London

11:50-12:50

**International Equilibria and Climate Change**

Jessica Fanzo, Johns Hopkins SAIS

Michael Plummer, Johns Hopkins SAIS

Nina Hall, Johns Hopkins SAIS

12:50-14:00

**Lunch** (with optional visit to the University of Bologna library)

14:00-15:00

**Behavioral Policies, Consumer Choices & Sustainability**

Lucia Reisch, University of Cambridge

Paul Lohmann, University of Cambridge

Matteo Vittuari, University of Bologna

15:00-16:00

**Vulnerability & Public Welfare (from SNAP to Ozempic)**

Timothy Beatty, UC Davis

David Frisvold, University of Iowa

Laura Cornelsen, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

# List of Participants

**Elena Benedetti** — Junior Assistant Professor (RTD-a) in Agricultural and Food Economics — University of Bologna

**Beatrice Biondi** — Assistant Professor — University of Bologna, Department of Statistical Sciences

**Sara Capacci** — Associate Professor of Economic Statistics — University of Bologna

**Laura Cornelsen** — Associate Professor in Public Health Economics — London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

**Ben Davis** — Director, Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations — FAO

**Daide Dragone** — Professor of Economics — University of Bologna

**Jessica Fanzo** — Professor of Food Policy and Climate — Johns Hopkins SAIS

**David E. Frisvold** — Henry B. Tippie Research Fellow and Associate Professor — University of Iowa

**Laura García Herrero** — Professor of Economics — University of Bologna

**José Maria Gil Roig** — Professor of Agricultural Economics — Polytechnic University of Catalonia

**Elisabetta Gotor** — Director, Land Resource Economics Unit — CGIAR

**Nina Hall** — Associate Professor of International Relations — Johns Hopkins SAIS

**Xavier Irz** — Professor of Agricultural Economics — University of Helsinki

**Nick Jacobs** — Independent Consultant (formerly IPES-Food) — IPES-Food

**Meike Janssen** — Associate Professor, Department of Management, Society and Communication — Copenhagen Business School

**Lynnda Kiess** — Emergency Food Expert

**Paul Lohmann** — Research Associate, El-Erian Institute of Behavioural Economics and Policy — University of Cambridge

**William A. Masters** — Professor of Food Policy, Friedman School of Nutrition and Department of Economics — Tufts University

**Mario Mazzocchi** — Professor of Agricultural Economics — University of Bologna

**Alice Pizzo** — Assistant Professor — Copenhagen Business School

**Michael Plummer** — Eni Professor of International Economics — Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe

**Lucia Reisch** — Professor and Director, El-Erian Institute of Behavioural Economics and Policy, Cambridge Judge Business School — University of Cambridge

**Franco Sassi** — Professor of International Health Policy and Economics — Imperial College London

**Bhavani Shankar** — Professor of Food Systems, Nutrition and Sustainability — University of Sheffield

**Bruce Traill** — Emeritus Professor of Food Economics and Policy — University of Reading

**Matteo Vittuari** — Associate Professor of Agricultural and Food Economics — University of Bologna

**Giacomo Zanello** — Professor of Food Economics and Health — University of Reading



## **Elena Benedetti**

Junior Assistant Professor (RTD-a) in  
Agricultural and Food Economics at  
University of Bologna.

Elena Benedetti is a Junior Assistant Professor (RTD-a) in Agricultural and Food Economics at the University of Bologna. She was previously a postdoctoral research fellow on the ONFOODS project focusing on healthy and sustainable diets and a Lecturer in Economics at Northumbria University. She earned her PhD in 2022 from Newcastle University (ESRC-funded) and was a Visiting PhD researcher at Toulouse School of Economics. Her research focuses on food and environmental policies, sustainable diets and consumer behaviour, with expertise in applied econometrics and policy evaluation.



## **Timothy K.M. Beatty**

DeLoach Professor and Chair of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of California, Davis.

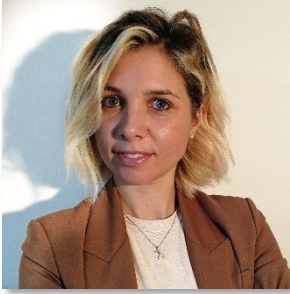
Timothy K. M. Beatty (“Tim” Beatty) is DeLoach Professor and Chair of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of California, Davis. An applied economist specializing in the economics of food, nutrition, and health, he served as President of the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA) in 2024–2025. He is also the Founding Editor of the Journal of the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association and a former co-editor of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics.



## **Beatrice Biondi**

Assistant Professor in Economic  
Statistics at the University of Bologna.

Beatrice Biondi is Assistant Professor in Economic Statistics at the University of Bologna. Her research focuses on consumer food choices and the evaluation of food policies. She applies discrete choice models and quasi-experimental methods to study how individuals respond to policy interventions, with a focus on dietary outcomes, health, and environmental sustainability.



## **Sara Capacci**

Associate Professor of Economic Statistics at the Department of Statistical Sciences “Paolo Fortunati” at the University of Bologna.

Sara Capacci is an Associate Professor of Economic Statistics at the Department of Statistical Sciences “Paolo Fortunati” at the University of Bologna. She received her PhD in Agricultural and Food Economics and Statistics from the University of Bologna in 2010. Her research focuses on economic statistics, policy evaluation, and demand modelling, with particular interests in quasi-experimental methods, consumer behaviour, nutrition policy, and the impact of public interventions on diets and health outcomes. She has published on healthy eating policies, food taxation, consumer responses to nutrition measures, and the economic effects of policy interventions. .



## **Laura Cornelsen**

Associate Professor in Public Health Economics at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

Laura Cornelsen is an Associate Professor in Public Health Economics at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). Her research focuses on the links between public health and food system change, including the role of food prices and health-related food policies in shaping health, inequalities, and environmental outcomes. She uses large-scale data analysis as well as experimental approaches to evaluate policy impacts. Laura is Co-Director of the Population Health Innovation Lab (PHI-Lab) and Co-Lead of the Policy Evaluation theme at the Global Health Economics Centre (GHECO) at LSHTM.



## **Benjamin Davis**

Director, Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division, ESP.

Benjamin has extensive experience in social protection, social policies and agricultural economics. He previously served as Strategic Programme Leader, Rural Poverty Reduction and Deputy Director of the Agrifood Economics and Policy Division (ESA) at FAO and he was team leader of the From Production to Protection (PtoP) project. He has also worked as Social Policy Advisor for the UNICEF Regional Office in Eastern and Southern Africa and as a Research and Post-Doctoral Fellow at IFPRI. He holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics and a Master's in Public Policy from UC Berkeley.



## **Davide Dragone**

Professor of Economics at the  
Department of Economics of the  
University of Bologna, Italy.

Davide Dragone is a Professor of Economics at the Department of Economics of the University of Bologna, Italy. He is an applied theorist whose research focuses on health economics, oligopoly theory, and experimental economics. He serves as an Associate Editor for the *Journal of Health Economics* and for *Health Economics*. His recent research examines the economics of risky health behaviors, particularly in the areas of substance use, gambling, obesity, and sex work.



## **Jessica Fanzo**

James Anderson Professor of Food Policy & Climate.

Jessica Fanzo is James Anderson Professor of Food Policy & Climate at SAIS Europe. Before coming to SAIS Bologna in 2023, Professor Fanzo was a Professor of Climate and Food and the Director of the Food for Humanity Initiative at Columbia University's Climate School. Prior to that, she served as the Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Global Food Policy and Ethics at Johns Hopkins University. She has also held positions at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN), the UN World Food Programme, Bioversity International, the Earth Institute, the Millennium Development Goal Centre at the World Agroforestry Center in Kenya, and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.



## **David Frisvold**

Associate Professor and Henry B. Tippie Research Fellow in the Department of Economics at the University of Iowa.

David Frisvold is an Associate Professor and Henry B. Tippie Research Fellow in the Department of Economics at the University of Iowa. He is also a Research Associate of the NBER, a Research Fellow of the IZA Network at LISER, and a faculty affiliate of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin. He is currently a co-editor at the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management and an associate editor at Economics and Human Biology. His work on food policy examines SSB taxes, calorie labels, and food assistance programs.



## **José Maria Gil**

Director of the CREDA and professor of Agricultural Economics at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC).

José Maria Gil is director of the CREDA and professor of Agricultural Economics at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC). He is also responsible for the food chain analysis and consumer behavior team. His research focuses on economic aspects related to food security and policies related to the consumer, the agri-food industry and international trade. He also has extensive experience in econometrics and statistical methods for analyzing value chains and household purchasing behavior.



## **Elisabetta Gotor**

Principal Scientist and program leader  
Alliance of Bioversity International and  
CIAT (CGIAR).

Elisabetta Gotor is an agricultural economist with a research focus on economic analysis and evaluation of food system solutions at the intersection of agriculture, environment, and nutrition. She is a Principal Scientist at the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and leads a research program on policy, inclusion, and socioeconomic analysis for impact. She also leads the market-led transformation area of work under the CGIAR's Policy Innovations program. With a PhD from the University of Reading (2008) and 15+ years of experience, her work supports evidence-based strategies aligned with the SDGs



## **Nina Hall**

Associate Professor of International Relations, Johns Hopkins SAIS.

Nina Hall is an Associate Professor of International Relations, Johns Hopkins SAIS. She researches on global environmental politics, the UN and climate activism. She holds a DPhil (PhD) in International Relations from the University of Oxford and a Master's Degree from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. She was previously a Lecturer at the Hertie School of Governance and a Senior Fellow at the Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society in Berlin. She is the co-founder of an independent think tank, Te Kuaka (formerly New Zealand Alternative). In 2025, she co-organized the Festival of Ecological Transition, which attracted almost 1,000 Bologna residents to a series of art, music, film and academic discussions on "Sensing the Climate".

Nina's most recent book is *Climate Activism, Digital Technologies, and Organizational Change*, (CUP, 2024), with Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni. A previous book, *Transnational Advocacy in the Digital Era, Think Global, Act Local* (OUP, 2022) won the ISA's Best Book Award in International Communication. Her first book explored the UN's response to climate change: *Displacement, Development and Climate Change: International Organizations Moving Beyond their Mandates?* (Routledge, 2016). She has published over a dozen peer-reviewed articles including in the *International Studies Quarterly*, *European Journal of International Relations*, and *Global Environmental Politics* and has also written commentary for: *The Guardian*, *Die Zeit Online*, and the *Washington Post*.



## **Xavier Irz**

Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Helsinki.

Xavier Irz is Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Helsinki. An applied economist, he researches sustainable food systems with a focus on dietary change, agrifood trade, aquaculture, and farm risk management. His work applies microeconomic theory, econometrics, and simulation models to analyse behaviour, markets, and policies across the food system. Prior roles include positions at Luke (Finland), INRA (France), the University of Reading (UK), and the UK Food Standards Agency.



## **Nicholas Jacobs**

Experienced food system researcher and communicator.

Nick Jacobs is an experienced food system researcher and communicator. From 2015-2025, Nick was director of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food), leading reports on food security, agroecology, and food system finance, and helping to establish the panel as a leading voice on food systems. Now working as an independent consultant, Nick has provided research and editorial services to NGOs, think tanks and EU institutions.



## **Meike Janssen**

Associate Professor in the Department of Management, Society and Communication at Copenhagen Business School.

Meike Janssen is Associate Professor in the Department of Management, Society and Communication at Copenhagen Business School. Her research focuses on consumer behavior in the field of sustainable food consumption. She is interested in policy interventions and marketing instruments for accelerating the green consumer transition, such as choice architecture, product labelling, and pricing. Her expertise covers various food-related topics, especially plant-based food and reduced meat consumption, organic food, local food, healthy eating, animal welfare standards, and sustainable food packaging.



## **Lynnda Kiess**

Emergency Food Expert.

Lynnda Kiess has over 30 years of experience in operational research, programme design, and advocacy, working in sub-Saharan Africa, South and East Asia, and the United States. Her expertise ranges from nutrition analysis, food security, food policy and food systems, public health nutrition, as well as humanitarian response in emergency and fragile contexts.



## **Paul Lohmann**

Research Associate at the El-Erian  
Institute of Behavioural Economics and  
Policy, Judge Business School,  
University of Cambridge.

Paul Lohmann is a Research Associate at the El-Erian Institute of Behavioural Economics and Policy, Judge Business School, University of Cambridge. He is an applied economist working at the intersection of behavioural science, environment, and public policy. His research focuses on designing and evaluating evidence-based policies to enhance individual and societal welfare, with a particular interest in food policy. His work involves conducting large-scale experiments, both online and in the field, in close collaboration with industry partners, as well as leading evidence-synthesis projects to inform ongoing policy debates.



## **William A. Masters**

Professor of Food Policy at the Friedman School of Nutrition and Department of Economics, Tufts University.

William A. Masters is a Professor of Food Policy at the Friedman School of Nutrition and Department of Economics, Tufts University. He is coauthor of *Food Economics: Agriculture, Nutrition and Health* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), and since 2020 has led the Food Prices for Nutrition project that introduced new metrics for the cost and affordability of healthy diets worldwide. He is an elected Fellow of both the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association and the American Society for Nutrition, and was awarded the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture's Borgstrom Prize for Global Food Security in 2026.



## **Mario Mazzocchi**

Professor of Economic Statistics at the University of Bologna and Visiting Professor at Imperial Business School, London.

Mario Mazzocchi is Professor of Economic Statistics at the University of Bologna and Visiting Professor at Imperial Business School, London. He previously held academic positions at the University of Reading, where he lectured in Applied Economics and Consumer Behaviour. His research focuses on consumer behaviour, health and food policy evaluation, and the application of statistical methods to public policy. He is a member of the Social Research Methods and Advice Working Group at the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and has served as a consultant to the FAO and the European Commission on nutrition and public health policies. He has coordinated or contributed to numerous international research initiatives funded by the European Commission. He is the author of two books (Fat Economics, Oxford University Press; Statistics for Marketing and Consumer Research, Sage) and has published extensively in leading international journals in applied economics, public health, and food policy. From 2014 to 2022, he was Co-Editor-in-Chief of Food Policy.



## **Alice Pizzo**

Assistant Professor at Copenhagen Business School.

Alice Pizzo is an Assistant Professor at Copenhagen Business School. She is a microeconomist working at the intersection of behavioral and environmental economics. Her academic interests and research focus on individual decision-making and consumer behavior in the context of climate change, environmental and natural resource economics, environmental public policy, and health economics. Her work is driven by quantitative and applied econometric methods and is primarily based on primary data collected through field, online, and laboratory experiments.



## **Michael Plummer**

Eni Professor of International Economics at the European campus of the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS Europe) at Johns Hopkins University

Michael Plummer is currently the Eni Professor of International Economics at the European campus of the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS Europe) at Johns Hopkins University based in Bologna, Italy. His research focuses on international economic integration, particularly trade integration in the Asia-Pacific region. He was Director of SAIS Europe from 2014 to 2023 and Head of the Development Division of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris from 2010 to 2012, as well as a member of the Trade Policy Modelling Review Expert Panel for the UK government (2020-22). His PhD is in economics from Michigan State University.



## **Lucia A. Reisch**

Director of the El-Erian Institute for Behavioural Economics and Policy at Cambridge Judge Business School and a Professor of Behavioural Economics and Policy, University of Cambridge.

Lucia A. Reisch is the Director of the El-Erian Institute for Behavioural Economics and Policy at Cambridge Judge Business School and a Professor of Behavioural Economics and Policy, University of Cambridge. As a behavioural economist and consumer researcher, she focuses on the theory and application of behavioural insights to promote change in individuals and organisations, with an emphasis on sustainability, equity and public health. Lucia consults international organisations (FAO, OECD, UNEP, EU JRC), national governments, and municipalities on demand-side policies. She has co-authored more than 150 peer-reviewed papers and several books.



## **Franco Sassi**

Director of the Centre for Health Economics & Policy Innovation at Imperial Business School.

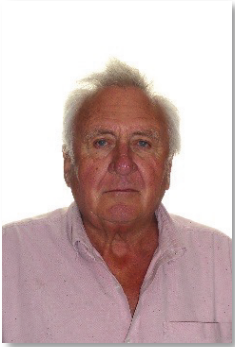
Franco Sassi holds a Chair of International Health Policy and Economics and is the Director of the Centre for Health Economics & Policy Innovation at Imperial Business School. Previously he was a Senior Economist and Head of the Economics of Public Health Programme at the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, France), and before that a Senior Lecturer in Health Policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He has held adjunct and visiting positions at universities in the US, including the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard University, the University of California at San Francisco, and Duke University — as well as at the at the Université de Montréal in Canada and at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Rome. Franco Sassi's research focuses on the economics of chronic disease prevention and health-related behaviours, with a special focus on the impact of fiscal policies on consumption behaviour. Prof. Sassi has led national and international research programmes, and his research has influenced government policies in countries across the globe. He is a member of many international committees and technical expert groups and has had a long-standing collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) in many areas of health policy. Franco Sassi has led major publications, including, among others, *Health Taxes: Policy and Practice* (World Scientific, 2022), *Tackling Harmful Use: Economics and public health policy* (OECD, 2015), *Promoting Health, preventing disease: The economic case* (OUP, 2015) and *Obesity and the Economics of Prevention: Fit not Fat* (OECD and Edward Elgar, 2010).



## **Bhavani Shankar**

Professor of Food Systems, Nutrition and Sustainability, and Co-Director of the Institute for Sustainable Food at University of Sheffield.

Bhavani Shankar is Professor of Food Systems, Nutrition and Sustainability, and Co-Director of the Institute for Sustainable Food at University of Sheffield. He is an applied economist working on research areas at the intersection of agri-food systems, nutrition and human and planetary health. His current research interests include the role of food markets in improving nutrition in low and middle income countries, inequalities in food systems and nutrition and food and nutrition policy evaluation.



## **Bruce Trail**

Professor, now Emeritus, of Food Economics and Policy at the University of Reading.

Bruce Trail is Professor, now Emeritus, of Food Economics and Policy at the University of Reading. He has researched and published widely on issues mainly concerning food choice and policy in relation to diet and health. He has led major research projects in the UK and EU including EATWELL, involving research teams throughout Europe; and led the independent panel reviewing CODEX and other international food standards for FAO/WHO. He is ex-President of the Agricultural Economics Society.



## **Matteo Vittuari**

Professor of Agricultural and Food Economics and Policy at the University of Bologna.

Matteo Vittuari is Professor of Agricultural and Food Economics and Policy at the University of Bologna, Italy, and currently holds a double appointment with ADA University, Azerbaijan, where he serves as Dean of the School of Agricultural and Food Sciences. His work focuses on transforming food systems to be more sustainable, equitable, and resilient. His research addresses food loss and waste, healthy diets, and policy design, combining behavioural economics with life-cycle thinking. He has collaborated with international organizations, contributed to major European projects such as Horizon, PRIMA and Interreg. He published widely on food sustainability and policy.



## **Giacomo Zanello**

Professor of Food Economics and Health and Head of the Department of Agri-Food Economics and Marketing at the University of Reading (UK)

Giacomo Zanello is Professor of Food Economics and Health and Head of the Department of Agri-Food Economics and Marketing at the University of Reading (UK). His research spans food systems, nutrition, and development in low- and middle-income countries, with work published in journals including World Development, Food Policy, Social Science & Medicine, and Nature Food. He Co-Chairs the Independent Expert Group of the Global Nutrition Report. He has conducted extensive field research across Asia and Africa, and has won multiple research and teaching awards, including the University of Reading's Teaching Excellence Award in 2022. Website: <https://giacomozanello.com>.

**WI-FI at SAIS Europe**

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