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## King's Water Research Group co-convenes global conference on food and water security

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A team of experts from King's College London have played a major role in delivering an international conference on food and water security in Qatar this week. The Food Security in Dry Lands (FSDL) conference has been organised in the run up to the forthcoming UN climate meeting (COP18) later this month, where 'climate-smart' agriculture is expected to be a key focus.

The King's Water Research Group have contributed to the new Doha Declaration, which states that by 2022, participating countries -Qatar, Kenya, Tanzania, Chad, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Nigeria, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia- will allocate 10 percent of their national public expenditure towards programmes to achieve food security on an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable basis.

With increasing scarcity of water due to intensive agriculture and climate disruption, and 30 percent of food production in OECD countries being thrown away instead of consumed, the task of managing food and water resources more efficiently and improving the security of supply is set to become one of the biggest challenges for policy makers in the 21st century.

The team from the King's, led by Professor Tony Allan, organised sessions on responsible direct investment in food and water covering issues of environmental sustainability, land and water rights and preparedness for climate change.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) occurs when nations that are economically rich, but poor in land and water resources, like Qatar, invest in agricultural production in countries that may be economically poor but with abundant land and water. FDI is seen as one of the strategies to increase global food security by improving the productivity of poorly yielding lands through technology and improvements in infrastructure.

Professor Allan said: 'We must not under-estimate the importance of the food supply chain, and key players in the private sector who manage the strategic resources of land and water. Farmers and all the other agents in the food-supply chain operate in a market that is blind to water's true value – even though so much water is embedded in food consumption.'

He also highlighted the dangers of some under-informed investors unwilling to recognise the painful lessons learned in regions where water had been over-allocated.

Dr Mark Mulligan from King's presented on the risks and opportunities for foreign direct investment in agriculture. He demonstrated the use of the King's WaterWorld policy support system and database for examining the opportunities for, and risks of, investments in agricultural development in a wide range of contexts globally.

The FDI sessions at the conference were co-convened by King's and the Qatar Energy and Environment Institute, with support from the Qatar National Food Security Programme. They included speakers from key investors, international organisations and academics, who have been working on the topic in the past years.

Collaborating groups at the conference included representatives from the International Land Coalition, the [International Water Management Institute](#) as well as academics from Princeton and Purdue, who provided their perspectives on FDI in agricultural land in developing countries. The session emphasised the role of small farmers, local communities and the environment in order to inform decision-makers from the Middle East about the complex nature of the topic.

Source: [King's College London](#)

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