

# LEGAL RESEARCH CHAIR IN FOOD DIVERSITY AND SECURITY

FACULTY OF LAW

## BACKGROUND

In order to ensure sustainable food and nutritional security in the present context of climate change, it is imperative that we investigate legal instruments for promoting and protecting agricultural and food diversity.

For thousands of years, the diversity in food crops and agricultural practices, coupled with local knowledge, have helped to maintain agricultural biodiversity and diversified, culturally acceptable food production systems adapted to local conditions.

However, this diversity is now being lost at an alarming rate, and this erosion will only accelerate with climate change. And because a large proportion of the food now being consumed is produced beyond national borders, the homogenization of production methods and food products available for consumption will intensify, negatively affecting the health of animals, humans and the planet as a whole.

## MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The mission of the Legal Research Chair in Food Diversity and Security (DDSA Chair) is to undertake a critical analysis of existing national and international legal instruments. It provides a space for continuous reflection on how to build laws that better protect and promote agricultural and food diversity in order to ensure sustainable food and nutritional diversity. In concrete terms, the DDSA Chair:

- > contributes to ongoing coherent reflection, in collaboration with stakeholders, on agri-food law in Quebec, Canada and internationally
- > serves as a focal point for university research and international collaborations in agri-food law
- > supports the training of a new generation of lawyers so as to remedy the present scarcity of expertise in this field
- > ensures the transfer of knowledge developed to interested publics



## INITIATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

**Contribute to the development of laws relative to sustainable food security.** By taking knowledge gained from research carried out under the first DDSA Chair (2014-2019) and transcribing this knowledge into its *Draft International Convention for the Promotion and Protection of Agricultural and Food Diversity*, the DDSA Chair will contribute to the advancement of standards outside of the World Trade Organization (WTO) relative to sustainable food security.

**Foster reflection on the impacts of climate change.** In recent years, legal systems have recognized the importance of including, as fundamental objectives, sustainable food security and sustainable agricultural and food systems as part of solutions to tackle climate change. The work of the second DDSA Chair (2019-2024) will contribute to elaborating laws that promote a constructive relationship between environmental protection and agricultural and food production.

**Promote the inclusion of world food security in trade agreements.** Efforts to relaunch multilateral negotiations within the WTO are intensifying. In such a context, it is important that international economic law favour the promotion and protection of agricultural and food diversity and include sustainable food and nutritional security as an objective.



## IMPACTS AND INFLUENCE

The DDSA Chair has distinguished itself at the local, regional and national levels, in large part thanks to its hosting of international symposia in Quebec City and its participation in numerous round table discussions with government bodies. The DDSA Chair has also established a strong international presence by developing partnerships and by organizing and participating in scientific events around the world.

Through its activities, the DDSA Chair sensitizes decision makers and representatives from the global agri-food ecosystem, providing them with knowledge on the evolution of laws and enabling them to make informed decisions that will have a positive impact on sustainable food security for both

present and future generations. In 2017, Université Laval and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) signed an agreement protocol that provided the DDSA Chair with a new platform for collaboration and diffusion of its work.

Through courses, the supervision of masters and doctoral students, participation in international conferences and numerous research activities, the DDSA Chair contributes to advancing knowledge in agri-food law and to promoting and protecting agricultural and food diversity as a means to sustainable food security.

## TOWARD AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

A number of phenomena are negatively impacting agricultural and food diversity and therefore sustainable food security, including land grabbing, climate change, loss of natural resources, concentration in national and international markets, and recent food shortages. In addition, the WTO considers agricultural and agri-food products to be merchandise, thus failing to consider non-market values associated with fundamental rights related to the environment, food security and health.

In order to meet the challenges associated with sustainable development objectives and to re-establish a balance between commercial considerations and non-market values, the DDSA Chair developed the *Draft International Convention for the Promotion and Protection of Agricultural and Food Diversity*. To draw up this draft convention, the working group:

- > surveyed more than 500 regional and international legal instruments related to agricultural and food diversity
- > conducted a legal analysis of more than 700 pages supported by relevant excerpts from these legal instruments

While continuing its legal research to elaborate better international economic laws that ensure sustainable nutrition and food security, the second DDSA Chair will also work to make key learnings from its *Draft International Convention for the Promotion and Protection of Agricultural and Food Diversity* available to principal stakeholders in the agri-food sector and to decision makers around the globe. The DDSA Chair team hopes these actors will assimilate the concepts advanced in this Convention and use them to help achieve sustainable nutrition and food security for all.

### The guiding principles behind the Draft Convention:

1. Peace and security
2. Interdependence between sustainable food and nutrition security and agricultural and food diversity
3. Respect of fundamental human rights and freedoms
4. Sovereignty
5. Non-discrimination
6. Complementarity of the diverse functions of agriculture and food
7. Respect of food cultures
8. Recognition of the diversity in agricultural and food systems
9. Sustainable rural agricultural development
10. Equity and equality between men and women
11. Availability and access to agricultural and food products
12. Protection of agricultural land and activities
13. Equal access to agricultural land, water and other natural resources
14. Responsible investment in agriculture and food systems
15. International and regional solidarity and cooperation
16. Transparency
17. Capacity building





## OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DDSA CHAIR

### Agriculture and climate change

The FAO and Quebec's Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie organized the International Symposium on Food Security and Nutrition in the Age of Climate Change, held in Quebec City on September 24 to 27, 2017. One of the goals of this symposium was to highlight the importance of food and agricultural systems in the fight against climate change, and to present concrete multi-sector solutions to address this global issue. The DDSA Chair contributed significantly to this symposium, presiding over the scientific committee and participating in various sessions during the symposium.

### Food systems

In 2015, the DDSA Chair organized, in partnership with the UNESCO Chair in World Food Systems – Montpellier SupAgro (France), the first symposium in Quebec on territorialized agri-food systems. Over 250 participants discussed issues around sustainable regional development through collaborative initiatives. At the end of symposium, participants ratified a Quebec Declaration aimed at promoting responsible and sustainable local food initiatives and the emergence of territorialized food systems.

### Rural-urban issues

The DDSA Chair contributed to drawing up UN guidelines for decision makers relative to rural-urban relations in the agri-food sector from a sustainable territorial perspective. The result was *Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development* (UN-Habitat, 2019).

### Heathy and sustainable food systems

In 2018, Université Laval had the privilege of hosting the 3rd Annual Canadian Food Law and Policy Conference. This pan-Canadian meeting brought together stakeholders in the Quebec agri-food sector and researchers, lawyers and organizations from across Canada working on issues related to Canadian agri-food law.

### Food waste

In 2018, the DDSA Chair published a joint report with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) – Canada entitled *The Impact of Food Safety Regulations and Standards on Food Loss and Waste in the Fresh Produce Sector in Canada*.

### Agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

In 2017, the DDSA Chair participated in the signing of an agreement between Université Laval and the FAO, thereby providing the Chair with a new collaboration and diffusion platform for its work.



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## STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The success of the DDSA Chair is due to a dynamic and dedicated team. The chairholder, Geneviève Parent, professor at Université Laval's Faculty of Law, is backed by a team of nine committed international researchers and lawyers, a combined force that increases the impact of all research produced tenfold. The expertise of these specialists complements that of the chairholder, acquired from over 25 years of working in national and international agri-food law aimed at ensuring sustainable food security. Geneviève Parent is a member of the French Academy of Agriculture and part-time member of the Canada Agricultural Review Tribunal. The DDSA Chair has become a key meeting point for legal experts in questions around sustainable food security.



## THE NEW GENERATION IN AGRI-FOOD LAW – IN THEIR WORDS



"The DDSA Chair was an amazing experience for me in terms of my career development because it led me here – to passing the bar and becoming a lawyer specializing in agri-food law, which is such an important field and one in dire need of legal experts."

**SOLÈNE D'AREXY**  
Graduate student, Master of Laws  
Université Laval



"Working for the DDSA Chair, I was able to put concepts that I had learned in the classroom into practice. I also learned so many new things while working on interesting projects. And I always felt like I was really helping to build better agri-food laws."

**ANTOINE PELLETIER**  
Student, Bachelor of Laws  
Université Laval



"The DDSA Chair allowed me to integrate agri-food law into a number of international development projects, an area that has been one of the Chair's greatest contributions since its inception. This experience with the DDSA Chair greatly enriched my doctoral work and helped me see the many possibilities for applying the law on the ground."

**KADER LÉONIDE MODOU**  
Graduate student, Doctor of Laws  
Université Laval

## THE DDSA CHAIR SINCE 2014 – SOME STATS



700+ students who have taken courses prepared and given by chairholder Geneviève Parent



130+ conferences in which the DDSA Chair has participated, including conferences in Costa Rica, Colombia, Italy, France, Switzerland, Spain, Mexico, Honduras, Bolivia, Paraguay, Belgium, Senegal, Benin, Morocco, England, Poland and Canada



60 scientific articles, chapters in edited books and works of general interest



4 languages of publication: French, English, Spanish and Italian



4 international symposia at Université Laval organized by the DDSA Chair



4 international summer schools on global food security issues



30+ students at the bachelors, masters, doctoral and post-doctoral levels supervised by chairholder Geneviève Parent



12 student researchers supported by scholarships from the DDSA Chair