See also **Class, Social; Government Agencies, U.S.; Poverty; School Meals; Soup Kitchens; WIC (Women, Infants, and Childrens) Program.**

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FOOD STUDIES. Although accounts of food and eating habits date to the earliest written records, the designation of more scholarly investigations of food as food studies is a modern development. In the 1990s researchers began applying this term to descriptions and analyses relying upon every conceivable method for studying the historical, cultural, behavioral, biological, and socioeconomic determinants and consequences of food production and consumption. The idea that such investigations might collectively constitute a legitimate field of study in its own right derived from earlier explorations of food practices within traditional academic disciplines. In the 1960s, for example, the folklorist Don Yoder popularized the term "foodways" to describe the entire range of food habits, behaviors, customs, and cultural practices associated with food consumption.

In the 1990s Boston University established a master's program in gastronomy focused on the cultural and culinary aspects of food consumption. In 1996 the Department of Nutrition and Food Studies at New York University began admitting students to undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs in food studies, thereby formalizing this emerging field as a state-accredited academic entity. The NYU programs emphasize the ways individuals, communities, and societies relate to food within a cultural and historical context. In this view, food studies is an umbrella term that includes foodways, gastronomy, and culinary history as well as historical, cultural, political, economic, and geographic examinations of food production and consumption. Any field defined so broadly immediately raises questions, in this case related to the scope, methods, and acceptance of food studies as a distinct academic entity.

An Inclusive, Interdisciplinary Field

Because the concept of food studies is new, scholars investigating food topics have not yet reached complete agreement on what it should and should not include. Anthropologists, folklorists, and sociologists always have examined the relationships of individuals and populations to their food. In the era of economic globalization, with its food inequities and scarcities, precarious and often tainted food supply, concerns about diet and health, and fears of genetically modified foods and food bioterrorism, food is recognized as a "lens" through which to view, explore, analyze, and interpret society in the present as well as in the past. The breadth of this approach means

that food studies can also include applied disciplines that deal with the fundamental properties of food—culinary arts, food science, and nutrition, for example—as well as food history and culinary history, agriculture and food production, and descriptive and economic analyses of food systems and the food industry.

By its very nature, food studies is interdisciplinary and must rely on methods, approaches, and themes derived from other disciplines. In this sense it is developing in much the same manner as other interdisciplinary fields, such as American studies, women's studies, and performance studies, that emerged a generation ago. Food studies may be unusual, however, in the breadth of the disciplines on which it draws. Economists, historians, psychologists, nutritionists, agronomists, geologists, geographers, archaeologists, environmental scientists, legal scholars, political scientists, and historians—culinary and otherwise—all bring distinct methods of research and analysis to bear on food themes.

Multiple Methods and Approaches

Traditional academic disciplines are often defined by the distinct methods used by scholars in conducting research. Certain areas of inquiry, for example, use surveys, participant observations, or analyses of texts, historical documents, social interactions, and self-reports. Because food studies emerged from the humanities and social sciences, researchers typically rely on ethnography, case studies, and historical investigations. Throughout the twentieth century, for example, anthropologists debated whether culture is rooted in tangible and concrete artifacts—the implements and debris of hunting, gathering, and cooking—or in ideas and belief systems. They asked why people chose certain foods and used them in certain ways. They examined how religious beliefs, practices, and rituals influenced dietary practices, and they compared those influences to the effects of the environment or evolutionary biology. Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example, used a classic anthropological approach in his study of the symbolic use of food in culture, *The Raw and the Cooked* (1979). In contrast, the anthropologist Sidney Mintz produced a quintessential example of food studies research in his book *Sweetness and Power* (1985), in which he traced the ways a single food substance, in this case sugar, transformed modern history and culture. Anthropologists have further expanded the scope of their investigations to include the nutritional implications of dietary practices.

Scholars in other fields also examine food themes from the perspectives of their traditional disciplines. Food historians investigate the ways in which foods have influenced world events in the past and present. Culinary historians focus on recipes and cooking techniques, exploring when, where, and how specific foods or ingredients might have been grown, produced, prepared, and consumed in different periods. Food sociologists focus on issues of hunger, malnutrition, and inequities of the global food supply as well as on societal determinants of diet-related conditions, such as obesity or heart disease. Psychologists often investigate how and why people make food choices or such matters as eating disorders, food phobias, and the psychological connections between eating and taste, pleasure, and disgust. Scholars trained in literature or languages examine how novels, poems, and essays are enriched with food imagery or the ways in which travel writing and memoirs use food themes to express ideas or points of view. Because food studies draws on many such disciplines, encyclopedias of food history or culture necessarily include examples of many different scholarly approaches to the study of food.

The Food Studies "Movement"

As participants in an emerging field, food studies researchers are not constrained by the methods and approaches of any one discipline, and they enjoy the freedom to study what they like in whatever way seems most appropriate. Because food studies is inherently interdisciplinary, its scholars must define their own research agendas based on elements incorporated from traditional disciplines. Because this flexibility may be perceived as unfamiliar or lacking in rigor no matter how excellent the quality of the work, the academic study of food itself, as opposed to studying food within a traditional discipline, is established in only a few universities. The field appears to be expanding, however. In the United States, culinary schools are broadening their offerings to include courses in food history and culture, and universities in France, Mexico, and Australia have established degree programs that emphasize food. To scholars writing about food, such developments constitute the food studies "movement." As further evidence for this movement, they cite the series of books on food and culture established by university presses, such as those of Columbia University, Northwestern University, and the University of California; the breadth and depth of the culinary history and food studies collections of the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College and the Fales Library at NYU; and the proliferation of encyclopedias on food history and culture, such as those cited in the bibliography.

In part, the growing acceptance and legitimacy of food studies as a discrete field reflects increasing recognition that innovative scholarship often crosses disciplinary boundaries. In the academic environment, the identification of food studies as a separate field may not matter much. The very existence of the food studies movement encourages students and faculty in traditional academic disciplines to conduct research on food themes and facilitates the publication of scholarly work related to the role of food in society, culture, and commerce.

See also **Anthropology and Food; Chef, The; Cuisine, Evolution of; Education about Food; Foodways; Gastronomy.**

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FOOD SUPPLY AND THE GLOBAL FOOD MARKET. Worldwide, the food supply available to people depends on a variety of environmental, technical, and sociopolitical factors, the relative importance of which have varied considerably in time as well as geographically. Environmental factors have governed food production and availability throughout history, and this remains so for many societies. However, in a world where food is abundant as never before, food supply is extremely vulnerable to economic and political interests, as well as technical factors, such as transportation and communications.

Food Supply through the Ages

Before the advent of agriculture and the domestication of animals (c. 10,000 B.C.E.), hunting, fishing, and gathering provided enough food for small groups of people such as bands of wanderers. Along with agriculture came a sedentary way of life, and self-sufficient agricultural settlements appeared in every region of the world. In this type of environment, food supply was direct and immediate. Careful management of produce ensured the survival of every household member until the next harvest. Except for times of warfare or environmental calamities, the balance between food demand and food supply remained fairly stable. Though hunting and gathering societies are almost extinct today, agricultural villages still endure in many parts of the world.

As some of these villages grew into towns, however, things began to change. Societies became more complex as certain groups of people ceased to be directly involved in the production of food. Food supply and distribution became dependent on an increasingly complex set of relations among groups of different professions and ranks. Surplus food (mainly grains) was traded with neighboring settlements. Concentrated in a few hands, food became a means to political power.

The growth of empires is associated with the emergence of a professional specialist, the merchant, who ventured into new territories exchanging food and other goods across borders, often between far-off places. Food began to be regarded as a commodity subject to the rationale of profit, and it eventually became the responsibility of the state to ensure an adequate food supply for its citizens.

The Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth century was also an agricultural revolution that dramatically changed the way food was to be produced, distributed, and used in most of the world. Farming, fishing, and other food-production activities became large-scale enterprises, organized according to the principles of maximum productivity and maximum profit. Capital-intensive agriculture produced surpluses of a magnitude never before possible. The modernization of transport and communications, and the emergence of food-processing and food-packaging industries, made it possible to extend food trade on a global scale. In urban centers, supermarkets can offer not only frozen and packaged food, but also fresh produce year-round from all over the world. For some this increased food supply has created a sense of plenty, albeit a localized and exclusive one.

Food Supply as a Political Weapon

In the twentieth century, food supply came under the rules of a new political and economic order. Large food stocks have proved to be one of the main geopolitical assets of rich nations. Most affluent countries are or have been large exporters of food, and they control the global food market to their advantage. Food prices are set at the major stock exchange institutions in North America, Europe, and Japan. In competing for the hegemony of the global food market, the United States, the world's main food exporter, has been engaged in "food wars" with Japan and the European Union. International organizations, such as the recently formed WTO (World Trade Organization), have been created to defuse these conflicts, as well as to balance the "market distortions" that affect less powerful nations.

The global food market is dominated by the most affluent countries, which, on average, have controlled almost 70 percent of the total value of imports and over 62 percent of the total value of exports of all agricultural products in the world since 1961 (see Table 1). During the last quarter of the twentieth century, these countries have been reducing the value of their imports while expanding the value of their exports. Food imports by these countries typically concentrate on specialized agricultural items, such as tropical fruits and selected vegetables, as well as coffee, tobacco, sugar, and tea, none of which is a staple in its place of origin. In order to meet the domestic demand for staples, many of the exporting countries of such products have to import large quantities of basic staples in exchange. From 1961 to 2000, the countries of Africa and Latin America increased more than eight times their imports of cereals, those of Asia more than four times, and those of Oceania more than five times.