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TRADE AND FOOD SECURITY THREATENED BY NATIONAL SECURITY POLICIES

Security policies responding to geopolitics, and populist responses to economic inequality are the biggest risks to the global trading system that ensures food gets to where it's needed. Economic research has to shift from how to set up markets to solve allocation problems, to focus on improving political responses for successful solutions.

These issues will be the focus of the Keith Campbell Distinguished Lecture by Dr Jenny Gordon, Honorary Professor at the Centre for Social Research and Methods, ANU at the Australasian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES) Conference, being held from 6-9 February. AARES is the pre-eminent society promoting research relevant to Australasia in agricultural, environmental, food, and resource economics and agribusiness. The conference theme is *Grand Challenges at the Frontier of Applied Economics*.

"While there is no good reason for Australians to experience food insecurity, there are growing risks to food security for some countries in our region and across the world, which should be of concern," said Dr Gordon, who is non-resident fellow at the Lowy Institute, one of Australia's leading think tanks on foreign policy.

"Australia plays an important role as a food producer, but our ability to reduce global food insecurity depends on trade. Yet trade has flatlined as risks to the global trading system have risen. Some risks stem from climate change, with shifts in where food can be grown, and rising rates of natural disasters. But the biggest near-term risks are from the growth in national security related policies," she said.

"From China's use of trade sanctions on products like barley and wine, to the pandemic supply chain disruptions, to further disruptions from the war in Ukraine and more recently in Gaza, risks to agricultural industries are rising. Increasing concerns about security and rising populist sentiment are fuelling protectionism, that ironically further undermine stability."

"The economic and social costs of security policies mean there are no easy answers to finding the right balance between managing a security risk and creating other risks – including those that can impact on long term security," she said.

"We need research to help us avoid negative impacts of security policies on relationships between nations and between people within those nations. It is the quality of these relationships that will ultimately determine our security," she concluded.

In addition to distinguished [invited speakers](#), there are almost 200 contributed papers across a broad range of energy, agriculture, development and environment issues. The full and searchable program is available [here](#).