Executive Summary

**Food and Foreign Policy:** Options for the UAE and Other Import-Dependent Countries

Dr Mari Luomi, March 2017

- In the 21st century, **food has risen to become an important area of foreign policy**, prompted by global population growth, limited scope for agricultural expansion, concentration of food exporters and environmental change. These drivers put pressures on global food markets, on which a number of countries depend.

- Similarly to many of its neighbouring countries, the United Arab Emirates can be described as a high-income developing country that is dependent on food imports. It relies heavily on a trade-based approach to food security, which is buttressed by oil income-enabled fiscal reserves. **For import-dependent countries like the UAE, food security policies need to have a strong focus on the external, alongside the domestic, side.** Domestic production, even if socially and psychologically important, equates to only a tenth of the country’s food supply.

- **The best-known food security policy options in the external environment include foreign investments, preferential trade agreements, strategic reserves and measures to secure vital trade routes.**

- There are, however **other options**. This working paper identifies the following ones:

  (i) Promoting an **international regulatory environment** that is favourable to a country’s food security interests;

  (ii) Supporting **regional cooperation** on food security;

  (iii) Managing **bilateral ties** with a country’s export partners through **balancing trade** and **diversifying the number of partners**, including through agro-investments; and

  (iv) Taking a **more strategic foreign policy approach** to food security. Such an approach would conceive of food trade and investments, and food in development cooperation, as part of a **broader foreign policy framework** that is segmented by regions and countries.

- **Foreign policy can play a role in supporting a country’s food security strategy.** Equally, international food trade, food investments and food-related development assistance can **support a variety of other domestic and foreign policy goals**, including economic growth and diversification, and a stable regional environment. Such an approach should be underpinned by a broad, unified and coherent national food governance model and policy.