FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The global financial crisis was a product of the affluent West, but its effects have been felt the hardest in developing countries. Since 2008 the number of undernourished people in the world has risen by 115 million – including more than 30 million in India.

Associate Professor Bill Pritchard, an economic geographer at the University of Sydney, is looking at the reasons behind this food security calamity by collaborating with researchers from Australia and India to survey Indian families and track their diets.

Professor Pritchard believes that the global food crisis can be explained using an approach which focuses on people’s individual circumstances. He says: “Rather than asking how much food is available, we should be asking how people gain access to food.”

Funded by the Australian Research Council, the project gathers data about each person’s body mass index, food intake and occupation. Combined with qualitative questions about satisfaction levels, the research will provide policy-makers with practical insights into people’s food needs.

Professor Pritchard hopes his findings will provide the Indian government with useful information when it drafts new legislation to remedy its hunger crisis. “Through producing research that people can trust,” he says, “we can start to change the world. I’m an internationalist at heart and I believe we can all work together.”