

Call for Papers

Human Rights and the Digitalization of Food Systems

22–23 October 2026

Rome, Italy

The expansion of networked digital technologies and introduction of artificial intelligence is disrupting food systems globally. Technology developers promise that new agricultural technologies—ranging from autonomous tractors to mobile phone-based digital advisory services—will enable more efficient and sustainable food systems through predictive analysis and new information flows. Yet, like previous waves of technological innovation, these technologies are poised to transform the social, economic and ecological relations of food production and consumption. While researchers and civil society advocates have pointed out multiple flaws and risks associated with this new agricultural paradigm, regulatory efforts to govern such technologies and protect human rights remain nascent.

This workshop will explore human rights-based approaches to the digitalization of food systems. We are interested in submissions that analyze the impact of digital agricultural technologies on the human right to food—particularly the rights of women, small-scale food producers, peasants, Indigenous peoples, food chain workers, low-income consumers, migrants, refugees, people living in conflict zones and other populations depending on humanitarian aid. Studies may range from community case studies to analyses at national, regional and transnational levels. We particularly encourage contributions that take an intersectional approach and examine the human rights of marginalized identities and communities, as well as rural constituencies whose rights have been underrepresented in discussions of digital food systems, including fisherfolk and pastoralists.

The two-day, hybrid workshop will serve a dual purpose: as a research seminar organized by the Data for Sustainable and Equitable Digital Food Systems ([DigiFood](#)) [Research Project](#) and as part of a broader consultation process conducted by the [UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food](#).

The Special Rapporteur has decided to dedicate one of her upcoming thematic reports to the subject of interlinkages between science, technology, traditional knowledge and food systems. In preparation, the Special Rapporteur will conduct extensive written and oral consultations on the subject, one of which will be this workshop where the Special Rapporteur will be present in person. The findings and results of these consultations will feed into her thematic report to the Human Rights Council, to be presented in March 2027.

Limited funding is available for in-person participation through the ERC-funded [DigiFood Project](#). Participants will be invited to contribute to a collective academic publication after the event.

Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words to Matthew Canfield (m.c.canfield@law.leidenuniv.nl) and Daniel Bertram (d.a.bertram@law.leidenuniv.nl) by 19 July. Draft papers do not need to be circulated prior to the meeting. In your submission, please indicate whether you would prefer to attend in-person or online, and if you require funding to participate in-person.

