



WORLD FOOD SECURITY: CAN PRIVATE SECTOR R&D FEED THE POOR?

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MAXIMIZING MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOUTH EAST ASIA'S FARMERS

South-east Asian smallholder farmers face many challenges as they try to transition to a more market-orientated approach but the increasing urbanisation and the globalisation of food production are creating new opportunities for them.

This was the message given by Peter Horne - Research Program Manager (Livestock Production Systems) Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) at the 2009 Crawford Fund International Conference "World Food Security: Can Private Sector R&D Feed the Poor?" in Parliament House Canberra on 27-28 October.

Speakers including senior Federal politicians, senior representatives from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The UN World Food Program, A Green Revolution in Africa, Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, DuPont and Monsanto, addressed the intersecting roles of the private, not for profit and public sectors in global food security and how to get the private sector better engaged for the benefit of the rural poor.

In welcoming delegates to the event, The Hon Neil Andrew AO, chairman of the Crawford Fund, noted that while some technologies, such as the mobile phone, flourish in the developing world, desperately needed agricultural technologies don't find their way to the countries that need them.

Mr Horne told the conference how the world's population is estimated to peak at around 9 billion in 2050, with almost half of the increase from 2009 (3 billion) occurring in Asia.

"This will require a doubling of food production on a declining land area and natural resource base and in the context of increasing climate variability. At the same time, however, increasing urbanisation and the globalisation of food production are creating new opportunities for smallholder farmers in Asia to make a transition from subsistence agriculture to more-specialised production systems linked to commercialised food production systems," he said.

"As a result of the development of the cassava industry in Vietnam and Thailand, for example, thousands of smallholder farmers are now selling to decentralised starch factories. While in Indonesia, hundreds of thousands of smallholder cocoa growers are now linked to the global cocoa market."

Dr Horne, who spent more than 20 years in Asia involved in research-for-development with a particular focus on forages and livestock systems, said that while the focus is often on linking farmers to global markets, local and regional markets often provide immediate opportunities, especially to smallholders in remoter areas.

"A good example is the raising of livestock, which in many countries of the region can be sold in local markets at prices per kg up to twice those in Australia," he said.

Mr Horne believes that in order to drive market transition, increased investment in more efficient and robust agricultural production technologies is needed as well as a greater focus on enabling supply chain opportunities for smallholder farmers.

“In most countries, government extension services have been unable to engage effectively with commercial supply chains. Increasingly, the private sector is investing in agricultural research and development with large potential benefits for smallholder producers.”

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Speakers at this year's Crawford Fund annual event include:

- *The Hon Stephen Smith MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs opening the event;*
- *The Hon Bob McMullan MP, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance making the inaugural Sir John Crawford Memorial Address;*
- *Ms Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the World Food Program;*
- *Dr Prabhu Pingali of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation;*
- *Dr Marco Ferroni, Executive Director, Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture;*
- *Dr Namanga Ngongi , President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa;*
- *Dr Bill Niebur, DuPont Vice President, Crop Genetics Research and Development*
- *Ms Janice Armstrong from Monsanto Company*
- *Professor Philip Pardey, an internationally renowned Australian agricultural economist*
- *Leaders from public good international and Australian agricultural research centres*

Further press [materials](#) and [background](#) on website or by contacting Cathy Reade, 0413575934

The Crawford Fund's mission is to increase Australia's engagement in international agricultural research, development and education for the benefit of developing countries and Australia.

The Crawford Fund wishes to thank its supporters for the event including:

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