



CONFERENCE 2007

BIOFUELS, ENERGY AND AGRICULTURE: Powering Towards or Away From Food Security?

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ATSE CRAWFORD FUND

Welcome to the ATSE Crawford Fund's 2007 conference. By the response to this year's topic, we seem to have once again touched on an issue in international agricultural research and development that is of broad interest and some concern.

At *Biofuels, Energy and Agriculture: Powering Towards or Away From Food Security?* we hope to alert the Australian community to the range of issues for developing countries and for Australia due to the growing interest in biofuels.

Obviously we all want to develop new forms of energy for transport to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and biofuels also offer another source of income for farmers worldwide so that it can be argued that biofuels are a positive development. And today we'll hear about some very positive developments in the next generation of biofuels technologies.

But as I sit to write this letter, there are media reports of UN warnings that biofuel demand is soaking up grain production and raising food prices to the point where the UN World Food Programme could be forced to cut its reach in famine relief in Africa. And that food-price inflation or so called ag-flation, due to the biofuel boom, has pushed up the cost of staples in places like Mexico where it's reported that rocketing tortilla prices have sparked angry protests. Closer to home, reports that while Indonesia – a palm oil producer - stands to gain from palm oil price hikes due to increasing demand for palm oil in climate-change aware Europe, the rise has also pushed up local cooking oil prices by about a third, making such oil unaffordable for millions of ordinary Indonesians. And a recent media report in Australia suggested that the demand for agricultural land and products to meet demand for first generation biofuel technologies could lead to inflation, driving up housing interest rates for everyone.

These range of concerns support the case for more international agricultural research, this time to mitigate the downsides to the biofuels bonanza and identify options for the sustainable production and use of biofuels for developing and developed countries alike.

There is plenty of room for vigorous debate and conflicting opinions, and our speakers come with a wide range of views and backgrounds. We are aiming to provide an even-handed and balanced discussion of the issues.

We hope that you will enjoy the dialogue and contribute to the discussion.

The Hon Neil Andrew
Chairman, The ATSE Crawford Fund

The ATSE Crawford Fund wishes to thank the sponsors for this event, including:
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