



MEDIA RELEASE

THE ATSE CRAWFORD FUND
Supporting International Agricultural Research

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INDEPENDENT AUSTRALIAN REVIEW OF RISING WORLD FOOD PRICES ANNOUNCED

An eminent group of Australians with international experience in agriculture and development have formed a national task force on rising world food prices and food shortages. The group will address the causes and impacts of the crisis and identify policy options for governments. The formation of the task force by the non government ATSE Crawford Fund has been welcomed by the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, The Hon Bob McMullan.

“There have been many analyses of issues relating to rising world food prices from a variety of respected international and national sources, but the Crawford Fund World Food Price Task Force is undertaking a review that will draw these together, test them for their rigor and relevance to Australia and its region, and present recommendations to governments,” said The Hon Neil Andrew, Chair of the Crawford Fund, announcing the formation of the Crawford Fund World Food Price Task Force today (Wednesday, 3 June).

“The Australian government is, of course, developing policies and initiatives through its various official agencies including AusAID and ACIAR. The Crawford Fund task force will provide an independent perspective.”

“The task force will translate the global issues and prescriptions into a set of specific proposals that might be actionable in an Australian context, especially in terms of the Australian aid program.”

“Whilst the task force will work closely with government agencies, its views and recommendations will be formulated independently.”

The formation of the task force follows record food and grain prices, the rush to develop biofuels, social tensions caused by the widening gap between rural and urban populations in Asia and Africa and recent statements by Hon Bob McMullan, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, that the emerging issue of the price of food is one of the three big recent trends that would influence the future shape of the Australian aid program.

The formation of the task force has been welcomed by The Hon Bob McMullan, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, as an independent source of information relevant to Australia on the causes of rising world food prices, their impact on the world's impoverished people, and policy options open to the Australian government to help address both the causes and impacts.

Leader of the task force is Mr JC Ingram AO, a former head of AusAID and Executive Director of the UN's World Food Program.

“The task force will focus on what appears to be a steady, long-term trend increase in the price of food as a result of imbalances in supply and demand,” said Mr Ingram.

“Whilst the task force will look at the broad context which includes issues of trade and protectionism, it is important to be practical and realistic.”

“In particular, we will seek to identify how development assistance programs can encourage increased productivity of agricultural land in developing countries, remove specific constraints to the growth in food production, and what role Australia may play in these efforts.”

In addition to Mr Jim Ingram, leader of the task force, and Dr Denis Blight, Executive Director of the Crawford Fund who is secretary of the task force, members include:

- The Hon. John Anderson, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Primary Industries
- Professor Kym Anderson, internationally respected economist and co-author of the 2008 World Development Report
- Dr Terry Enright, former chair of the Grains Research and Development Corporation and a farmer from Western Australia
- Dr Tony Fischer, internationally renowned wheat cropping scientist
- Dr Tony Gregson, Chairman of the Molecular Plant Breeding CRC; Plant Health Australia, and of Bioversity International. Dr Gregson is also a farmer, from Victoria
- Dr Gabrielle Persley, international advisor on biotechnology-related matters and advisor to the Director General of the International Livestock Research Institute
- Dr Bruce Standen, agricultural economist specializing in livestock production, marketing and international trade
- Professor Beth Woods, chair of the Board of the International Rice Research Institute.

Further information: Cathy Reade, Coordinator Public Awareness, Crawford Fund, 0413 575 934. Short bio statements on members available on request.

The ATSE Crawford Fund is an NGO that works to raise awareness of the benefits to developing countries and to Australia from international agricultural research (IAR) and development. It is named after Sir John Crawford, a key architect of Australia's Post-War growth and a passionate supporter of IAR.