



Scholar Reflections from...

South Australia

2019 Crawford Fund Annual Conference



Four South Australian scholars attended the 2019 Crawford Fund conference supported by our SA Committee.

Our competitive Conference **Scholarships** are offered to young people with a genuine interest in international agricultural research and development to attend the conference and participate in a special set of activities that we have developed since the program commenced in 2010.

Once again, we would like to thank our wonderful mentors, mentioned alongside the scholar they supported, who volunteer their time and offer valuable guidance, support and insights to the scholars throughout the conference.

SA COMMITTEE SPONSORED SCHOLARS

Tara Garrard, *South Australian Research and Development Institute*

Mentor: Lester Burgess, *NSW Crawford Fund Committee*

As an early career researcher, it is very easy to become focussed on your particular area of research and specialisation without considering the global picture. The 2019 Crawford Fund Conference “Weathering the ‘Perfect Storm’: Addressing the Agriculture, Energy, Water, Climate Change Nexus” provided valuable insight into the issues being faced globally in relation to climate change and agriculture. I came away feeling inspired after listening to talks that not only outlined where the areas of concern are, but also how we are moving forward and tackling these issues. Dr Di Mayberry discussed her research into innovative solutions to reduce emissions from red meat production, Marc Noyce spelled out a vision to turn our cement jungles green and Sarah Barker provided an insight into the changes that are already taking place in the corporate world to provide financial infrastructure for our changing climate. This pieced together a picture of how different industries and communities are making considerable progress towards food, water and energy production to weather the ‘Perfect Storm’.

The scholar program provided excellent networking opportunities throughout the scholar days and the conference itself. Having a mentor was instrumental in the networking being successful as they were able to introduce the mentees to key people within their networks who we would not have had the opportunity to meet otherwise. In addition to this, the coordinated networking activities and events were meticulously planned to generate authentic and insightful discussions. Meeting my mentor Lester Burgess was a highlight of the program for me as he has an extensive amount of knowledge and experience in my field of plant pathology. His passion and enthusiasm for his work is contagious and has inspired me to volunteer overseas in the future. I was very grateful for the wisdom and knowledge he imparted to me through stories of his travel. It was so encouraging to hear stories of research so closely linked with disease management and community engagement.

I have parted from the scholar program with a fresh perspective, a deeper understanding and more globally focussed research goals. In addition, I have met a broad range of people at all stages of their careers from students and early career researchers to executives and highly distinguished professors to add to my growing list of contacts, mentors and collaborators to help guide me in my career pathway. I would like to thank the Crawford Fund for allowing me to have this experience that has provided me with a diverse range of tools I will carry with me into the ‘Perfect Storm’.

Natasha Hallett, *University of Adelaide*

Mentor: John Radcliffe, *SA Crawford Fund Committee*

This year I was grateful enough to be able to attend this year’s Crawford Fund conference and be given the opportunity to participate in the scholar’s program. This year’s topic was ‘Weathering the ‘Perfect Storm’: Addressing the Agriculture, Energy, Water, Climate Change Nexus’ which was an incredibly intriguing topic to me as I am a Bachelor of Agricultural Science student. I wanted to gain a further understanding in these areas and comprehend how the agricultural industry will need to adapt to be able to combat the worlds ever-changing climate. Through attending the conference, my knowledge of the ‘Perfect Storm’ was amplified and I can now



comprehend the issues which are not only being faced within Australia but also globally, especially with those in developing countries.

There were two speakers in the conference which intrigued me greatly and they were Professor Sir Charles Godfray and Ms Sarah Barker who gave two new insights into how climate change is affecting all industries and not just the agricultural industry.

Professor Sir Charles Godfrey discussed the three waves of Malthusian pessimism which addressed the industrial revolution of the 1790's, the green revolution of the 1960's and 70's and the weathering of the 'Perfect Storm' in the present. He discussed the issues of agricultural greenhouse emissions with over 50% of it being animal products and how the largest growth rates are within developing countries. His main point was that yes, the 'Perfect Storm' is on track to occur, but he was confident in our ability to overcome the issues which we will face with the ultimate discussion being on the topic of what if we all ate healthily? And the benefits which this will have on the world. Finding out something as simple as changing our diets and eating according to what our environment can give instead of what we want was extremely intriguing to me and, although I already understood that changing our diets can help to feed those in developing countries who are malnourished, I did not understand the larger picture in which changing our diets can influence the effects that climate change has on our industry.

Ms Sarah Barker offered an alternative perspective on the climate change issue at hand. It started to open my eyes up to how the business sector is currently handling climate change. It was a surprise for me to find out that businesses are considering the effect of climate change on the environment and that they understand the effects it has on food supply. The biggest take home message that I got from her talk was the influence which stakeholders have over many industries. Finding out that many oil and plastic companies are struggling to hire graduates due to the job description going against their morals had me sitting up straighter in my seat and becoming fully aware of how my generation is influencing businesses to become cleaner and more renewable.

My participation in the Crawford Fund conference has really allowed me to open my eyes to new channels which I would like to pursue after I finish my Bachelor's Degree. It has given me a newfound knowledge and a chance to network with like-minded people and I am thankful for the opportunity given.

Anh Duc Nguyen, *Centre for Global Food and Resources, The University of Adelaide*

Mentor: Rohan Yargop, *Centre for Global Food and Resources, The University of Adelaide*

The inspiration for this year's Crawford Fund Conference, "Weathering the Perfect Storm" was Sir John Beddington's prediction of a perfect storm a decade ago. I was honoured to be one of the young scholars chosen from across Australia to attend the conference. Through a series of conference, training, and networking activities, I have gained a valuable knowledge, skills, and experience. More importantly, I have also developed my networking with other scholars, senior scientists and researchers from Australian and international research agencies, and other key stakeholders.

This year the conference focused on the significant impacts of climate change on agriculture, energy, and water systems and how different governments, research agencies, industries, and farmers have been trying to resolve the problems. Although the 'Perfect Storm' was still on track to happen according to Sir Charles Godfray, we can still make changes to address the coming challenges. The key messages from the invited speakers that impressed me most were that "climate has changed" and "farming as we know it will not be possible under the current system". Yet, I believe that our agricultural system can produce enough nutritious food, we must consider the agriculture food nutrition human health planetary model as a critical point in decision-making. Also, we should keep in mind that climate change has substantial impacts on 500 million smallholder farmers, mostly in developing countries. Thus, it is important to make necessary transformational changes but we must ensure that no one is left behind.

Beside the one-day conference, all young scholars had privilege to participate in a series of mentoring and networking activities, which I believe that it is a distinct feature only found in the Crawford Fund Conference but not other conferences. Through the conference, I was able to meet many interesting people whom I have a lot of respect and know them by their great work. Their life and work have inspired me to keep faith in continuing my career pathway, and to think of my future contribution in not just Vietnam, but other developing countries. I have also learnt that we can improve the efficiency of international agricultural research and development projects by working together closely as one team and sharing our knowledge and experience to gain more valuable insights of the current issues.

Through this piece of my personal reflection, I strongly encourage other young fellows to think of the Crawford Fund Conference as an important event that they should attend at least once. I am sure that there are many



other benefits of the conference that I have not mentioned yet, and hopefully you, the future reader of my reflection, will find out by yourself.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to the Crawford Fund, sponsors, speakers and scholars for this wonderful experience that offered me a lot to learn, to think about, and to enjoy. Also, a big thank to RAID for organising the RAID networking trivia night and the Crawford Fund Scholar day, they are such beautiful memories that I will never forget.

Joshua Philp, *University of Adelaide*
Mentor: Dave McGill, *University of Melbourne*

I am grateful to the Crawford Fund South Australia Committee for their support to attend the 2019 Annual Conference as a Conference Scholar. It has been an informative and beneficial experience that I hope I can repay by furthering the Crawford Fund's aims of improving food security in my role as an agricultural scientist.

The conference topic, "Addressing the Agriculture, Energy, Water, Climate Change Nexus" was especially relevant to my interest in improving pasture production by smallholder livestock farmers in developing economies. The role of ruminant livestock in a future of increased food production and reduced greenhouse gas emissions is controversial, and the presentations during the conference included differing expert opinions. Several presenters proposed that the solution to the high methane emissions by ruminant livestock production was to vary human diets, thereby reducing demand and eventually production. In my own experience I have noticed a matching shift in community expectations towards reduced livestock production, especially in Australia, driven by environmental and ethical concerns. Conversely, grazing livestock is often the only source of income and nutrition available from marginal lands, and a pathway for the rural poor to escape poverty. Furthermore, presenters at the conference, discussed emerging technologies that reduce enteric methane production by ruminants, and there is also tremendous potential for carbon to be sequestered deep in soil by improved pastures that support ruminant livestock. It was valuable to mingle with some of the experts whose research and understanding may shape the future of my profession. It was also fascinating to hear talks on topics that I was less familiar with.

Regarding the experiences of being a Crawford Fund Conference Scholars specifically, it was really great to meet so many other passionate and talented people from the different states. The pairing of Conference Scholars with a mentor was very effective in terms of ensuring networking opportunities for the Scholars were not wasted. I really valued having someone at the conference who could assist me with introductions and help me identify delegates who I only knew by name. Perhaps irrationally, given how friendly everyone there was, it is difficult for me to approach people I don't know, especially when they are already in a conversation, but at a conference you will rarely catch someone by themselves. In situations like this I really valued having David's help, especially since he knew almost everyone there.

