



THE CRAWFORD FUND
For a Food Secure World

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MEDIA RELEASE

DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD – National task force on aid for food security

12 MARCH 2013

At a time when there is pressure on and within the aid budget, eminent scientists, policy makers, farmers and development specialists will be approached for their input to a national task force to report on benefits to Australia from development-assistance funded agricultural research for food security.

“The Crawford Fund believes that Australian development assistance programs in agriculture and related sectors should retain their primary purpose of assisting economic and social development in developing countries, in accordance with Australia’s national interests,” said Dr Eric Craswell, the project leader.

“However, since being set up over 25 years ago, the Fund has also emphasised the fact that investment in agricultural research for development and food security can also deliver substantial direct and indirect benefits to Australia, its States and Territories, in effect *‘doing well by doing good.’*”

“The task force will make an assessment of a range of published studies of broad issues around investments in agricultural research for development to build a comprehensive picture of the costs and benefits and their distribution.”

Former Speaker of the House of Representatives and former chair of the Crawford Fund, The Hon Neil Andrew AO, will lead the Task Force. He said “We will give special attention to assessing the impact of research on biosecurity as well as international scientific exchanges. For example, our task in combating the incursion to Australia of exotic diseases such as citrus greening, which has damaged fruit production in most Asian countries, is made much easier through research collaboration with Asian scientists to improve detection.”

“We hope the findings will provide evidence-based policy advice to guide investments in agricultural research and training in the future and also broaden the appreciation of the impact of R&D funding for developing countries and for Australia – our economy, our security, our environment, our farmers, our scientists, and our international relations.”

The new task force follows a 2008 Crawford Fund task force which focused national debate around rising world food prices and food shortages – a debate which continues today.

The task force will include Mr Terry Enright, farmer and former chair of the Grains Research and Development Corporation; Dr Tony Gregson, who has an extensive science and corporate research management background including board positions on a range of international agricultural research centres; Ms Cathy McGowan, rural consultant and academic; and Prof John Mullen, a distinguished fellow of the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society from Charles Sturt University.

Dr Craswell noted that following initial discussions with the National Farmers Federation, which has recently called for an expansion in spending on agricultural research, the task force plans to consult widely with the domestic and international agricultural research and extension communities as well as with development specialists at AusAID and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research.

An initial draft report is expected by June 2013 with a final report being published later this year. Further information, including Terms of Reference, is at www.crawfordfund.org