

CRAWFORD FUND 2014 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ETHICS, EFFICIENCY AND FOOD SECURITY: Feeding The 9 Billion, Well



CONFERENCE SUMMARY

DG Blight AO FRSA
Chief Executive

How might the world be fed, well, in an efficient and ethical way with a growing population demanding a more diversified diet, a declining resource base, slowing productivity growth and neglect of many traditional foods and indigenous vegetables? This was the conundrum that focused minds at our 2014 Parliamentary Conference.

In the following piece, Dr Denis Blight, the Fund's Chief Executive, presents the series of key themes that were highlighted through the thought-provoking addresses on our program, and some of the issues relating to each. A longer summary and synthesis will be provided in the conference proceedings:

Agriculture in Aid

Agriculture has re-emerged as a key tenant in the Australian aid strategy and in the priorities of other international aid programs. Minister Julie Bishop confirmed that Australia is prepared to play its role with a renewed priority for agriculture in our aid program, support for an open trade and investment environment (reflected in an emphasis on 'aid for trade' and 'economic diplomacy') and support for high impact research investments.

There is bipartisan support for the view that Australia cannot be research isolationists nor can we ignore the vast store of knowledge held globally. It is in our interests to be a good neighbour, supporting research for the global public good and for the well-being of the human race that depends on agriculture for stable civil societies.



The Hon Julie Bishop MP opened the conference with her address "Australia's leadership role: using aid to tackle intractable problems & catalyse long term solutions"

The Role of Women



Professor Catherine Bertini delivered the Sir John Crawford memorial address and highlighted the need to invest in women

There is no arguing that women are pivotal in agriculture. They are at the core of the work force, even if they are compelled, as conveyed in one dramatic image evoked in Catherine Bertini's Sir John Crawford memorial address, to use short hoes so they can crouch to weed in the field to keep safe a child on their back.

We heard from a range of speakers that:

- inequitable treatment of women is economically inefficient;
- empowered and educated women have lower fertility rates;
- women's groups and community organisations create awareness of the need for training in schools;
- health clinics can target women's reproductive health concerns; and
- policy makers should be made accountable for gender equity.

Nutritional Security

More than 2 billion people suffer micronutrient deficiencies and the incidence of being overweight and obese has doubled in the last decade, reaching 900,000. This exceeds the number of people in the developing world who are chronically hungry.

Some of the issues and solutions suggested were:

- good nutrition is an economic issue with an estimated three percent loss to economic growth due to under-nutrition and obesity.
- nutritional security needs to be better-addressed in agricultural research and development programs.
- plant breeding might pay more attention to nutritional traits and to the impact that social attitudes have on consumption patterns.
- poorly educated people may not be able to read nutritional information on food packaging and might be better guided by package illustrations.
- changes in lifestyle in emerging economies may lead to more processed, and less nutritious, food consumption.
- closer liaison between agriculture and health ministries, and accountability for nutritional as well as production outcomes, might help, and
- more balanced research investment should embrace nutrition, and cut across disciplines and landscapes.



Dr Shenggen Fan, Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute spoke on the economic aspects of food insecurity and undernutrition



Population, Development and Food Security

Population, development and food security issues intertwine but the different sectors have not traditionally worked well together, and should. Global population will reach 9.6 billion by 2050 if fertility rates continue to decline or 10.9 billion if they don't. A population increase of 30 per cent will double the world's food needs. Bringing fertility rates down in food insecure countries may be crucial but we should now be negotiating universal development goals for wealthy and developing nations.



Dr Laurent Zessler, United Nations Population Fund, presented key trends and changing dynamics of food security and population growth, and how they are connected

National and Global Self Sufficiency and Competition for Resources

A change in aspirations from national self-sufficiency in food production to global self sufficiency is needed. Whilst an ambition for self sufficiency in the main food grains is deeply embedded, there are encouraging signs of change as policy capability in developing countries increases and reliance on subsidy and trade restrictions decreases worldwide. More efficient food production will lessen the net impact on the globe's scarce natural resources.

Competition for resources was discussed in the areas of food for people, feed for animals and food stocks for energy:

- for every one kilo of meat consumed, demand for feed grows by 10 kilos, intensifying pressure on crop and forestry lands and adding to greenhouse gas emissions;
- some 30 per cent of American corn is converted into biofuels. Should countries in Asia devote arable land to animal production and to biomass for energy generation?
- reforms appear to be tending to a focus on food crop production through intensified systems, whilst it is hoped that research and development will enable utilisation of poorer land to deliver multiple purpose crops and the utilisation of by products for energy and animal feed.

Food Waste

Wasted food in 'our broken food system' is wasted energy and lost natural resources. In North America and Europe 95 to 115 kilos of food per person is lost annually compared to 6 to 11 kilos per capita in Africa, South and South East Asia. In Australia, average household waste is estimated at \$1000 per household per year. Losses in developing countries are mostly due to pests and diseases and infrastructure weaknesses in the supply chain. In Africa, losses reach 10 to 20 percent prior to processing. If the loss was eliminated and waste avoided, 44 million people could be fed.



Climate-Smart Agriculture



Ms Rachel Kyte, World Bank Group Vice President and Special Envoy for Climate Change, and CGIAR Fund Council Chair discussed "climate smart agriculture"

Climate change is a 'threat intensifier.' Agriculture and land use patterns must change from being part of the problem to being part of the solution through:

- an integrated holistic approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- producing more food with fewer resources
- increasing resilience of farmers, and
- reducing green house gas emissions for each kilo of food produced.

Climate smart agriculture offers a 'triple win' through increased productivity, improved resilience and greater climate change mitigation.

Markets, Trade and Investment

Markets, trade and investment are central to ethical and efficient solutions to food insecurity. 'Aid for trade' policies should encourage a more open global trading system; lifting of export bans is good economics; improved land title laws, smallholder (and especially women) friendly financial services, some form of market-based price stability, and social protection programs are all policy options to be explored.

Demand for dairy and meat is on an upward trend especially in Asia. Some countries will seek to enhance their own livestock production through pasture improvement and animal breeding but also continue to rely on imports, including of live cattle.

Australia has a high stake in free trade and it is also in a position to contribute to global food security through its research skills and experience, whether through aid or trade.

Directly, Australia contributes to the diets of some 60 million people. Through the delivery of research, technical and education services, and through aid and trade can contribute to the diets of around 400 million, but could reach more. Asia already dominates Australia's agricultural exports but Australia delivers only 6 per cent of the region's food imports and the rate of growth is slower than competitors - Australia faces tough competition.



Speaking about agriculture restructuring for higher competitiveness and food security was Dr Nguyen Van Bo, President, Vietnamese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and ACIAR Policy Advisory Council member



Suggested Responses

Policy change, better governance and more research, education and training could be at the centre of responses in each of these highlighted areas.

The current global governance system was set up in the mid-1940s/ 50s. The world has changed and G20 countries therefore need to ensure that voices of the emerging economies and the private sector are heard to drive improved trade policies, better sharing of research, and more effective investment. Governments have to facilitate this with the right policies across aid and other portfolios.



As our conference showed, one cause of some optimism is that there is so much more awareness of the broader issues and their inter-relationships.

The Way Ahead for the Crawford Fund

The Fund will be using the key messages around these issues from the conference to inform its policy, public awareness and training activities and this will be elaborated in my report in the proceedings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Blight', with a stylized flourish at the end.

DG Blight AO FRSA
Chief Executive

