



THE CRAWFORD FUND
For a Food Secure World

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MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo: 29 August 2016

RETAINING NUTRIENTS FOR GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

Everyone has a role to play in establishing the circular food economy

A new paradigm for global food security is required which is focused on retaining nutrients in the food chain for as long as possible.

This will be the message given by Dr Steve Lapidge, from the South Australian Research & Development Institute, to the Crawford Fund's annual food security conference on 29 and 30 August. Titled 'Waste Not, Want Not: The Circular Economy to Food Security,' the event brings international and Australian specialists together to draw national attention to food loss and waste issues in production, in getting product to market, and in the management and reuse of waste.

"With an expected 10 billion mouths to feed by 2050, the United Nations reports that current food production will need to double, at a time when our poor soils and limited fresh water supplies are already being stretched," said Dr Lapidge, who has recently addressed G20 and OECD groups around his current research on reducing Food Loss & Waste through developing a more circular food economy to improved nutrient retention.

"While there is an increasing awareness of the food loss and waste problem in our throw-away society this is only part of the story. Some estimates suggest that the world currently loses up to 90% of nutrients between the soil and the sea. Further evidence highlights that the nutritional quality of our food has been slowly declining, leading to increases in the rates of some chronic diseases such as heart disease and asthma."

"Australians have long been avid recyclers of objects like old clothes to charity or beverage containers. Our food production system must follow a similar path if it is to become more sustainable, and this needs to start with the soil and end before available nutrients are sent out to sea."

"The average Australian family throws away over \$1000 worth of food each year, representing about 20% of what they purchase. This equates to a bill of over \$8 billion per year, although the true cost is much higher once environmental factors such as landfill costs and greenhouse gases produced from rotting food are taken into account," Dr Lapidge said.

"With over half of food loss and waste in Australia occurring in the home, it will also be essential to ensure that available nutrients are not being thrown away. Whether through utilising leftovers or composting food scraps to grow our own food, the development of the circular food economy in Australia will need to take many forms," he said.

In a Monty Python-esk approach, Steve extols the virtues of 'every nutrient is sacred'. "Modern food production systems need to start with better directed fertilisers and water," states Dr Lapidge. "We then need to utilise everything that we grow, both through relaxing our high cosmetic standards applied to fresh food and through using unsaleable food as the basis for functional food development and nutraceuticals to ensure that the nutrients stay in the food chain."