



THE CRAWFORD FUND
For a Food Secure World

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MEDIA RELEASE

Media are welcome to attend

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SHAKING UP AGRICULTURE WITH 'BIG DATA': MORE PRODUCTION, EFFICIENCY AND RESILIENCE

With the spread of technology such as smartphones and 3G services, there is an unprecedented opportunity to transform smallholder farming. So-called 'big data', the immense stocks of information collected in computers worldwide, is helping accelerate responses to some of the world's biggest challenges - climate change, food insecurity, malnutrition and environmental degradation.

This will be the focus of a keynote address by Dr Andy Jarvis of the CGIAR Big Data Platform in Agriculture when he speaks at *Transforming Lives and Livelihoods: The Digital Revolution in Agriculture*, the 2017 Crawford Fund annual conference in Canberra on 07-08 August. The conference will be addressed by The Hon Barnaby Joyce, Deputy Prime Minister, on 8 August at 9am in Parliament House.

"Big data represents an unprecedented opportunity to find new ways of reducing hunger and poverty by applying data-driven solutions to ongoing research for development impact. Many consider it one of the most important tools for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals."

"It's time for smallholder farmers to stop looking at the sky, praying for rain. With enough data and analysts, we'll be able to say if the rains will be late or on-time. We'll be able to say which crops to plant, when to plant and how much fertilizer or water to use. We'll be able to anticipate shocks, reduce risks and maximize opportunities for profitable, sustainable agriculture," said Dr Jarvis, a self-professed big data geek, who heads the CGIAR Big Data Platform, a US\$30m initiative including IBM, Amazon, PepsiCo, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the World Bank.

"Rapidly increasing internet connectivity in rural areas means that potentially millions of smallholder farmers could soon access digital services to help them boost food production and adapt to challenges like climate change. These services will rely on the use of vast amounts of agricultural data," said Dr Jarvis.

"There's no reason for precision farming to be the preserve of the fortunate few any more. Now's the time to digitize agriculture, and democratize the benefits for the 570 million smallholders around the globe. After all, they produce 70 per cent of the world's food."

Launched in May, the CGIAR Platform for Big Data in Agriculture, jointly led by the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture and the International Food Policy Research Institute, aims to process vast amounts of agricultural data for analysts, statisticians and programmers, to mine it for trends and develop rapid, accurate, compelling recommendations for farmers, researchers, and policymakers.

"Data geeks like me are tremendously excited about the prospects for the use of so-called big data in agriculture. Australian data geeks may be interested in submitting innovative proposals on how information can create positive impact for food security. Our "Inspire" Challenges will provide US\$100,000 grants to test out risky approaches that provide opportunities that provide impact at scale." For more information, visit: <http://bigdata.cgiar.org/inspire>.