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FROM A GRANDMOTHER'S FARM - NOURISHING AFRICA AND THE WORLD

How is it that rural farmers and their families are the preponderance of the hungry in Africa when a grandmother's one-acre plot could feed an army of relatives in the 1960s?

This will be a central question to this year's Sir John Crawford Memorial address, titled "*A New Narrative for Ending Hunger*" to be presented by Dr Lindiwe Sibanda Majele, a leading global advocate for food and nutrition security. Dr Sibanda will be speaking at the Crawford Fund annual conference in Canberra, which is being held on 7-8 August and will be opened by The Hon Barnaby Joyce, Deputy Prime Minister.

"I firmly believe that Africa is building a momentum that could lead the continent towards an agriculture transformation," said Dr Sibanda, who explained that it was visits to her grandmother's farm – a one-acre plot of land in rural Zimbabwe – that gave her such a strong personal connection to Africa's agricultural traditions and led her to choose a course towards agricultural policy and advocacy.

"When I was visiting my grandmother's farm back in the 1960s and 1970s, Asia was undergoing its 'Green Revolution'. In the majority of African countries, however, food production did not keep pace with population growth and even today, some 30 out of 53 African countries produce less food per head of the population than they did in the early 1960s," she said. Dr Sibanda recently joined the [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa \(AGRA\)](#) which was set up in response to a call by Kofi Annan, who said the time had come to wage a uniquely African Green Revolution. Dr Sibanda also sits on the Policy Advisory Council of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research.

"While my grandmother provided our large extended family with a diverse food supply that included livestock and vegetables, we were an exception as Africa faced a crisis in providing food and nutrition for its population."

"With the majority of Africans still employed in agriculture, improving rural living standards is the key to mitigate further increased inequality, the key to raising domestic consumer demand and, eventually, the key to strengthening the fiscal basis of African societies."

"We finally have global understanding of the significance of this challenge and the global impact of us not meeting it. We must come together, advance policies and secure the investments to ensure a better life for millions of Africa's farmers and families including women and youth. The world will benefit from African agriculture as an engine of inclusive growth and sustainable economic progress."

“To a large extent, we have the knowledge and the tools to catalyze this necessary change. By delivering a comprehensive package of solutions that are sensitive to the realities of smallholders’ lives—taking account of the fact, for example, that women do the majority of agricultural labor on the continent— we can usher in the rapid advances that have so far eluded African agriculture.”

“The struggles for an African agricultural transformation are real, but the opportunity to progressively move the needle towards a tipping point are looming and in sight. Farmers across Africa need better access to finance, markets, and an enabling policy environment that affords them the social protections many of us across the world take for granted.”

In her address, Dr Sibanda will explain solutions through a focus on the smallholder, involvement of the private sector, improved local extension services, bolstered market measures and policies that encourage regional agricultural trade.

Dr Sibanda will also join the discussion panel of keynote speakers at the Crawford Fund conference ‘*Transforming Lives and Livelihoods: The Digital Revolution in Agriculture*’, on 8 August. The event will be opened by The Hon Barnaby Joyce, Deputy Prime Minister at 9am in The Theatre, Parliament House.