

**The Honourable Mark Furner MP  
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries**

**Opening Address at The Crawford Fund  
Agriculture Food and Nutrition Security Forum  
Monday 19 February at Parliament House**

I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and their elders both past, present and emerging.

I would also like to acknowledge:

- Senator Claire Moore, Senator for Queensland and Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific
- Colin Chartres, Chief Executive Officer for the Crawford Fund
- Dan Walker, Chief Scientist for the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
- Invited guests

Thank you for the opportunity to open The Crawford Fund Queensland forum on “Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security”.

Queensland has a proud history in agriculture and agricultural research.

Agriculture is a key contributor to jobs in Queensland with one in seven Queenslanders employed in the sector.

Our State is a natural leader in the production of agriculture and food for the tropical and subtropical environments and we are well-placed to help others to produce not only more food, but healthier food.

According to the Global Hunger Index, the highest levels of hunger exist in South Asia - in countries which are right on our door step.

There is a changing face to food security - from the risks of starvation fifty years ago to today's problems, including malnutrition from a lack of nutritious foods, and obesity due to rich, highly processed diets.

These things are affecting both developed and developing countries, and Queensland is doing much to help address them.

Like other farmers throughout the Asia Pacific region, Queensland producers are facing many challenges including flooding, cyclones, drought, pests and diseases, which all impact production. Agricultural research has much to offer both Queensland and our region in addressing these issues of mutual concern.

Using Queensland expertise in research isn't something we should do just because we are a good global citizen, but because it will also bring many benefits to Queensland agriculture.

It also makes sense to learn from our overseas neighbours, where the issues are often more acute, and to bring this knowledge back home.

Where there is a shared problem or where Queensland can benefit - both in biosecurity and learning about pests and diseases - our researchers and farmers can improve our readiness and safety to keep us prepared for any biosecurity incursion.

The 122 million dollars the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research invests in international projects led by Queensland organisations is welcome, and has a real impact both at home and overseas.

One of the main challenges today in agricultural research in Australia and Queensland is how to encourage more young people into agriculture and the associated agricultural sciences.

I am particularly pleased that today's forum is helping to encourage the next generation of agricultural researchers that will help our agriculture sector into the future.

A good example of this that has gained international attention, is the work of one of our younger researchers in the room today.

Dr Lee Hickey from the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation sits on the Crawford Fund Queensland Committee.

His 'speed breeding' technology was inspired by NASA experiments to grow wheat in space.

Dr Hickey developed a world-first speed breeding program that cuts a decade off the time it takes to deliver new crop varieties.

The Queensland Government continues to support the Crawford Fund's Queensland's efforts to train and support young Queenslanders like Lee in making our Agricultural sector prosper. This includes through annual prizes at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' High School Awards Program run through the Hermitage Research Station at Warwick.

We also sponsor the Crawford Fund's Student Award Program which enables young Queensland university students to include an international component to their studies.

I encourage the young people in the room to take advantage of these opportunities.

We must continue to inspire the next generation to work and make a difference in this very dynamic and important sector.

A bright future for agriculture means a better future for Queensland, Australia and the world.