



THE CRAWFORD FUND
For a Food Secure World

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MEDIA RELEASE

Media are welcome to attend

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BAD RAP FOR LIVESTOCK IGNORES BENEFITS FOR THE POOR

The vital role of livestock to the health, nutrition and incomes of the world's poor is often ignored or omitted from current global narratives about the impact of the livestock sector on the environment or human health. We must identify opportunities to build on the positive contributions of livestock to society, particularly in low and middle-income countries, whilst minimising the sector's negative impacts.

This will be a key message delivered by Dr Anna Okello, Associate Research Program Manager, Livestock Systems at the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) in her case study presentation at "*Reshaping Agriculture for Better Nutrition: The Agriculture, Food, Nutrition, Health Nexus*", the Crawford Fund annual conference in Canberra on 13-14 August. Dr Okello will join other international and Australian specialists to consider how to reshape agriculture to address the increasingly urgent and competing needs of the hungry and the over-nourished, and the finite resources of our environment.

"Particularly in the global north, increasing environmental and health concerns from commercial livestock production practises has led to increasing calls to decrease or even cease global production and consumption of animal source foods," said Dr Okello, who spent 10 years researching zoonotic Neglected Tropical Disease control in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia.

"Whilst the world's wealthier countries have increasingly greater access to a diverse range of plant-based diet alternatives, animal-source foods remain integral to the health and economies of a vast majority of the world's rural poor."

"Such 'blanket' narratives fail to appreciate the distinct differences between commercial and smallholder and pastoralist livestock systems. They also overlook the significant opportunities that smallholder and pastoralist livestock keepers have to improve human health and nutrition in their communities through better quality and safety of animal source foods," said Dr Okello.

There are also indirect benefits to livestock keeping; for example, increased livestock-derived income can facilitate better and more diverse food choices, and promote health-seeking behaviours and illness prevention measures.

"Good governance of smallholder livestock sectors that promotes the social, economic and nutritional benefits of livestock keeping, whilst minimising environmental, welfare and public health impacts of livestock intensification, is an important balancing act. However, this has never been more important as the growing global population continues to increase its consumption of animal-source foods," concluded Dr Okello.