



THE CRAWFORD FUND
For a Food Secure World

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MEDIA RELEASE

Media are welcome to attend

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AUSTRALIA SHOULD GET SMART WITH “SMART FOOD”

Smart Food, like millet and sorghum, can tackle some of the biggest global issues of today including malnutrition, poverty and climate change because they are super-healthy and hardy. Australia has the right agroecology to be a leader in spreading the ‘smart food’ movement and benefit from what is hoped will be a new food trend.

This will be a key message of Joanna Kane-Potaka, Assistant Director General at the India-based International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, in her address to “*Reshaping Agriculture for Better Nutrition: The Agriculture, Food, Nutrition, Health Nexus*”, the 2018 Crawford Fund annual conference in Canberra on 13-14 August. Joanna will be joining 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.

“Smart Food - food that is good for you, the planet and the farmer – can have a major impact on the mega-global issues of malnutrition, poverty and environmental degradation,” said Ms Kane-Potaka, who is also Executive Director of the Smart Food initiative. Smart Food will be on display at the conference in the Mural Hall of Parliament House, and the initiative was selected as a top global food innovation in a competition run by Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and USAID.

“World agriculture needs to reduce the reliance on rice, wheat and maize which provide 50% of the world’s calories and protein but crowd out other nutritious, naturally climate-smart foods.”

“Smart Food that can be eaten as staples in developing countries can have a major impact on some of the leading global issues in unison.”

Joanna explained that Smart Food like millets and sorghum are traditional foods of many countries across Asia and Africa, survive well in hot dry marginalized lands and would be suitable for Australia’s harsher agroecology, especially in times of drought.

“I have seen serious drought in different continents, as currently underway in parts of Australia. Of course, zero water does mean zero crops but millets, especially pearl millet, are one of the hardiest crops and basically the last crop standing in times of drought. They are a risk management strategy for farmers the world over. Australian farmers and processors would do well to reconsider them beyond a forage option as particularly climate smart.”

Ms Kane-Potaka noted the need to develop the demand for smart food products.

“Australian consumers know very little about millets and sorghum. The few foods that are available on the supermarket shelf often just mention ‘whole grain’ and only the fine print indicates they are millet or sorghum.”

Joanna noted some of the health benefits, with finger millet having three times the amount of calcium than milk; pearl, little and barnyard millet containing 2-4 times the amount of iron than meat and all millets and sorghum being low on the glycemic index and gluten free.