

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo: 12 August 2019

Media are welcome to attend. Interviews can be prearranged for Monday, 12 August
Embargoed media releases will be available [here](#) and the full program is [online](#).

MANAGING WATER, ENERGY & FOOD KEY TO SOCIAL STABILITY AND REGIONAL SECURITY

As world leaders process the implications of the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a food security specialist reports that finding long term solutions to food, water and energy security, in the face of climate change and escalating demand, is critical to the prosperity, security and stability of the region. There are opportunities for Australia to engage on science and innovation with our regional neighbours.

This key message will form the heart of the address by Dr Jim Woodhill, Food Systems Advisor for DFAT's South Asia Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP) on 13 August to the 2019 Crawford Fund annual conference, titled *Weathering the 'Perfect Storm': Addressing the Agriculture, Energy, Water, Climate Change Nexus*. Dr Woodhill will highlight several innovative approaches supported by Australia in south Asia to help ensure long-term water, energy and food security.

"Australia's experience, including our own heated domestic debates on agriculture, water and energy, and our world leading technical expertise, makes us a valued partner in the region for helping to tackle the daunting challenges around food, water and energy security, in the face of climate change," said Dr Woodhill, who is also Honorary Research Associate at Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute.

"Sitting on Australia's doorstep, South Asia is one of the world's most highly populated regions with high levels of poverty and malnutrition alongside its rapid economic development. It is also a global hotspot due to huge demands for food, water and energy in a context of severe climate change impacts."

"From experience we know that food insecurity can be a trigger to societal unrest and even revolution. In such a populous region it is critical that socially just and environmentally sustainable solutions are found to the challenge that the water, food, energy and climate nexus presents."

"Australia, as a world leader in food production and water management, can help to generate the foresight needed to avoid the dramatically escalating risks that come with climate change and unchecked demand for food, water and energy."

"Systems of weak governance are at the heart of the problem. A focus on generating and distributing wealth is no longer enough - we must add the dimension of how to respond to climate change. Science, new forms of decision making, and citizen engagement must go hand in hand."

"Experience worldwide is showing how competition for land and water resources is intensifying, driven by increased demand from agriculture, the energy sector and industry. In South Asia the potential scale of the human tragedy of not moving fast enough down a path of sustainability and climate resilience is immense."

He noted that balancing the competing demands across sectors will be essential to sustaining future economic growth, poverty alleviation and maintaining political security at the national and regional level.

Dr Woodhill will describe a range of innovations related to water, energy and food in fragile areas in South Asia such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal through the Australian SDIP program.

