

## MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo: 9am 13 December 2021

**Media are welcome to attend.** Interviews can be prearranged for Mon, 13 or Tues, 14 December  
All media releases will be available [here](#) and the full program is [online](#).

### **FIGHTING ANTI-MICROBIAL RESISTANCE: When Health, Ag and Ecosystems Collide**

Resistance to antimicrobial agents like antibiotics is rising and is posing serious threats to public health, agriculture and food security. Not unlike the battle against COVID-19, given AMR can spread regionally and globally, it is in everyone's best interests to pool resources together to tackle the problem, irrespective of their AMR status.

This is the message to be delivered by Dr Walter Okelo, a research scientist with CSIRO Land & Water to the 2021 Crawford Fund annual conference, titled *Food & Nutrition Security – The Biosecurity, Health, Trade Nexus*, on 14 December.

"The discovery of antimicrobial agents for treatment of diseases in humans, animals, and plants was one of the most significant events of the 20th century. However, acquired resistance has become increasingly problematic," said Dr Okelo, whose research involves quantifying economic impact of biosecurity risks at the human-animal-environment interface.

"Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses an alarming threat to regional public health, agricultural production and food security. It causes at least 700,000 deaths annually, presents a major economic burden to farmers, governments and the rest of the society, and can cause major disruption globally."

He explained that antibiotic-resistant bacteria can spread between people and animals, person to person and environment to people.

"A 'One-Health' systems approach to tackle the issue across sectors is essential, and if it is to be effective in poorer countries, it must be affordable," he said.

"Whilst there has been progress in understanding the causes of AMR, there is insufficient know-how on how to mitigate it using the required 'One Health' approach in low resource settings."

One Health is described by the World Health Organisation as an approach to designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation and research across multiple sectors together to achieve better public health outcomes.

He noted that developing countries are expected to feel the impact of AMR greater than developed countries because of a range of factors including 'unnecessary' use of antibiotics, lack of regulation, and limited resources.

"Key lessons learnt in Fiji so far include that a multisectoral platform is needed to coordinate AMR activities; that the concerns of each sector - human, animal and environment - need to be considered, and that more evidence of economic impact of AMR is required."

"We envisage that the approach used, and lessons learnt in Fiji will be scaled out to other low resource settings to reduce the spread of AMR," he said.

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