

FOREWORD TO OUR 2023-2024 ANNUAL YEAR IN REVIEW FROM OUR CHAIR AND CEO

Championing Agricultural Productivity and Capacity Building

2024 marked a milestone, the 40th anniversary of Sir John Crawford's passing—a moment to reflect on his vision and enduring impact on international agricultural research. Sir John Crawford, a remarkable Australian, is celebrated for his pivotal role in shaping agriculture and food security, not just within Australia but globally. In February 2024, the Crawford Fund honoured this legacy at the National Press Club, launching *Buying Time: J.G. Crawford and International Agricultural Research*, a tribute to his approach to the Green Revolution and his unyielding belief in the power of agricultural research to 'buy time' for societies to address urgent issues beyond food security.

Sir John saw agricultural innovation not only as a solution to hunger but as a temporary reprieve—a way to alleviate pressing needs while setting the stage for deeper, structural improvements. This philosophy remains a cornerstone of the Crawford Fund's work, which continues to champion agricultural productivity, training, and policy capacity-building.

Sir John Crawford was a 'Malthusian optimist' who recognized that achieving food and nutrition security required more than scientific innovation; it demanded robust policies, effective governance, and resilient institutional frameworks. This year's initiatives, highlighted by the Crawford Fund's annual conference and state-based programs, illustrate how this legacy continues in our commitment to building local capacity and promoting self-sufficiency across vulnerable regions.

Key Initiatives of 2023: A Year of Sustainable Impact

Throughout the year, the Crawford Fund remained steadfast in its dual mission of immediate relief paired with sustainable development. Under the theme "Global Food Security in a Riskier World," the annual conference convened a diverse group of experts to tackle the mounting challenges of COVID-19, climate change, and geopolitical conflicts that threaten global food systems. Notably, Dr. Cary Fowler's insights emphasized the need for resilience in agriculture, advocating for strategies like local partnerships, soil health initiatives, and crop adaptation. His message resonated with the conference's overarching goal: to secure long-term food security by strengthening local capabilities and supporting agricultural systems capable of withstanding future shocks.

The Crawford Fund's work, however, extends beyond the national stage. A vital aspect of this year's efforts involved state-level initiatives, such as the NSW Forum on "Doing Well by Doing Good." Bringing together agricultural researchers, policymakers, and students,

this event highlighted the practical benefits of investing in international agricultural research. Through collaborative discussions, participants explored how research advances made in NSW contribute to addressing global food insecurity while fostering Australian expertise. Dr. Colin Chartres, CEO of the Crawford Fund, underscored the mutual gains of such partnerships, noting that these initiatives not only alleviate food insecurity abroad but also build valuable networks and opportunities for Australian scientists.

Celebrating Excellence and Fostering Future Leaders

2023 also saw the establishment of state-based Crawford Fund Awards to recognize individuals and organizations making significant contributions to international agricultural research and food security. These awards, presented across various states, bring a localized perspective to global food issues, raising awareness and inspiring future generations to engage with this crucial field. By celebrating excellence in food security efforts, the Crawford Fund reinforces its commitment to cultivating a new generation of scientists, researchers, and policymakers dedicated to sustainable food solutions.

This commitment aligns seamlessly with Sir John Crawford’s vision of “buying time.” Just as Crawford saw agricultural research as a means to address immediate food needs while paving the way for larger systemic solutions, the Fund’s education and training programs equip vulnerable communities with the skills to build resilient, self-sufficient food systems. The state-based events and the launch of *Buying Time* highlight the importance of this enduring approach, blending immediate aid with capacity-building and policy advocacy to foster long-term food security.

Engaging Local and Global Partnerships for Lasting Impact

At the heart of the Crawford Fund’s strategy lies a comprehensive approach to food aid, grounded in Sir John’s legacy of combining short-term assistance with a pathway to resilience. Through collaborations with local governments, agricultural organizations, and educational institutions, the Fund amplifies its impact by working both locally and globally. Programs designed to enhance local agricultural skills, support diversified farming, and promote self-sufficiency embody the “doing well by doing good” philosophy that defines the Crawford Fund’s approach to food aid. This year’s initiatives, including the landmark launch of *Buying Time*, the NSW forum, and targeted state awards, demonstrate that food security is most effectively achieved when resources are combined with policy frameworks and training.

Acknowledging our people

The success and progress reported here owe much to Colin Chartres. Colin has led the Fund since 2017, and we record our thanks to him on his retirement as CEO. He has left

a lasting legacy both as Chief Executive and as Director of Master Classes before, and we wish him well in his future endeavours.

We also welcome Rosemary Deininger who joined the Board as a Director during the year.

It would be remiss of us not to acknowledge the many people who make the Crawford Fund successful. We especially acknowledge the staff, State and Territory Coordinators, the State Committees and Directors who collectively form what we describe as the Crawford Fund family. Each makes a valuable contribution to feeding and nourishing the world.

Looking Ahead: Building a Resilient Future

The Crawford Fund's legacy and ongoing work underscore a powerful maxim: addressing food security is about more than providing immediate relief. It's about creating a foundation for communities to become self-reliant and resilient in the face of future challenges. By focusing on sustainable practices and capacity-building, the Fund ensures that "doing well" in food aid leads to lasting benefits. This approach echoes Sir John Crawford's vision, emphasizing that the power of agricultural research lies not only in solving today's problems but in empowering communities to meet the challenges of tomorrow independently.

As we look forward, the Crawford Fund's work continues to be a beacon of sustainable development, proving that meaningful food aid combines resources, knowledge, and systemic solutions. In honouring Sir John Crawford's legacy, we remain committed to a future where global food security is within reach, not as a temporary fix but as a resilient foundation for generations to come.



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