



THE CRAWFORD FUND FOR FOOD SECURITY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Emerging Voices Shaping Regional Integration for a Food Secure World

10–11 August 2026
Parliament House, Canberra,
Australia, and online



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MEDIA ALERT
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Emerging voices shaping regional integration for a food secure world

The Crawford Fund for Food Security's Annual Conference will be held this year on Monday 10 and Tuesday 11 August and will feature discussions around food security, climate and the impact of Australia's investment in international agricultural research in supporting developing nations.

The timing is perfect, with Australia in the process of developing its first ever food security strategy and also taking a leading role in climate discussions in the lead up to COP31 in Türkiye in November

This year's conference's theme, *Emerging Voices Shaping Regional Integration for a Food Secure World*, will focus on how regional integration in agricultural research and innovation can strengthen food and nutrition security in a rapidly evolving geopolitical and climate environment.

The conference will be held at the Great Hall in Parliament House, Canberra. The full program is [here](#).

The Hon Julie Collins, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will deliver the conference dinner keynote address between 1800-2100 on Monday 10 August 2026.

On Tuesday, distinguished speakers and their presentation topics include:

Opening Session: 0830-1000

Dr Sandra Milach, CGIAR Chief Scientist. Her keynote will explore how integrated science, and regional collaboration can shape a food-secure future — and how CGIAR's research is helping countries navigate climate shocks, strengthen nutrition, and build sustainable, peaceful agricultural systems.

Session 2: 1030-1230

Dr Tekini Nakidakida, Pacific policy action representative and Deputy Secretary Agriculture Department, Fiji, lead UNFCCC COP agriculture negotiator. Dr Nakidakida will provide a Pacific-led perspective on how climate change is reshaping food security, and how Australia-Pacific partnerships can deliver resilient, integrated food systems for the Indo-Pacific.

Imelda 'Dada' Bacudo, FAO convenor for regional momentum on agri-climate action & contribution to NDCs will focus on regional policy alignment, governance, and financing for climate-resilient food systems.

Sally Higgins, Youth Climate Champion for COP31, will call on governments to genuinely include young people and ensure youth participation improves policy, not simply representation.

Clayton Simamao, Samoan Farmers Association and Civil Society Representative for Asia-Pacific on the GAFSP Steering Committee. Clayton's objective is to drive the empowerment of small holder farmers to be involved in key decision-making policies that impact food security in the region.

Dr Sally Box, Division Head International Climate Negotiations, Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. This presentation will focus on how Australia as COP31 President of

Negotiations is playing an important convening and bridging role to encourage Parties to reach practical outcomes.

Session 3: 1315-1500

Professor Jaquie Mitchell, Discipline Lead - Crop Science of School of Agriculture and Food, and **Paul Serra** SunRice Group CEO *Climate-smart premium rice, securing future value chains in the Mekong Delta*. Climate change threatens rice production in Vietnam through salinity intrusion, sea-level rise, and water scarcity. Addressing those risks means building climate-ready, premium, high-value rice systems that also secure Australia's future rice supply.

Dr Mohammed Mainuddin, Senior Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO Environment. *From salinity to food security – transforming cropping systems in the Ganges Delta*. The salt-affected coastal Ganges Delta of Bangladesh and West Bengal supports over 20 million people and is critical for food security, biodiversity, and livelihoods. This presentation highlights how transdisciplinary integrated research has transformed agriculture in a region challenged by salinity, natural disasters, and climate change.

Dr Dennis Beesigamukama, Postdoctoral Fellow, ICIPE. *From waste to wealth – the journey from Africa to the Pacific of the Black Soldier Fly*. This program has gone from African proof-of-concept to Pacific deployment, with emphasis on local feedstock streams, village-scale systems, climate resilience, and youth-led enterprise models. This presentation will highlight new Pacific pilots, PNG-specific design adaptations, and emerging evidence on BSF's role in circular agriculture and food-system resilience.

Dr Tony Pattison, Senior-Principal Researcher with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries. *Stopping TR4- the global race to save bananas*. This program is helping countries manage one of the world's most destructive banana diseases and is now entering a new phase in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific, where early-warning systems and containment practices will help slow the spread of TR4 in smallholder landscapes.

Session 4: 1530-1730

Dr Stefan Schmitz, Executive Director, Crop Trust, *Seeds of Opportunity: Regional Cooperation for Food Security in an Uncertain World*. Crop diversity provides the genetic resources needed to adapt agriculture to climate change, strengthen nutrition and build resilient economies. This discussion will explore how global genebank networks provide critical regional infrastructure and how stronger collaboration across the Indo-Pacific unlocks opportunities for farmers, researchers and future generations.

Dr Himanshu Pathak, Director General, ICRISAT – Centre of Excellence for South-South Cooperation in Agriculture. The ICRISAT Centre for South-South Cooperation in Agriculture (ISSCA) is redefining South-South cooperation and showing how innovation can be adapted and amplified across geographies.

Soane Patolo, Adjunct Associate Professor, Researcher - Australian Centre for Pacific Islands Research, CEO - MORDI Tonga Trust. Mr. Patolo has built up the MORDI Trust to enable its significant contribution to Tonga's food and nutrition security and to be a model for other Pacific islands. Community Development Plans are put together in partnership with communities across the many islands, including identifying issues to be addressed and ensuring the inclusion of women in potential solutions.

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Media are encouraged to attend. The program is available [here](#), and speaker details are available [here](#).