



The Crawford Fund Annual Conference

Scholar Program - Speaker Bios

10 and 12 August 2026

(in order of appearance)

Lucy Broad, Director of Communication, Outreach and NextGen Programs, Crawford Fund

Lucy Broad joined the Crawford Fund for Food for Food Security in 2025 bringing more than 40 years of experience in strategic communications, media relations, stakeholder engagement and extension and behaviour change across Australia's rural and regional industries. Her career commenced as a rural reporter with ABC Radio, and over the following 23 years roles included reporting, producing and presenting a range of ABC radio and television programs, National Editor for ABC Rural, State Director for the ABC in Queensland and Network Scheduler across ABC's Radio networks.

Lucy also has extensive senior management and leadership experience outside the ABC, as Managing Director of the full-service public relations business Cox Inall Communications (now part of Dentsu), General Manager Communication and Extension with the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), General Manager Communications with Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) and strategic communications adviser to the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists.

Krishna Chaitanya Alamuru, RAID Network Central Committee - Secretary

Krishna is the secretary of RAID Network, a 2024–26 Plantae Fellow with the American Society of Plant Biologists (ASPB) and a PhD candidate at the Centre for Crop Health, University of Southern Queensland, where his research focuses on plant pathology, genomics, and disease resistance in mungbean. His PhD investigates host–pathogen interactions, including tan spot, a bacterial disease, and powdery mildew, a fungal disease affecting mungbean.

Krishna has received several recognitions for his research and science communication, including multiple best presentation awards at the Centre for Crop Health HDR Symposium and the Broad Acre Cropping Initiative Lightning Talks, as well as recognition through ASPB and international plant science networks. Through his research and professional service, he aims to contribute to sustainable agriculture, crop improvement, and stronger global connections in agricultural research.

Ms Su McCluskey FCPA FTSE, Chair, Crawford Fund for Food Security

Ms McCluskey is the former first Special Representative for Australian Agriculture. She is an experienced senior business executive and company director with a strong background in agricultural policy, production and research.

Currently her roles include Director of LiveCorp and Australasian Pork Research Institute. Ms McCluskey is also a beef cattle farmer at Yass, NSW. She previously held directorships with Australian Unity, AWN, Foundation for Young Australians and the NSW Rice Marketing Board. Ms McCluskey was a Member of the Commission for International Agricultural Research and a Commissioner on the National COVID-19 Advisory Board, a member of the Deregulation Taskforce Advisory Panel, the Charities Review and the Small Business Digital Taskforce. Ms McCluskey has also held senior positions with a number of organisations including the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations and the National Farmers' Federation.

Manita Raut, RAID Network Central Committee - Capacity Development

Manita is the RAID Network's Capacity Development Lead and a John Allwright Fellow at the Australian National University's Crawford School of Public Policy, where she recently submitted her PhD research on irrigation technology adoption and agricultural water security in Nepal. Her work examines how social, institutional, and infrastructural factors shape access, adoption, and scaling of irrigation technologies among marginal farming communities. Manita has over six years of experience in water governance, climate resilience, agricultural development, and social inclusion. Previously, she worked as a Senior Research Officer at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), researching groundwater governance, farmer collectives, agricultural technology adoption, migration, and gendered access to natural resources across South Asia. She is passionate about bridging research, policy, and practice through inclusive collaboration, capacity development, and science communication.

Dr Suzie Newman, General Manager – Partnerships, ACIAR

Suzie oversees multilateral and strategic partnerships at ACIAR. She leads a multidisciplinary team that engages with stakeholders, undertakes impact evaluation and communicates the value of ACIAR-funded initiatives. The team also facilitates partner country engagement through ACIAR's locally engaged country network. She has extensive leadership and program management experience in international development having worked in both government and academic sectors. She brings strong technical skills in agribusiness, horticultural production and postharvest management research and extension.

Bridget Mullany, RAID Network Central Committee – Vice President and Communications

Bridget is the Co-Vice President of RAID Network and the Communications lead. She is also a PhD candidate and lecturer at the University of Technology Sydney, interested in leveraging transdisciplinary approaches to meet marine resource challenges in the Asia-Pacific. Her PhD is linked to an ACIAR project and focuses on understanding community dependence on coral reef fisheries in the Philippines. She's passionate about embedding equity and social justice into food systems and about ensuring that academic research meets community needs.



Dr Himanshu Pathak, Director General, ICRISAT

Dr Himanshu Pathak is currently the Director General of International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad and President of National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, New Delhi. Earlier, he served as Secretary of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Government of India; Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research; chaired the Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board; and Director of ICAR-National Institute of Abiotic Stress Management in Maharashtra and ICAR-Central Rice Research Institute in Odisha.

Dr Pathak has over 33 years of experience in the global agricultural landscape, particularly in the areas of climate resilience, soil and crop management, and sustainable agricultural systems. He holds a Ph.D. in Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry from Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi and held prestigious fellowships and international research positions has held prestigious fellowships and international research positions including the Humboldt Fellowship in Germany, and visiting scientist in United Kingdom, Australia, Philippines, and Ethiopia. He has published over 200 research papers and 20 books with more than 32,100 citations and 310 i-10 index.

Dr Janila Pasupuleti, Principal Scientist (Genomic Prediction and Groundnut Breeding), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics

Janila has 25 years of scientific and leadership experience in establishing and managing demand-driven crop breeding programs at both international and national research institutions. She earned her Ph.D. in Plant Genetics from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi. In her current role, she co-ordinates the implementation of genomic prediction approaches for ICRISAT's dryland crop breeding programs and foster strategic research collaborations across Australia, the Pacific Islands, and the ASEAN region.

As Cluster Leader of Crop Breeding at ICRISAT and Flagship Leader for Varieties & Hybrids under the CRP-GLDC (2018–2025), she provided leadership in implementing breeding innovations across dryland cereal and legume breeding programs at three CGIAR centers—ICRISAT, IITA, and ICARDA. She mentored 15 doctoral and postdoctoral researchers and trained more than 120 scientists from National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) across Asia and Africa in new crop breeding technologies. Among her most significant contributions is the development of high-oleic acid peanut varieties by employing breeding innovations.

Dr Larelle McMillan, Research Director, CSIRO Agriculture & Food

Larelle McMillan leads research that supports resilient, low-emissions and equitable agri-food systems. Her teams work spans the bioeconomy, climate and emissions, supply chain assurance, regional resilience, and Indigenous and community-led innovation. Bringing multi-disciplinary, sustainability and system sciences; the team partners to deliver evidence, metrics, methodology for participatory processes and tools that decision-makers can trust and use. They specialise in integrating data, modelling, Indigenous and local knowledge, and real-world trials to create practical solutions that support policy, investment and coordinated action across agriculture, environment, energy and regional development.

Larelle brings 25 years' experience across natural resource management, climate and emissions, biodiversity, value chains, food security and international development, she has a strong track record in complex MEL, research impact brokering, and building partnerships that embed science to action. Larelle is a strong advocate for inclusive leadership and collaborative approaches that empower people, strengthen capability, and deliver lasting impact across agri-food systems.

Bek Ash, RAID Network Central Committee - State Rep Coordinator

Bek is an early career researcher passionate about sustainable livestock systems, international development, and climate change. She is completing a PhD by publication exploring context-specific adaptation and mitigation strategies across diverse livestock systems. Her research spans systems modelling of grazing management in Australia, gender and resilience in pastoralist communities in northern Kenya, and emissions mitigation modelling at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). Beyond research, Bek is an active agricultural leader and science communicator, having presented at major national and international events. She is a Westpac Future Leaders Scholar and RAID central committee member.

Dr Mohammed Mainuddin, Senior Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO Environment

Dr Mohammed Mainuddin is a Senior Principal Research Scientist and Leader of the Water and Society Team within the Water Security Program at CSIRO Environment, based in Canberra, Australia. Prior to joining CSIRO in 2004, he worked with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in Sri Lanka and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Thailand. Dr Mainuddin is internationally recognised for his multidisciplinary expertise at the nexus of climate, water, agriculture, food security, and livelihoods, with over three decades of experience. He has led extensive work in integrated river basin modelling across Australia, Asia, Africa, and South America.

Most of his research over the last 15 years focused on integrated coastal zone management for cropping intensification and livelihood enhancement in the Ganges delta and on sustainable groundwater management for food security in the Eastern Gangetic Plains (EGP). Dr Mainuddin's commitment to bridging the gap between research and actionable solutions underscores his profound impact on society. Through his leadership and expertise, he continues to spearhead initiatives that drive sustainable development, resilience, and prosperity in water-dependent communities both locally and globally.

Greta Stark, Senior Policy Officer, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and former Crawford Fund Student Awardee

Greta Stark is a Senior Policy Officer with a background spanning agriculture, research, international development and trade. She holds a Bachelor of Science majoring in Soil Science and graduated with First Class Honours in Agricultural Science. Greta began her career at the National Farmers' Federation, working across natural resource management and climate policy. She then joined ACIAR where she worked within the Fisheries and Soils programs, gaining valuable insight into agricultural research and development and its on-the-ground impacts for farming communities and food systems.

She currently works in the Trade and International Division at DAFF, supporting Australia's trade relationships and agricultural market access outcomes. Greta is passionate about the role of sustainable agriculture in improving food security and nutrition, and is committed to strengthening resilient food systems that support farmers, communities and consumers in Australia and internationally.

Madaline Healey, ACIAR Project Leader and former Crawford Fund Laos Volunteer

Dr Healey studied a Bachelor of Agricultural Science before stepping into a PhD and then landing in Laos as a volunteer entomologist and now member of the Queensland Crawford Fund's Laos program. Running since 2009, the program is focused on supporting a team of young Australian volunteers to improve crop and soil health, biosecurity, food safety, weed control and, ultimately, food security. Madaline works at the University of the Sunshine Coast focusing on integrated pest management, biological control and forest biosecurity. She is a member of the RAID Network and of the Crawford Fund Qld Committee. She is involved in two ACIAR projects: one with researchers and stakeholders across six SE Asian countries to improve the tools and technologies available for good forestry biosecurity practices; and the other in Ethiopia to develop pest management options for tree crops that are integral to community life. Her interests are trees, people and all things bug like as she completes a Masters in Global Development at RMIT.

Mr Soane Patolo Jr, Chief Executive, MORDI Tonga Trust, Adjunct Associate Professor, Researcher, Australian Centre for Pacific Islands Research, University of the Sunshine Coast

Soane Patolo Jr. is Chief Executive Officer of the Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovation (MORDI) Tonga Trust and an Adjunct Associate Professor (Rural Development) at the University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia. With more than two decades of experience, he leads major rural development, climate resilience, and food systems programmes supported by the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, IFAD, GEF, and other development partners.

He actively collaborates with ACIAR, the University of Melbourne, the University of the Sunshine Coast, and research institutions across New Zealand, Japan, and the Pacific. His work focuses on climate-smart agriculture, resilient food systems, and community-led development. He was awarded the Royal Order of the Crown of Tonga by His Majesty King Tupou VI in 2021 and the Lincoln University International Alumni Medal in 2023.

Larissa Mullot, Communications Manager, Crawford Fund

Larissa has been working with the Crawford Fund since 2016, as part of the Outreach and NextGen programs. As a consultant she has worked with the Agricultural Biotechnology Council of Australia, the Fodder Industry Association of Australia and Grain Producers Australia. She has previously held positions with CSIRO Plant Industry and Greening Australia Limited. Larissa has a Bachelor of Arts (Communications Studies) degree from the University of Newcastle and a Graduate Diploma (Public Policy) from the Australian National University. She highly recommends working in the agricultural, science and environment sectors if you want a diverse, rewarding and interesting career. Born and raised in NSW, she now lives in Perth.

DAY TWO

Kath Sullivan, ABC National Rural Reporter

As national rural reporter, Kath reports for the ABC across television, radio and online from Parliament House in Canberra. Kath has spent more than a decade reporting on rural and regional affairs across Australia. After a four-year stint working for rural newspaper The Weekly Times, Kath returned to the ABC in 2018 where she first began her career as a rural reporter in Victoria's Gippsland.

Jane Bastin-Sikimeti, Director, Climate Resilient Agriculture and Food Security, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

Jane has extensive experience in Pacific affairs, specialising in international development and gender equality. Her development experience is grounded by whole of community partnership work with Australian rural and First Nations communities.

Penelope Howarth, Senior Adviser Climate Resilient Agriculture and Food Security, DFAT

Penelope is a multi-lingual economist, diplomat and international development professional and has experience working across government, multilateral, research and NGOs sectors. She has deep experience supporting international cooperation for impact, particularly for energy decarbonization, food security and humanitarian assistance. She has led field operations for the United Nations World Food Programme in various countries across sub-Saharan Africa, and was Director for Energy at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) Secretariat in Singapore.

Megan Williams, RAID Network Central Committee – Vice President

Megan is an agronomic scientist with both national and international research experience. Megan is currently undertaking her PhD, researching the bean rhizosphere microbiome for better soil and plant health, whilst also working to bring new varieties of vegetable seeds to the Australian market through Syngenta's in-depth R&D breeding programs. Having completed a MSc in Agriculture in Switzerland, her work now involves knowledge of implementing new technologies of biological pathogen control in plant production. She is also passionate about driving sustainable farming practices in international agriculture research having spent considerable time working across Asia (Vietnam, Thailand, and China) and Africa (Ghana). Most recently, Megan has focused on cross-collaboration opportunities to strengthen research skills in early to mid-career researchers through her leadership role in the RAID Network's Australia-Vietnam exchange program.

Dr Deirdre Lemerle, Crawford Fund NSW Committee, mentor and technical adviser

Deirdre is an agricultural weed scientist who worked 25 years for DPI NSW and she led the Cropping Program of the Weeds Co-operative Research Centre for 10 years. Deirdre was the inaugural Director of the Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation, an alliance which aimed to increase sustainable productivity for mixed farming systems. She is a member of the Crawford Fund's NSW Committee and is active in our Laos project which involved young Australian volunteers through the Australian Volunteer Program.

Duong Nam Ha, University of Tasmania

Dr Duong Nam Ha is a Lecturer in Economics at the University of Tasmania whose work focuses on agricultural economics, value chains, rural development and international agricultural research. He is Project Coordinator and Co-Investigator of an ACIAR-funded project supporting smallholder participation in commercial beef supply chains in Vietnam, and Academic Lead for UniGO Northern Vietnam, an international engagement program connecting Australian students with sustainability and development challenges in Southeast Asia. His research interests include agrifood systems, climate-resilient agriculture, circular agriculture, food security and Australia-Vietnam research partnerships. Through his research, teaching and project leadership, he works with universities, government agencies, industry and farming communities to translate research into practical development outcomes.

Sam Coggins, former Crawford Fund scholar and awardee and New Colombo Plan Fellow

Sam has a degree in agricultural science, won the Sydney University Convocation Medal and received a Crawford Fund Student Award and CSIRO Undergraduate Vacation Scholarship during his undergrad degree. He recently completed an interdisciplinary PhD at ANU researching how farmers in Bihar (India) access and share farming know-how using their mobile phones. He now works at ANU's Agrifood Innovation Institute researching opportunities to improve governance of AI risks in agrifood systems. Previously, Sam was a graduate at the ACIAR and then a research associate at Cornell University.

Mr Clayton Simamao, Steering Committee Representative, Global Agriculture Food Security Program (GAFSP), Asia Pacific region

Clayton Simamao is an entrepreneur and dedicated farmer with a strong focus on agribusiness and sustainable agricultural development for vulnerable communities. Working with regional organizations such as Pacific Farmers Organization has allowed him to network and connect small scale farmers and producer organizations to markets and also agricultural projects for farming support. Mr Simamao is the steering committee representative for the Asia Pacific region under the Global Agriculture Food Security Program (GAFSP). His objective is to drive the empowerment of small holder farmers to be involved in key decision making policies that impacts food security in the region. Through collaboration, and community engagement, Clayton strives to inspire the next generation of farmers to embrace innovation while preserving sustainable farming practices. He believes that sustainable farming in the Pacific context needs to incorporate the impacts of climate change on food security and how farmers can be more resilient to the many changes now faced in the agriculture industry.

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In addition to the speakers listed above, we would like to thank the members of RAID who will be helping with chairing and facilitating the Scholar Activity Sessions, including:

Anam Afzal, RAID Network Central Committee - Capacity Development

Anam is a PhD student at University of Melbourne, Australia with over six years of experience in Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) supported Dairy and Beef project in Pakistan. She has worked extensively in training farmers and farm advisors, engaging stakeholders, and supporting agricultural extension systems.

Her research interests include agriculture extension, innovation brokering, agriculture–nutrition linkages, gender and power dynamics, child nutrition and health. She holds a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree from University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore. Anam is passionate about agriculture and food security; strengthen inclusive, evidence-based agricultural development systems under One Health framework.

Mackenzie Coopman, RAID Network

Mackenzie Coopman is an early career researcher at CSIRO, where he works at the intersection of behavioural science and agronomic decision-making. He is a past Crawford Fund Conference Scholar and has been a state representative with RAID since 2024. Mackenzie holds a First Class Honours in Agricultural Science from the University of Adelaide and has contributed to climate change adaptation research across Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia through the CGIAR Excellence in Agronomy initiative. Mackenzie also volunteers as a director of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Sciences and Technology.