



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>
aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

Food for the Future: Opportunities for a Crowded Planet

Tim Fischer

Paper prepared for presentation at the “Food for the Future: Opportunities for a Crowded Planet” conference conducted by the Crawford Fund for International Agricultural Research, Parliament House, Canberra, Australia, August 8, 2002

Copyright 2002 by Tim Fischer. All rights reserved. Readers may make verbatim copies of this document for non-commercial purposes by any means, provided that this copyright notice appears on all such copies.



Food for the Future: Opportunities for a Crowded Planet

PREFACE

THE HON. TIM FISCHER

The conference in 2002 was the eighth in an annual series established by the ATSE Crawford Fund to help raise awareness on the need for, and aims of, international agricultural research, and the important role that Australia plays in this.

The challenge

The speakers came from many organizations and sectors to help us to better understand some of the issues that surround *Food for the Future* and some of the opportunities that there are for a crowded planet. The names of the generous sponsors whose assistance was essential appear below.

Two years ago, the then Chief of Australia's Defence Forces, Admiral Chris Barrie, stood on the Crawford Fund platform and advocated an investment in food security as a way of contributing to world peace. He said,

'If the circumstances of life are precarious enough, it is easy for the bad guys to recruit young people to their cause for a uniform and

some food, however squalid or ill-defined the particular cause might be.'

Now, post 11 September 2001, the truth of what Chris Barrie said is becoming widely acknowledged, with economists of the calibre of Jeffrey Sachs at Harvard writing in *The Economist* on the topic 'What's good for the poor is good for America'.

For humanitarian reasons and out of self-interest, progress has been, and is being, made. The imperative for the world, however, is still to rapidly increase the food security and reduce the poverty of the six billion people who inhabit the planet today, and to have the ability and the capacity to do the same for the nine billion that are predicted to inhabit the planet in the next twenty to thirty years.

It was with this imperative in mind, coupled with the very public and international debate on biotechnology in general, and the application of gene modification techniques in particular, that stimulated us to use the 2002 Conference to explore this topic more fully. The program surveyed the interests of the developing world from a variety of aspects and through a panel of invited speakers, all of whom have a wealth of knowledge and expertise in their chosen areas.

THE HON. TIM FISCHER MP is Chairman of the ATSE Crawford Fund Board of Governors. He is one of Australia's most highly regarded politicians. His long career in politics started after he left the Australian Army in 1970 and he began to raise the profile of rural Australia at the State, and then Federal level. He was elected Leader of the National Party in 1990 and appointed Shadow Minister for Trade in 1993. In 1996 he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade. His interest and advocacy for Australia to become a trading super-power, especially in Asia, are well known. Mr Fischer retired from politics in June 1999 and continues to lend his considerable advocacy and political talents to chair the ATSE Crawford Fund's Board of Governors.

Our contributors

Dr Gordon Conway, President of the Rockefeller Foundation and author of the book *The Doubly Green Revolution*, was the keynote speaker.

Dr Elizabeth Dennis, a Chief Research Scientist at CSIRO Plant Industry, described the suite of technologies, collectively known as biotechnology, to establish a broad base for the subsequent contributors. She was followed by Dr Randy Hautea, Global Coordinator of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications. Randy kindly accepted an offer to contribute at short notice when Dr Clive James was unable to participate because of ill-health. He discussed the rapid expansion of the area of GM crops. Dr Jim Ryan then described routes other than biotechnology by which we can realize our imperative.

There were then a series of cameo presentations on some of the important issues seen from the perspective of users of the technologies, including consumers (Louise Sylvan), farmers (Raul Montemayor) and Governments (William Padolina) in developing countries. The important role of people in technology adoption was described by Harry Nesbitt, and ethical issues associated with the newer technologies were reviewed by Beris Gwynne.

Ken Fischer discussed the intellectual property and legal issues involved in public good research when it is conducted by or in partnership with private enterprise.

The day concluded with a panel discussion involving all our speakers, moderated by Dr Jim Peacock, and which provided an opportunity to consider options for policy and action.

Development assistance through research

I would like to explain the relationship between the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), and the ATSE Crawford Fund.

The Rockefeller and Ford Foundations were the inspiration and originators of the global network of international agricultural research centres called the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. The Rockefeller

Foundation is still a highly respected member of the group and still a strong supporter of its programs. Australia is one of 58 industrial and developing countries that, together with the private foundations and regional and international organizations, provide financial assistance and technical support to the CGIAR.

The CGIAR's mission is *'to achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty in developing countries through scientific research and research related activities in the fields of agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, policy and natural resources management.'*

Australia is lucky to have its own Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, which is enjoying its 20th anniversary this year – 20 years of tremendous success. ACIAR is a statutory authority operating within the portfolio of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

ACIAR's mission is *'to achieve more productive and sustainable agricultural systems for the benefit of developing countries and Australia, through international agricultural research partnerships.'*

It brokers research and development projects with partners in developing countries, and Australia. These partners are drawn from mainly the public but also the private sectors, and the CG centres are frequent players in these partnerships. ACIAR also funds training that will help to implement research.

ACIAR's budget for this purpose is around \$46.3 million for 2002/03. About three-quarters of ACIAR's total R&D budget is allocated to its bi-lateral programs to improve the agricultural systems of developing countries.

Amongst its activities in R&D and training, ACIAR also administers the Australian Government's annual donation to the international agricultural research centres. ACIAR allocates about one-quarter of its annual budget to these centres, especially the centres within the CGIAR, but also to a few others of critical significance to the Australian aid program, such as CABI. For many years, Australia has been among the top dozen donors to the international centres.

Since its establishment the Crawford Fund has been a small but distinctive and effective part of Australia's international development assistance

effort. We focus on support for international agricultural research that complements the work of ACIAR and the CGIAR system. We are funded through donations from Federal and State governments and the private sector.

The core activity of the Crawford Fund is raising awareness – which is one of the reasons that you are here today. The Fund has also built strategic alliances with the Australian and international R&D communities in the public and private sectors to help with training courses for men and women from developing countries. These courses, held in Australia and overseas, help to increase the capacity of farmers, scientists and researchers to learn new skills, or build upon existing skills. Many hundreds of men and women have taken part in the Crawford Fund’s training program that complements the overall R&D effort in Australia and developing countries.

The activities of the CGIAR, ACIAR and the Crawford Fund are all aimed at reducing poverty in developing countries through agricultural research. The major part of Australia’s development assistance program, as distinct from, but related to, the R&D effort to reduce poverty, is administered by AusAID – The Australian Government’s overseas aid program.

AusAID, like ACIAR, reports directly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs for all its operations in helping to relieve poverty in developing countries. Its budget this financial year is \$1.815 billion.

The Hon Chris Gallus, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, has day-to-day

responsibility for issues pertaining to Australia’s international aid program. We were delighted that she was able to open the conference.

The ATSE Crawford Fund prides itself on the success of our past Conferences, and we believe that this one was no exception. We had to close off registrations early because of the demand for places in the audience. We aim to make future conferences in this series equally relevant and stimulating.

Acknowledgements

The Crawford Fund would like to warmly thank the following supporters for their in-kind and financial assistance for the conference:

Conference supporters

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries – Australia

AgriFood Awareness Australia

AusAID – The Australian Government’s Overseas Aid Program

Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering

Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research

CSIRO Plant Industry

Foundation for Development Cooperation

Grains Research and Development Corporation