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The Livestock Revolution: A Pathway from Poverty?

Tim Fischer

Paper prepared for presentation at the “The Livestock Revolution: A Pathway from Poverty?” conference conducted by the Crawford Fund for International Agricultural Research, Parliament House, Canberra, Australia, August 13, 2003

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PREFACE

THE HON. TIM FISCHER

The conference in 2003 was the ninth 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 Crawford Fund community shares a passionate belief that poverty can be reduced, regional security can be enhanced, and the natural resource base for agriculture can be improved through the engagement of Australians in international agricultural research, development and education for the benefit of developing countries and Australia.

We again had a fine array of guest speakers who came from many organisations and sectors to help us to better understand some of the issues that surround 'The Livestock Revolution' and the opportunities that this revolution provides to lift small farmers in developing countries out of poverty.

Most people in the audience knew that on 19 April this year, Derek Tribe died. Emeritus Professor

Derek Tribe AO OBE FTSE, one of the giants of Australian agricultural research, was the first Executive Director of the Crawford Fund — Australia's own national support organisation for international agricultural research.

Indeed, it is not stretching the truth to say that he invented the Crawford Fund, and its establishment in 1982 was due to his determination and powerful persuasion. We remember him as a passionate advocate for 'doing well by doing good' — the title of one of his books, and the phrase that he made his own.

However, Derek's contribution to international agricultural research commenced much earlier than this. By 1970 he was already well known on the international scene, and in 1972 he led an international task force established by the CGIAR to report on the advisability of establishing an International Livestock Centre in Africa. The CGIAR agreed with his recommendations, and the new Centre (the International Livestock Centre for Africa) was duly established. From 1973 to 1980 Derek was a member of its Board. Eventually, ILCA and another livestock centre ILRAD (the International Laboratory for Research on Animal Diseases) were combined to form ILRI — the International Livestock Research Institute. It was therefore with a mixture of pride, pleasure and inevitability that we welcomed Dr Carlos Seré, the Director General of ILRI, and Dr John Vercoe, the current Chair of the ILRI Board, as two of the key speakers at the conference. And it is absolutely appropriate that we dedicated the occasion to Derek Tribe.

THE HON. TIM FISCHER MP is Chairman of the ATSE Crawford Fund Board of Governors. He is one of Australia's 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.

Joining Carlos Seré and John Vercoe we had an impressive team of speakers:

- Dr Chris Delgado
- Rt Hon. Mike Moore
- Professor John Longworth
- Dr Zhang-Yue Zhou
- Dr Jock Christoe
- Dr Judith Blackshaw
- Dr Martyn Jeggo
- Dr Gardner Murray

They brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise in their chosen areas to our conference.

What is this ‘livestock revolution’, and what does it mean to us?

Put simply, the livestock revolution refers to the astonishing, **consumer-driven** increase in the production of livestock in the developing countries of the world. In many developing countries, a significant proportion of the population is becoming richer. As their incomes rise, and as they experience urban lifestyles, their dietary preferences change: they want to eat more livestock products — meat, dairy products and eggs.

In response, farmers in these countries are producing more livestock: pigs, chickens, cattle, sheep and goats. The consumption of meat *per capita* in developing countries is doubling every 30 years. In China alone, consumption of meat and milk *per capita* is doubling every ten years. In India, the world’s biggest milk producer, consumption of milk is increasing by 50% every ten years.

As well as these trends in per capita consumption, the world population is also growing rapidly. By 2020, the world-wide demand for meat will rise by 65%, milk by 60% and eggs by 90%. This rate of growth is much greater than that for cereals (50%). Almost all of this increased demand for livestock products will be in developing countries, and China alone will account for more than 40% of the increased demand for meat. By 2020, driven by feed requirements for livestock, maize production in developing countries will overtake the production of rice and wheat.

These are astonishing statistics, and most of us are only vaguely aware of them. The livestock revolu-

tion promises to offer small farmers in developing countries a way out of poverty, and it also offers farmers in countries like Australia unprecedented opportunities for exports of livestock products. But revolutions cause pain, and face many obstacles, and this one is no exception. Market access issues, feed supplies, environmental negatives, animal ethical issues, and the management of diseases: these are the things that will get in the way of equitable sharing of the benefits from the livestock revolution. These were the focus of our seminar.

It was my great pleasure to introduce the first speaker, Hon Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Alexander Downer is no stranger to us; this was the fifth Crawford Fund seminar he has opened for us. We are most grateful for his steady support — he knows well that every dollar channelled into international agricultural research through ACIAR or AusAID has delivered at least three dollars worth of lasting benefits in developing countries.

Acknowledgements: conference supporters

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

- AusAID — The Australian Government’s Overseas Aid Program
- Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering
- Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
- Cooperative Research Centre for Innovative Dairy Products
- CSIRO Livestock Industries
- Dairy Australia
- Grains Research and Development Corporation
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- Meat and Livestock Australia