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Forward

Neil Andrew

Paper prepared for presentation at the “World Food Security: Can Private Sector R&D Feed the Poor?” conference conducted by the Crawford Fund for International Agricultural Research, Parliament House, Canberra, Australia, October 27-28, 2009

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Foreword

THE HON. NEIL ANDREW

The Crawford Fund's 2009 Parliamentary Conference focused on the potential role of private-sector research and development in helping feed the world's poor. The conference proceedings are outlined in this report.

While there are sound examples of private-sector research and development contributing positively to food production in the developing world, the conference found it difficult to quantify its overall impact. It was, however, strikingly evident that the long-term objective of increased food production, outlined in the millennium development goals, will only be met through maximised cooperation between the public and private sectors. Such partnerships are imperative. The other imperative that emerged from the conference was the importance of increased outlays on agriculture research and development at both public and private levels.

THE HON NEIL ANDREW was brought up in the SA Riverland, where his family and later Neil had interests in horticulture. He was an active participant in the SA Agricultural Bureau movement, and was Chairman 1980–1982. In 1975, he was awarded a Nuffield Agricultural Scholarship to make an overseas study tour. In 1983, he was elected to the Australian Parliament as the member for Wakefield in the House of Representatives. With changes in the boundaries of his electorate, he later moved to Gawler. He held various positions including that of Government Whip from 1997, and from November 1998 became Speaker of the House of Representatives. Neil retired from that position and from his seat in November 2004. He now lives in Adelaide and became Chairman of the Crawford Fund on the retirement of The Hon. Tim Fischer in June 2005.

Obviously, success requires a supportive policy framework and public–private partnerships of the kind described at the conference and recorded in these proceedings. The conference played a key role in jettisoning stereotypes and allowing delegates to witness the concern that the scientific staff and the leadership of large corporations showed for meeting world food production targets. Speakers from a wide range of private-sector and public-sector organisations played a key role in the conference outcomes. All presentations were well received. The effective application of new agricultural production techniques is currently being limited by a lack of extension capability. Crawford Fund training programs attempt to address this and the growing private-sector engagement in seed distribution and advisory services described by speakers from international agricultural research centres is also encouraging.

There was a lot that was new about the conference in 2009. For the first time we integrated the seminar component of the event with the dinner and the so-called Parliamentary Breakfast, opening the latter two to all participants. We also introduced a modest registration fee to partially offset the cost of the event, including the dinner and breakfast. It is informative to note that this had minimal impact on participant numbers and seemed to ensure that everyone stayed throughout the seminar. Another innovation in 2009 was the extended panel discussions which concluded the seminar component of the conference and allowed questions from the floor to be collated and answered sequentially.

The Conference is possible only because of the generous support of our sponsors. A full list of sponsors is incorporated in these proceedings but I should like to express my thanks to those who

have provided sustained support for the conference since its inception some 20 years ago and to the sponsors who have joined us for the first time.

Finally, I should like to express my personal appreciation of the time and effort invested by all of our speakers in making the event such a success. In particular, I would wish to thank Foreign Minister the Hon. Stephen Smith and Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance the Hon. Bob McMullan for their contributions. Minister Smith's spontaneous endorsement of applied agricultural research as part of Australia's aid program was especially appreciated by our international guests. Similarly, Mr McMullan in his Sir John Crawford Lecture linked agricultural research and economics — the

two great strengths of Sir John himself — in a very positive way

Watch for our announcement of the 2010 conference topic and timetable.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Neil Andrew', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Hon. Neil Andrew AO
Chairman
Crawford Fund Board of Governors