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2010 AARES Distinguished Fellow

James C. McColl



Jim McColl is currently part-time Research Fellow, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems. He has held senior positions in numerous government departments and agencies responsible for managing the agricultural and fisheries industries. He has also undertaken or been involved in consultancies for a range of organizations including the Commonwealth, South Australian and Northern Territory Governments, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, and various Research and Development Corporations and Cooperative Research Centres. He is author or co-author of numerous reports, articles and book chapters, most recently in the area of water policy and economics. In 2005, he was awarded the Eureka Prize for water research jointly with Mike Young, and in 2006 he received a Centenary Medal for Agriculture from the University of Melbourne.

Jim grew up in Victoria where he spent most of his school holidays on the family farm at Acheron. He obtained his bachelor's degree in agricultural science from the University of Melbourne in 1956 and was subsequently appointed as an irrigation research and extension officer with the Victorian Department of Agriculture. In 1960, he was appointed District Agricultural Officer responsible for general irrigation farm advisory work. In 1963, he left the Department and established a private farm management consultancy, J.C. McColl and Associates Pty Ltd, operating in the irrigation areas of northern Victoria and southern NSW. From 1970 to 1976, he was Chairman and Managing Director of McColl Partners Pty Ltd, consultants in agriculture, forestry and resource management. From 1970 to 1972, he undertook a master's degree at the University of Melbourne and subsequently joined the staff as Senior Lecturer in Farm Management Economics. In 1976, he was appointed by the South Australian Government as Director of Agriculture

and Fisheries, and in 1980 he was appointed as Director-General of Agriculture. During this period, Jim was actively involved in the development of agricultural policy, mainly through the Standing Committee of Agriculture and the Australian Agricultural Council of Ministers and associated committees. In 1979, he was also appointed as Chairman and Managing Director of SAGRIC International, a company owned by the South Australian Government providing international consulting and project management services in agriculture, land administration and education. In 1985, he joined the Industries Commission (now Productivity Commission) as a full-time Commissioner undertaking a number of inquiries including dairy marketing arrangements, vegetable and vegetable products, tobacco marketing, and various manufacturing industries.

Jim has been involved in projects in many developing countries, initially in 1969 at an irrigation research and development project in Thailand, and subsequently with various projects in Central Java (1972–1973), North Africa and the Middle East (1976–1985), the Philippines (1988–1989), and Tanzania and Zimbabwe (1991). Another major involvement over the last 30 years has been with several important agricultural policy inquiries and reviews including the Review of Agricultural Policy by the Balderstone Committee (1981–1982) and a number of Industries Commission Inquiries (1982–1994). In 1986, he was appointed as the Royal Commissioner into the Grain Storage, Handling and Transport System in Australia. In 1990, he chaired a Review of Agricultural and Related Education (Higher Education). In 1997, he was appointed as Chairman of a national Review of the Rural Adjustment Scheme for the Commonwealth Government. Jim's experience in natural resource agency management led to appointments as the inaugural Chairman, Australian Fisheries Management Authority (1992–2000) and Presiding Member, South Australian River Murray Catchment Water Management Board (1998–2001). In 2001, he joined CSIRO Land and Water, Policy and Economic Research Unit as a part-time Research Fellow.