MEDIA RELEASE
2012 International Development Conference

THE SCRAMBLE FOR NATURAL RESOURCES:
More Food, Less Land?
Parliament House, Canberra, 9 - 10 October
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CREATING MORE FOOD BY USING LESS LAND: HOW CAN SCIENCE HELP?

Agriculture holds enormous potential to reduce poverty in the developing world, to strengthen the sustainability of our global food system, and to rebuild and revitalise fragile communities so they can move from dependency to self-sufficiency. But this can only happen if we take scientific innovations and move them along the chain into farmers' hands and people's stomachs.

This is the message to be given by Dr Frank Rijsberman, Chief Executive Officer of the CGIAR Consortium, as part of discussion at the Crawford Fund's 2012 annual development conference titled **The Scramble for Natural Resources: More Food, Less Land?** on 9-10 October in Parliament House, Canberra. International and Australian specialists will consider Australian and global dimensions of issues relating to competition for natural resources from agriculture, mining, urbanisation and environment services; the impacts this is having on food security, and action to be considered by law-makers.

With limitations to the amount of new land that will be available for cultivation in the coming years, Dr Rijsberman believes the solution to feeding the world's growing population will have to come from land that is already in use for agricultural purposes – and science will be the answer.

"In the 1960-70s it was the development of improved varieties of wheat and rice - varieties that could produce far greater yields and resist disease – that spearheaded the Green Revolution in Asia, Latin America, the Near East and the Middle East. Millions of lives were saved from starvation thanks to these new varieties developed by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the International Rice Research Institute," Dr Rijsberman said.

"It wasn't just poor countries and farmers that benefited from the step-change through science. Australia ranks among the top 10 wheat-producing countries in the world and 98% of the area sown to wheat in Australia uses varieties developed by CIMMYT, estimated to have increased the value of outputs from the Australian wheat industry by at least $750 million," he said.

In terms of the developing world, Dr Rijsberman said agricultural science is already having a powerful impact, in many cases with Australia's assistance, and more can be done.

"Each year, we add another 75 million or so people to our planet, most residing in the developing world, especially in Asia and Africa. To feed all those people, we will need to increase food production by 70%.

"75% of this additional food will have to come from land already in use for agricultural purposes. So we have to use the land more productively and judiciously.

"Much of the additional food will be produced by small-scale farmers in developing countries, a majority of whom are women. These farmers tend to experience far lower yields than those we see in large, sophisticated agricultural systems like here in Australia, for example.

"Most of the increased production will have to occur where the food is consumed – in developing countries, including the marginal and isolated areas where the poor, and poorest of the poor, tend to live. These are people for whom food equals 80-90% of the household budget, who are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and to food price spikes.

"We have to produce all this additional food in a context of climate change, with episodes of extreme weather and unpredictability. So, we must be climate smart and balance food production with environmental protection.

"To address all these challenges we must increase investment and commitment; adopt holistic approaches that span from the microscope to the marketplace; develop new talent, and use greater collaborations for synergy and innovation, " he concluded.

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