

Foreword

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Foreword

In the principled belief that a conference built around high quality speakers making evidence-based presentations will lead to more sensible discussion on policy options, the Crawford Fund has never shied away from controversial topics — and we have addressed quite a few in our 25 years.

On this basis, I am confident that with this 2012 conference we have been able to further the Australian debate about issues such as foreign investment in land, forestry and the best use of water. The conference also discussed the issues confronting mining and rural industries as they relate to both developing countries and Australia, and how agricultural research, development and policy change can help ensure that the range of competitors for the globe's natural resources all get the 'fair go' they and the planet deserve.

We were particularly fortunate to have an outstanding panel of international and Australian speakers, all of whom came here without remuneration, from as far away as West Africa, Europe and the USA. Their participation would not have been possible without our sponsors, including in many cases the speakers' host organisations. They are all listed in the Acknowledgements.

Interest in the 2012 conference was such that we needed to close registrations early. The point about the number of delegates is that, as a scan of the list reveals, they comprised a very broad grouping of people with an interest in food security: scientists and researchers, policy and decision makers, farmers, NGO representatives, aid workers and members of the general public. Many of these return again and again to this annual event, to address sometimes controversial but always interesting issues.

We are particularly pleased that we were able to again offer scholarships for young Australian scientists, and concessions for students, as part of our efforts to encourage young people into careers for agricultural R&D. A further widening of our demographic at the 2012 conference was achieved through attendance by a number of African scientists, who were beneficiaries of Australia Awards.

None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary talent and commitment of our very small secretariat led by Denis Blight. I express my appreciation for their hard work, and make particular mention of Cathy Reade, the Fund's inimitable Director of Public Affairs and Communication, and Director of the Conference.



Hon. John Kerin AM
Chairman, The Crawford Fund

