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HAWKESBURY COMMUNIQUÉ

We, the participants of the conference called FEEDING SYDNEY, held at the Hawkesbury campus of the University of Western Sydney, (UWS), on 24 September 2009, come from a wide range of groups all interested in future supplies of good food.

We note with concern the following facts relating to the complex issues identified at the "Feeding Sydney" Conference:

1. Demand for food is growing. World population is estimated to grow from the current 6.8 to 9.5 billion by 2050, leading the UN to predict that global food production will need to double to feed both increased population and improved food intake per capita in developing countries.
2. The resource base underpinning agriculture is threatened. This doubling of food production needs to occur in the face of:
 - i. A continuing degradation in the bio-physical resource base.
 - ii. Threats to the integrity of the world's ecosystems.
 - iii. Growing scarcity of key inputs such as land, water, energy and skilled human resources.
3. We are unprepared for this looming challenge at both local as well as international levels and lack an understanding of the impacts international factors will have on Australia. Australia does not have a national framework for policy and strategic planning to address food security nor a clear understanding of the nation's role in producing its own food or in assisting other countries to feed themselves.
4. Australia is complacent about the challenges to food security. There is a lack of appreciation by society in general of the challenges to future food security, and there is a lack of appreciation of the interconnectedness of environment, agriculture, food and health.

We believe Australians need:

1. A National Food Strategy. The strategy should plan for future food security to 2030. It should incorporate policies relating to the natural resources underpinning agriculture such as land, water, energy and human resources. Key linkages between food and environment, and food and health, would be central to the strategy.
2. Increased priority should be given to education and public engagement activities to promote an understanding of food security and its imperatives. These activities need to focus on human health, food and nutrition, climate change, water, energy and carbon, and the integrity of ecosystem services.

3. Increased investment is required in research and development appropriate to future food security. Existing data on the resources utilised in agriculture and food are fragmentary, yet these data are required to plan the future allocation of resources where there are competing claims on land and water resources between food and energy, or food and urban expansion. There needs to be better integration of policy, science, planning and practice.
4. The role of fresh healthy food in reducing chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer and obesity needs to be promoted. Greater awareness by urban consumers of the agrifood systems that support their lifestyles is needed as part of heightened appreciation of the role of rural communities. Public education programs need to target all stakeholders in the food supply chain; producers, processors, wholesale, retail, service industries, and consumers.

Specific points contributed from delegates:

Demand increasing

- Population increasing between now and 2050; global from 6.8 to 9.5 billion, Australia from 22 to 35 million, NSW from 6.9 to 10.2 million, Sydney from 4.3 to 6.9 million.
- Australia has been a major exporter of food. As more countries look to import food, Australia will be expected to continue as an exporter.
- Rising living standards in developing countries lead to changes in diet, including more protein based foods requiring more input resources.

Future supply threatened

- Climate change will result in less rainfall and higher temperatures in South Eastern Australia and much less water for irrigating agriculture.
- Increase in energy costs due to scarcity and policy responses (Emissions Trading Scheme) will force changes in farming practices and drive up cost of food.
- Competing claims on land for mining (coal) or urban expansion takes some of our most productive land permanently out of food production.
- Human capacity constraint to future food security. Need to find ways to attract more young people into agrifood systems and to increase the number of students studying agriculture or food science at University.

Policy initiatives

- Need a clear definition of food security that is widely supported. For example, food security incorporates elements of food supply, but also includes access and affordability issues.
- Need coordination of food policy at national, state and local levels.
- Food security can not occur without water security.
- Review international developments in food policy, for example the integration of environment, agriculture and health in Canada.
- Promote regional decentralisation of population.

Planning initiatives

- Need for better, more reliable evidence in planning, particularly with respect to sustainability of resource use (land, water, energy).
- Planning laws and regulations to support local agriculture, incentives to farm.
- Sydney Basin agricultural land is a special case with specific circumstances requiring specific planning response that considers a wide range of values (food, environment, aesthetic, recreational, educational, community)
- Coordination between NSW government and local governments in land use planning/zoning.
- Establish agricultural precincts to avoid land use conflicts.

Research initiatives

- Facilitate data sharing and coordination between government agencies, universities and private sector.
- Research aimed at supporting the planning process. For example, applying science to resolve conflict over resource use.
- Research into organic food growing methods.
- Improved methods/technology for using recycled water and recycled organics in food production systems.
- Quantify ecosystem services so these services can be valued in land use planning.
- Improving efficiency of resource use in agrifood systems.
- Research to quantify trade-offs so rational decisions can be made.

Educational initiatives

- Consumers require education on sustainability of agrifood systems.
- Educate consumers on their rights and responsibilities as food consumers, promote concept of food citizens.
- Campaign to promote consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables. Buy local first, Australia second.
- Campaign targeting reduction of waste of water and food at the household scale.
- Industry targeted education for transforming the agrifood sector.
- Human capacity constraints in agrifood systems need to be addressed. Somehow need to attract more students into agrifood courses at TAFE and university level.

Community development

- Give greater priority to community cultural development associated with local food systems.
- Need to consider social equity of agrifood systems.
- Marketing of local food systems.
- Equity for small producers compared to large producers.
- Support home gardeners to increase food self-sufficiency.
- Social inclusion and social responsibility legislation.
- Encourage and support grower organisations and direct marketing.

Other

- Need to minimise waste across the food supply chain.
- Food labelling to assist consumers in their food choices, sustainability and/or health related.
- Require 'champions' or 'leaders' to drive process of change.
- Clearly label Australian grown and manufactured food.
- Acknowledge the urgency to develop policy and to address the key issues.