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Food security – action plan to sustain our harvest

The NSW Government has unveiled an action plan to tackle the growing global problem of food security, Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald said today.

The Minister unveiled the plan, *Research for Action – Productivity and Food Security*, as part of a major food security forum held in Sydney today, featuring experts from science and industry.

“Food security is one of the biggest issues facing our planet,” Mr Macdonald said.

“Today’s event in Sydney brings together some of the brightest minds, including leading scientists and industry experts, to look at how we can overcome this challenge and increase our agricultural productivity.

“Providing food has been a challenge for society for centuries, but the primary industries sector is experiencing rapid change.

“World-wide food shortages, rising food prices, the global financial crisis, a changing climate, other environmental issues, skill shortages and increasing biosecurity threats are issues affecting food security right now.

“Fortunately, consumers in NSW are unlikely to go hungry in the foreseeable future, however for the developing world - the food crisis has already arrived

“Global food output must increase by 75 per cent by the year 2025, and it must have doubled by 2050 to meet expected demand.

“NSW plays a vital role in directly feeding people in developing nations because we export around half of our agricultural produce and our research helps developing nations address food security issues.

“Farmers in NSW need to consider how they can produce more food in the future, using the same amount of resources.”

The Minister said research, improvements in technology and working with industry partners are some of the best ways to improve agriculture productivity and conquer the food shortage.

“Industry & Investment NSW has a major role in ensuring domestic and global food security, especially when NSW exports around half of our produce,” Mr Macdonald said.

“Research is critical to our State’s agricultural industries, which are worth \$7.7 billion and employ around 73,400 people across NSW.

“I am pleased to say that Industry & Investment NSW has more than 700 scientists and technicians working on more than 900 projects at any one time.

“These projects include the adaptation of new technologies to improve resource use such as water efficiency. For example, Hawkesbury Nepean farmers can save water by receiving a daily text message notifying them on how much water their crop has used and determining the optimum crop water use.

“Now, more than ever, it’s time we start working on solutions to sustain our harvest.”

The Research for Action plan contains a number of strategies including:

- Developing new ways to increase productivity and at the same time use resources more efficiently;
- Developing new crops, improved ways for feeding livestock, better breeding systems for plants and animals;
- Finding alternative markets for agricultural products;
- Establishing functional foods that reduce the risk of lifestyle diseases; and
- Developing innovative strategies to achieve cost-effective increases in production.

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