



# AUSTRALIA



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## **Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

24 February 2009

### **Agricultural Session**

#### **Statement by Mr Dean Merrilees Head of the Australian Delegation**

(Check against delivery)

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Madam Chair

I will keep my remarks brief and just highlight a few key points from our written statement.

Like all countries, Australia is concerned about the impact on food security of the recent global food and economic crises.

Australia views agricultural productivity growth and efficient markets as the main contributors to food security for a growing population, poverty reduction and overall development. As many of these issues are covered by the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, it is timely for the Commission to take a close interest in global agriculture today.

With access to arable land and water becoming more difficult, Australia believes productivity gains will be the main source of growth and the primary means to satisfy increased demand for food and agriculture products.

Global *per capita* agricultural production has increased since the 1980s, with much of this growth occurring in developing countries. However, as we have heard, agricultural performance has varied widely across different regions. Future productivity gains are expected to be less easily achieved.

It is also clear that the international community must take strong steps to improve global food security through appropriate policy settings, including efficient global markets and more open international agricultural trade.

Open markets allow farmers to respond to high food prices and can provide the incentive to produce more.

The panel today has reminded us of the range of tools available to achieve a more sustainable base for agricultural production. In Australia, farm practices and land management practices continue to evolve to adjust to Australia's environment while still improving productivity.

Australia also recognises that climate change has the potential to adversely affect agricultural production in many countries. As was suggested by our panel today, Australia strongly supports integrating adaptation responses into agricultural and natural resource management policies and programs.

Domestically, Australia's research and development (R&D), innovation and technology transfer system has played an important role in improving agricultural productivity. Australia strategically invests in a system of R&D corporations to improve natural resource management, on-farm production, and development and adoption of new technology. A recent study found that every AU\$1 invested in R&D delivered AU\$11 in total benefits to primary producers and the wider community.

In conclusion, Australia strongly supports efforts to liberalise trade in agriculture and the role of research, development and innovation and technology transfer in lifting agricultural productivity and sustainability, and to improve food security. Australia also supports the integration of adaptation responses to climate change into agricultural and natural resource management policies and programs.

Thank you