

## **Statement by Australia**

### **CSD-16: Drought Thematic Discussion, 7 May 2008**

Australia would like to thank today's distinguished panel for its contributions. They gave us a clear focus on the growing challenges we face as climate change threatens to increase the frequency and severity of droughts around the world. The risks this poses for agricultural production, rural communities, food security and the natural resource base are obvious.

We feel this very directly in Australia as we emerge (we hope) from a painfully long and unusually widespread drought which has lasted for more than six years in some parts of our country.

Recent research from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) suggests on the basis of the Stern Report's projected climate change impacts that we could face significant drops in global agricultural production. For key commodities - such as wheat, beef, dairy and sugar - the reductions in global production could be as much as 2% to 6% by 2030 and up to 5% to 11% by 2050.

Renewed attention to managing and adapting to these circumstances is timely and important.

Australia's approach to national drought management reflects much of the advice from the panel experts this morning. We have invested in research and development initiatives as well as data collection and dissemination and management support tools to help our farmers prepare for and manage drought. But Australia's approach has as its centrepiece self-reliance and integrated risk management at the farm-producer level. Federal and State authorities are also working together to sharpen focus on protecting and maintaining the agricultural and natural resource base and we are encouraging early recovery of agricultural and rural industries following drought events, consistent with their long-term sustainable levels.

We are also working with international partners to extend our experience and support climate preparedness and management initiatives. A good example is a recently-launched partnership between Australia's main scientific body, the CSIRO, and the Mekong River Commission to develop climate change strategies with a focus on threats to food security.

Australia welcomes CSD16's focus on this important issue and the enhanced attention to drought of key international institutions, as outlined by the representative of the World Bank today.

Finally, we note the contribution that can be played by new crop varieties with greater stress tolerances for drought and heat. In this respect the work of the FAO's Commission on Genetic Resources and the Global Crop Diversity Trust are important initiatives.

Thank you Mr Chair