

Growing more with less

It's certainly early to call for a world famine or a farmer apocalypse as media recently suggested, but it is always the time to assess and reassess the correspondence between available resources for agriculture production and the projected food/fibre/energy demand. The latest edition of the *Farm Policy Journal* published by the Australian Farm Institute presents the latest assessments of agriculture resource levels.

The question of water and land availability has been well set in Australia. However, the arrival of international players in the land market and the possibility of consumers to select their product depending on a claimed resource footprint (carbon, water) seem to make these issues a bit more complex.

Other major agriculture resources – labour, fertilizers – are also showing increasing signs of concern, underlining the need for careful appraisal and attention.

The August quarter *Farm Policy Journal*, '**Growing more with less**', covers the issue of the current assessment methods and results regarding fertilisers, labour, water and land availability. Articles in the *Journal* consider International and Australian perspectives on these issues.

'Over recent years the constraints on "inputs" available for agriculture has expanded beyond just inputs such as land and water, as price shocks have occurred for fuels, fertilisers and agricultural chemicals, and labour has been diverted away from agriculture into the mining sector, which is able to afford much higher rates of pay', said Mick Keogh, Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute.

'Discussion needs to start about how the sector might be able to respond to a market environment that includes both higher global demand for agricultural products, and also greater limits on the availability of natural resources and other farm inputs.

'The common message arising from the issues considered in these papers, and other future constraints that will be faced by the sector, is that rates of agricultural productivity growth will need to accelerate significantly in order for Australian agriculture to remain competitive and continue generating important export revenue.' said Mick Keogh.

Journal papers include the following:

- **Securing a Sustainable Phosphorus Future for Australia** – by Dana Cordell and Stuart White from the Sustainable Institute, University of Sydney, Australia.
- **Peak Phosphorus, Food Security, Environment and Climate Change** – by Nick Drew, Executive Manager of the Fertilizer Industry Federation of Australia (FIFA).
- **Water Footprinting: A Consumption-Oriented Approach to Addressing Physical Water Scarcity** – by Bradley G Ridoutt from the CSIRO Sustainable Agriculture National Research Flagship.
- **Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council Labour Market Information Research on Recruitment and Retention** – by Danielle Vinette, Executive Director, Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council.

- **Can Farm Labour Management Practices Lead to Sustained Competitive Advantage? Lessons from Afar** – by Amin W Mugeru from the Institute of Agriculture, and School of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, the University of Western Australia.
- **Making Foreign Investment Work for Developing Country Agriculture** – by David Hallam from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome, Italy.

The August 2010 quarter *Farm Policy Journal* preview is [available here](#).

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