



# Food Security through Rural Development

Lifting Agricultural Productivity, Improving Rural Livelihoods and Building Community Resilience

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## The Global Food Crisis

While global food prices have fallen from their peaks of mid-2008, they remain considerably higher today than they were in the 1990s and early 2000s. This trend of higher food prices is forecast by the United Nations and World Bank as likely to continue for at least the next 10 years. The spike in prices is largely attributable to the failure of global food production to keep pace with growing demand. Population growth, per capita income growth and changing diets, climatic variability, limitations on arable land and water, distorted global food trade, biofuel feedstock demand and falling investment in agriculture in developing countries – especially in agricultural research - are critical factors in this trend.

The compounding effect of higher food and fuel prices together with the global recession has had a dramatic impact on the developing world. Hunger is set to reach an historic high in 2009, with the United Nations estimating one sixth of humanity, or over one billion people in developing countries having inadequate access to food. This is an increase of almost 150 million in just four years. There are also grave fears that this crisis in food security could reverse the valuable gains made in overcoming poverty in the last decade and stifle progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

## Australia's Response

The Australian Government is very concerned about the impact that ongoing food insecurity and price volatility is having on the poor in developing countries. To play its part in addressing this, on 12 May 2009, it announced a four-year, A\$464 million global food security initiative. The initiative aims to assist countries in Asia, Pacific and Africa affected by the global food crisis. It also reflects the government's commitment to increase support for Africa, with A\$100 million committed to food security across the continent. The initiative focuses on three components:

- 1) Lifting agricultural productivity
- 2) Improving rural livelihoods; and
- 3) Building community resilience.

### Lifting Agricultural Productivity

Australia will support increased agricultural productivity by increasing investments in agricultural research. Key strategic partnerships, including between the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and other centres of Australian expertise, will be enhanced. The Government will also double current funding to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) network. The CGIAR brings together 15 international research centres to improve coordination and undertake joint research among centres and their partners on agricultural research for development. Collectively, the CGIAR works in 100 countries, utilizes 2000 scientists and invests over US\$500 million per year in agricultural research. It focuses on all facets of the agricultural sector including environmentally friendly farming techniques and food policies which benefit the poor. Without the CGIAR's work, it is estimated that developing countries would produce 7-8 per cent less food, world food and feed grain prices would be 18-21 per cent higher, and 13-15 million more children would be malnourished.

