



AUSTRALIA



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Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

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Drought Session

Statement by Mr Stuart McKay Member of the Australian Delegation

(Check against delivery)

Madam chair

As parts of our country endure an unusually long and widespread drought, Australia finds this discussion on drought very relevant and timely.

Australia would like to thank the distinguished panel for its contributions. Australia considers the Secretary-General's report provides a good overview of responses to the challenges and obstacles highlighted in the discussions on drought at CSD 16.

On drought policy, Australia supports the concept of self reliance and believes that governments should provide a policy framework that allows producers to prepare for, and cope with, drought.

Australia promotes approaches which:

- encourage primary producers and other sections of rural communities to adopt self-reliant approaches for managing climate variability;
- maintain and protect the agricultural and environmental resource base during periods of extreme climate stress; and
- ensure early recovery of agricultural and rural industries, consistent with long-term sustainable levels.

In supporting these approaches, Australia notes that climate change is likely to lead to increased frequency and severity of extreme climatic events, such as drought.

Analysis by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics indicates that climate changes and associated declines in agricultural productivity and global economic activity may affect global production of key commodities. For example wheat, beef, dairy and sugar production could decline by two to six per cent by 2030 and by five to 11 per cent by 2050, compared to a “no climate change impacts” scenario.

In response, Australia supports integrating adaptation responses into agricultural and natural resource management programs and policies.

As an example, the Australian Government launched a partnership with the CSIRO and Mekong River Commission to develop climate change prevention and adaptation strategies in the Mekong Basin, with a focus on food security in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

Farming communities will also need crop varieties with greater tolerance to direct and indirect climate change stresses, such as drought and heat, and pest and disease threats respectively, to adapt to climate change. Australia also supports investment in more efficient and sustainable irrigation and farming practices.

Australia is pleased to note the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Global Crop Diversity Trust in ensuring the conservation, sustainable use and access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

Finally, Australia would like to note that research and development has contributed to the continuing strong growth in Australia’s agricultural productivity, despite ongoing fluctuations in international markets and seasonal conditions. Examples of successful projects include: improved weather forecasting tools, better water management models and crop species, which help farmers in making decisions on the best cropping and pasture systems to use in the face of changing climatic conditions.

Thank you Madam Chair