

MEDIA BACKGROUND

Economists to focus on Northern Australia's environment at annual conference

Invited speakers and story ideas at AARES 2009

About the Conference:

The Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES) is an independent association of persons and organisations interested in agricultural, resource and environmental economics.

Once a year all members of the society come together at the annual conference to discuss the latest research and to hear broader perspectives about where the issues fit in the Australian, New Zealand and world economies.

The theme for this conference is Tracking North: New Challenges in Environmental and Resource Issues. Some key areas of focus for the conference include: emerging challenges in climate change and emissions trading; future agriculture industries and development across Australia; advances in environmental and natural resource management policy; marine and fishing; and agricultural biotechnology.

The conference is being held at the Sebel Cairns Hotel, Cairns, North Queensland from the 10th to the 13th February.

Following is a list of story ideas for our Australian and International invited speakers. Included is session times and contact details for these presenters.

Media enquiries to:

Anthea Coggan: (m) 0414 390 760
(e) Anthea.coggan@csiro.au

Shanna Sheldrick: (m) 0437 377 107
(e) shanna@aomevents.com

Conference website <http://www.alloccasionsgroup.com/AARES09>

What does a national emissions trading scheme mean for Australia's resources sectors

Professor Ross Garnaut recently led the Australian Federal, State and Territory governments review on Climate Change and Policy Responses to Climate Change. The Garnaut Climate Change Review Report was presented to the Prime Minister of Australia in September 2008.

In this review Professor Garnaut of the University of Melbourne reports that the Australian agricultural and resource industries will suffer more than other parts of the Australian economy from insufficiently strong and ineffective climate change mitigation policies.

In this presentation, Professor Garnaut will reflect on an important and often neglected way in which global mitigation policies could affect the agricultural and resource industries. Professor Garnaut will highlight that poorly conceived policies designed to shield trade exposed industries from the effects of mitigation policies will distort trade and investment. Professor Garnaut will highlight how these policies have the potential to damage global trading regimes.

There are, however, a number of economically and environmentally efficient ways through which these problems can be avoided, Professor Garnaut will provide discussion of these in his presentation.

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| Presentation title: | Issues for Australia's resources sectors (minerals, energy, agriculture, forestry and fishing) surrounding the National Emissions Trading Scheme. |
| Presentation scheduled: | 9.00am – 10.00am Wednesday 11 th February |
| Contact: | Veronica Webster |
| Phone: | +61 (0)2 6125 3100 |
| Fax: | +61 (0)2 6249 8057 |
| Mob: | +61 (0)423 717 091 |
| Email: | veronica.webster@anu.edu.au |
| NOTES | Professor Garnaut is only available at the conference on the 11 th February |

What makes agriculture productive?

Improvements in agricultural productivity are critically important for maintaining the environment and improving standards of living.

Professor Chris O'Donnell of the University of Queensland has analysed the components of global agricultural productivity growth from 1970 to 2001. Over this period, only three countries have maximized agricultural productivity: Nepal, Zimbabwe and Thailand.

In this talk, Professor O'Donnell explains why larger agricultural producers have not been maximizing productivity.

Presentation title: **Measuring and decomposing agricultural productivity and profitability change**
Presentation scheduled: 4.00pm – 5.00pm Wednesday 11th February
Contact: Professor Chris O'Donnell
 School of Economics, University of Queensland
Phone: 07 3365 7299
Email: c.odonnell@economics.uq.edu.au

What have we learned from biotechnology?

The agricultural biotechnology industry emerged 30 years ago, hitting the market with a few spectacular commercial successes 15 years later.

But has agricultural biotechnology met the expectations of early observers and visionaries? Has it fulfilled its potential so far? And is it gathering speed or slowing down?

Professor Kalaitzandonakes from the University of Missouri-Columbia answers these questions as well as questions about the future economic impacts of agricultural biotechnology.

Presentation title: **Agricultural biotechnologies and their economic impacts: The next 10 years"**
Presentation scheduled: 10.30am – 12 noon Friday 13th February
Contact: Professor Kalaitzandonakes
 University of Missouri - Colombia
Email: Email: KalaitzandonakesN@Missouri.edu

Investment in agriculture from the past and into the future

Technological investment has been behind the sizable and sustained productivity growth of agriculture in Australia and the rest of the world in the 20th century. But can the agricultural productivity of the past continue into the future?

Professor Phil Pardey from the University of Minnesota has reviewed and re-evaluated the state of play regarding productivity developments in agriculture and the research investment trends that helped bring them about. Based on this analysis, Professor Pardey will reflect on the future of agricultural productivity.

Presentation title: **Investing in agriculture to make a difference: Theory and practice, principles and priorities**
Presentation scheduled: 2.30pm – 3.30pm Friday 13th February
Contact: Professor Phil Pardey
Director, International Science and Technology Practice and Policy Centre
University of Minnesota
Email: ppardey@umn.edu

Learning from the past to improve the future in natural resource management policy making

Past national policies for environmental and natural resource management in Australia have fallen well short of achieving their stated goals. Learning from these shortcomings can assist in the development of improved policies into the future.

Professor David Pannell from the University of Western Australia will highlight some key lessons learned from past schemes and discuss how these can assist in application of Australia's new national natural resource management policy program, 'Caring for our Country'.

Presentation title: **Australian Environmental and Natural Resource Policy – from the Natural Heritage Trust to Caring for our Country**
Presentation scheduled: 11.00am – 12.30pm Thursday 12th February
Contact: Professor David Pannell (Federation Fellow)
School of Agricultural and resource Economics,
University of Western Australia
Phone: 08 6488 4735
Email: david.pannell@uwa.edu.au

The resilience of the Great Barrier Reef

Even with strong and co-ordinated global action occurring to mitigate climate change, the future of vulnerable ecosystems such as coral reefs remains grim. This will remain the case unless action is taken to improve the resilience of these systems to the shocks that are certain to arise as a result of climate change.

Professor John Quiggin of the University of Queensland and Professor Terry Hughes James Cook University have been analysing actions that could be taken to bolster the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef. Their findings and policy implications will be presented in this talk.

Presentation title: **Climate change: Can the Great Barrier Reef be saved?**
Presentation scheduled: 11am – 12.30pm Thursday 12th February
Contact: Professor John Quiggin (Federation Fellow)
 Economics and Political Science at the University of
 Queensland
Phone: 07 3346 9646
Email: j.quiggin@uq.edu.au
Contact Professor Terry Hughes
 James Cook University, Townsville
Phone: 07 4781 4222
Email: Terry.Hughes@jcu.edu.au

Prioritising actions and funding for conservation

Quantitative decision tools are increasingly being used to solve conservation questions such as how to prioritise conservation projects and allocate funds to monitoring.

Despite the value of these quantitative tools, the conservation policy and management community is often ill-equipped and resistant to these approaches to decision-making.

Professor Hugh Possingham from the University of Queensland will discuss why this is the case, ways this might be resolved and how this will benefit conservation investment.

Presentation title: **The business of biodiversity : Interfacing science and economics**
Presentation scheduled: 10.30am – 12.00pm Friday 13th February
Contact: Professor Hugh Possingham
 Director of the Ecology Centre, University of
 Queensland
Phone: 07 3365 9766
Email: h.possingham@uq.edu.au

Development gains and growing pains for resources industries in Australia's North

The regional economies of northern Australia have become increasingly internationally connected over the past 10-20 years.

Along with many 'development gains' associated with growth in the North, the region has had to face a number of 'growing pains'. Ms Jane Melanie from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics will explore these gains and pains with a focus on minerals and energy.

Presentation title: **The energetic north: Development gains and growing pains**
Presentation scheduled: 11.00am – 12.30pm Thursday 12th February
Contact: Ms Jane Melanie
 General Manager, Resources and Energy Branch
Phone: 02 6272 2349
Email: j.melanie@abare.gov.au

The future of biofuels in Australia

High fuel prices and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are two of many factors contributing to an increased global interest in ethanol to supplement current fuel sources.

Current ethanol production in Australia is based on low grade starch and molasses leading to debate about food versus fuel.

In the longer term, second generation processes from agricultural and forestry residues and high yield 'energy crops' offer greater potential for increased ethanol production.

Professor Peter Rogers from the University of NSW will discuss the many opportunities and potential problems for future biofuel development in Australia.

Presentation title: **Energy and agriculture: state of knowledge of current and emerging biofuel systems**
Presentation scheduled: 11.00am – 12.30pm Thursday 12th February
Contact: Professor Peter Rogers
 Centre for energy research and policy analysis
 University of NSW, Sydney, Australia
Phone: 02 9385 3896
Email: p.rogers@unsw.edu.au

Improving recreational fishing management in Australia

Recreational fishing is a major component of many fisheries. Yet, basic understanding of recreational fishing behaviour and the management of recreational fisheries lags behind that of commercial fishing. Improving recreational fisheries management is becoming increasingly important as recreational fishers get greater access to fish stocks in competition with commercial fishers.

Dr Paul McLeod from the University of Western Australia analyses the many issues that need to be addressed before recreational fisheries management can be developed with the same degree of coherence that underpins approaches to commercial management.

Presentation title: **Recreational fishing policy in Australia: A case of government failure?**
Presentation scheduled: 10.30am – 12.00pm Friday 13th February
Contact: Dr Paul McLeod
Business School, University of Western Australia
Phone: 08 6488 2498
Email: paul.mcleod@uwa.edu.au

Enhancing adoption of technology for an enhanced farming future

For farmers to adopt a new technology, the technology needs to be better than current practice, be less complex and be compatible with current farming systems.

Generally, technologies under development do not conform to these criteria.

Mr Kevin Goss from Future Farm Industries CRC, University of Western Australia has been analysing technological adoption can be enhanced in the Australian dryland farming community. Demonstrating the potential benefit of the technology prior to adoption as well as building a culture of technology adoption all assist in overall adoption. Mr Goss will discuss how this can be done this in his presentation.

Presentation title: **Farm future industries for Australia**
Presentation scheduled: 10.30am – 12.00pm Friday 13th February
Contact: Kevin Goss
Future Farm Industries CRC, University of Western Australia, Crawley, W.A.
Phone: 08 6488 2555
Email: kevin.goss@futurefarmcrc.com.au