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Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Global partnerships needed to harness agriculture innovation

Agricultural research and education institutes must work in global partnerships to sustainably raise agricultural productivity to feed an estimated two billion extra people in the next decade, according to the keynote speaker at the [17th Australian Agronomy Conference](#) being held in Hobart today.

More than 350 agronomists and agricultural scientists will attend the four-day conference, which is organised by the [Australian Society of Agronomy](#) and hosted by the [Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture](#) (a joint venture between the [University of Tasmania](#) and [Tasmanian Government](#)).

Today's [keynote](#) speaker is Professor Martin Kropff, who is the new Director General of the Mexico-based International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT).

CIMMYT holds a massive bank of modern and ancient cereal grains and is working on selecting and improving varieties to help feed an estimated 800 million people in the world that currently go hungry every day - 98 per cent of all wheat grown in Australia is derived from CIMMYT varieties.

Professor Kropff says organisations have to work across disciplines and contexts to harness the power of agricultural innovation to transform agri-food systems.

"According to all predictions, the world must take a great step forward to meet the challenges of raising productivity, reducing resource use, adapting to climate change and creating a fairer and healthier food system," Professor Kropff said.

"For agricultural research to step up to the challenges facing the world today, it is necessary for agricultural research and education institutes to work in global partnerships."

"The global university sector must play an ever-greater role in providing vitality to agricultural innovation systems.

"This can be achieved by providing more exchange program opportunities for students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and PhD projects involving supervision from partner universities and research centres such as CIMMYT."

Head of the University of Tasmania's School of Land and Food and Director of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, Professor Holger Meinke, is leading discussions with Professor Kropff about forming research and research training collaborations between the University and CIMMYT.

"CIMMYT has had a major impact on Australia's grain industry and there are many opportunities for Tasmania to link in with the Centre's research and education to support Tasmania's expansion in intensive irrigated cropping of cereals and production of world-record yields."

Other topics being presented at [today's conference sessions](#) include:

- Coloured brome as a potential alternative to perennial ryegrass in high input grazing systems in Tasmania's Midlands (Rowan Smith).
- Grazing management to increase biodiversity (Rachel Lawrence)
- Companion pasture species benefits during the establishment phase (Brigid Watson)
- Potential for summer active grasses to minimise gaseous soil nitrogen losses (David McNee)
- Evaluation of chicory performance against perennial ryegrass during heat waves (Adam Langworthy).
- Effect of sowing date on grain yield and yield components of wheat (Rohan Brill)
- Using broadleaf crops to improve wheat grain yield and on farm profitability (Guangdi Li)
- The effect of fertiliser placement and row spacing on plant establishment and grain yield of lupins (Eric Koetz)
- Biotic and abiotic factors affecting potato yields in New Zealand (Alexandre Michel)

For more information on the conference program visit www.agronomy2015.com.au

Media are invited to attend all sessions of the conference, which is being held at Wrest Point Casino on 21, 22 and 24 September and to attend the field trips on 23 September.

The 17th Australian Agronomy Conference Twitter hashtag is **#agronomy2015**

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