

Ms. Sandy Robinson

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BIOGRAPHY

Sandy Robinson has an agricultural background with some twenty years experience in national public policy and program development and implementation. Through this experience she has developed a particular interest in agricultural production, rural landscapes and communities as co-evolving socio-ecological systems. Sandy has recently completed a Masters of Environment at ANU, focusing on food security issues in Australia. Prior to her studies, she held management positions with the Cooperative Research Centre for Greenhouse Gas Technologies and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, and was the National Heritage Trust Program Manager for the MD2001 Program, in the former Department of Primary Industries and Energy. Sandy's ten years of experience in Murray Darling Basin issues was based on close and extensive working relationships with rural industries and communities. She is strongly of the view that defining problems, developing solutions and implementing effective long term action, needs an approach that values and integrates the many and diverse community perspectives and establishes genuine partnerships.

ABSTRACT

Global Food Security - understanding complexity, trends and action

Australia produces 93% of its food supply. The World Food Crisis in 2008 elevated public concern about food security domestically, in the context of prolonged drought and adverse climate change scenarios. The crisis focused attention on Australia's capacity to continue to produce affordable quality food and to support the world food supply, regarded by some as a 'moral imperative'. Recent research has identified that food security is primarily viewed as an issue for developing countries, providing Australia with opportunities for expanded export and research activity. However, this research also identified three other strongly held views in the wider community, which each draws links between existing food supply problems and Australian food security. As a result, there are three alternate views to the dominant view on appropriate action by Australia on food security.

Similarly, the threats to global security are also contested. Global food security concerns are generally framed on expected population growth to 9 billion people, rising demand for food with increased living standards and the challenges of climate. Responses to these problem are: increased world supply; major R&D investment into new crop varieties suited to expected climatic changes; addressing resistance to GMO crops and exports and increased commercialisation of agriculture in developing countries. Internationally, it is widely accepted that the cost of food, not shortages, is the primary cause of world hunger while the growing number of people who are obese or overweight is now greater than those who are hungry. In a number of countries local people are resisting corporatisation of small farms and global trade which undermines their food security - looking for food sovereignty.

Allied research investigating regional and global food "flows" has identified an increasing dependency on a small set of core exporters of food. These 'core' exporters are increasingly looked to by countries facing existing or projected food shortages. Yet the production systems of these core countries are coming under increasing threats from a range of sources including predicted climate change, costs associated with emissions trading schemes, and local and global geopolitical influences.

Conclusion:

- A general lack of understanding of food security as a complex multi-disciplinary issue. Different perspectives on the problem are legitimate - illustrates complexity.
- Need better understanding of 'global food system' to define the complexity of food security as a problem, understand vulnerability and therefore the implications of current solutions and the value of alternate solutions.