



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release: 4 November 2011**

### **AUSTRALIA, CHINA JOIN ON GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY**

Researchers from Australia and China have joined hands in a bid to improve global food security by mounting a scientific counterattack on the pests and diseases that ravage food and tree crops.

The Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity (CRCNPB) has developed memoranda of understanding with two leading Chinese science agencies and a university to mount joint research programs aimed at curbing losses of grain and other vital crops to insects, moulds and plant diseases.

"Food security is a top national priority for China – and Prime Minister Julia Gillard has recently made it one for Australia as well. It is becoming a critical issue around the world. This is a deal that makes good sense from every perspective," the CEO of CRCNPB Dr Simon McKirdy said today.

"When we visited China to sign these agreements, we were told food is in fact the Chinese government's number two priority overall. And we saw clear evidence of the massive reinvestment and technical tooling-up they are now making in food and agricultural science. Compared with what's happening in Australia, it is huge – and the new partnership means we now stand to benefit from their investment in science."

The CRC signed MOUs with the Chinese Academy of Inspection and Quarantine and the Chinese Academy of State Administration of Grain and will shortly sign a third with Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University. These provide primarily for increased joint research, and greater exchange of scientists and PhD students between the partners.

The initial research focus of the new collaboration will be in diagnostics – timely identification of plant pests and diseases – and in the management of pests in stored grain.

"Worldwide, humanity loses anywhere between 8 and 20 per cent of its annual grain harvest to insects and moulds – that's enough food to feed every hungry person on the planet," Dr McKirdy explains.

"Australia is recognised as a world leader in dealing with insect pests in stored grain, and the Chinese are keen to partner with us in this area.

"Also they really emphasised their concerns about the need to reduce the use of fumigants and other chemicals used in food production.

“Australia has particular skills in developing clean, green approaches to grain hygiene and China is keen to find non-chemical solutions to grain pests, so this works well for both of us.”

The benefits from joint research collaboration can potentially flow on to other countries, helping to improve global food security in general, Dr McKirdy says.

China is a major market for Australian grain and horticultural exports, with potential to grow significantly, he adds. The biosecurity collaboration will assist this development. “Australia will benefit by building a greater understanding of the import requirements for Australian produce (as they apply to plant biosecurity) which will assist our grains and horticulture industries develop further markets in China.”

**More information:**

Dr Simon McKirdy, Chief Executive Officer, CRCNPB, 02 6201 2412

Max Knobel, Communications Manager, CRCNPB, 0402 327 087

<http://www.crcplantbiosecurity.com.au>