

PRIME MINISTER

AUSTRALIA STRENGTHENS FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA

Prime Minister Julia Gillard today announced a new initiative to share Australia's world leading expertise in food production with the people of Africa.

The Government will set up a new Australian International Centre for Food Security to provide valuable agricultural research and advice to African countries in need.

Africa holds 60 per cent of the world's uncultivated farmable land however one in three people still go hungry there every day.

Under-investment in agricultural research and innovation, along with a decline in agricultural productivity, are key factors affecting Africa's ability to bring about food security.

Australia has an important role to play in supporting African countries confronting the challenge of food security.

The new centre will offer greater support to help African countries strengthen their agricultural practices.

Australia has unique agricultural and scientific expertise and world class teaching and research institutions that are well-suited to African agriculture and food security.

This expertise includes dry-land and tropical farming, climate change adaptation, commercialisation of agricultural research and water and soil management.

The new centre will give farmers, government agencies and the private sector access to this expertise and other support from a large network of Australian, African and international research bodies.

The Australian Government will provide more than \$36 million to establish the centre which will be led by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

The new centre will be set up in Canberra and an office will be established in Africa to provide further support.

As an important first step, the centre will host an international conference, *Food Security in Africa: Bridging Research and Practice* next year.

The conference will bring together a range of Australian and African research partners, as well as international experts, to identify opportunities for cooperation.

Australia will also support the 'Research in Business' program of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa.

This funding, together with the work of the centre, will help put research products into the hands of farmers to improve their productivity.

This package of assistance builds on Australia's existing \$100 million initiative that is working with African and Australian partners, including ACIAR and the CSIRO, to improve crop yields, livestock health and rural livelihoods in Africa.

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