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A Word from the President

In this fast-changing world, I had a great start to my presidential term at the 70th AARES Annual Conference in Adelaide, which also featured Pre-Conference Workshops, the Early Career Economics Researcher Workshop (ECREW) Session, tours, and social events. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Local Organising Committee on the outstanding success of the conference and to thank all colleagues who participated in these events.

The conference welcomed a total of 417 delegates, with one-third based overseas and approximately one-quarter registered as students. During the conference, we also had the opportunity to pay tribute to leading senior AARES colleagues who have recently retired. The post-conference survey indicated a high overall satisfaction. In particular, the keynote presentation quality and diversity were highly rated, alongside similar positive feedback was received for the special sessions, contributed paper program, pre-conference workshops and

social events.

I look forward to further engagement throughout the year. My focus will be on continuing the important work undertaken in previous years, in alignment with our strategic plan. This includes conducting early career activities and preparations for the next AARES 2027 Conference in Melbourne.

During this period, I encourage all branches to organise activities for their members and, when possible, to facilitate cross-branch interactions. Thank you all for your continued commitment to AARES. Your contributions are highly appreciated and make a difference to our society.



Emilio Morales
AARES President

In Celebration

Professor John Rolfe was awarded a **Member of the Order of Australia (AM)** earlier this year, in recognition of his significant service to regional economic development as an economist and author.

Congratulations, John!



[Read more here](#)

Rick Llewellyn was awarded a **Seed of Light Award from GRDC** in recognition of his contribution to the South Australian grains industry.

Congratulations, Rick!



[Read more here](#)

In Memoriam

Obituary for Adam Loch

Former Editor of AJARE



In 1971, Dr Adam James Loch came into this world, did his best to set it on fire with a combination of wit and insight, and left it way too soon. Adam died on 4 September 2025 and spent the last three years of his life battling brain cancer, writing, educating students, and making people laugh.

Adam followed a non-traditional route into academia, and his real-life experiences, including being an irrigator in Emerald, helped shape the insights and understandings he brought to agricultural and resource economics. He was a gifted and prolific writer and was always hungry to work on something new, once he submitted the current draft. Scopus lists 71 documents, and there are still a couple more to be completed.

While Adam touched on a range of topics, including circular economy, health, gender, biosecurity and environmental issues, to name a few, he was a water nut. Markets, trade, risk and uncertainty, property rights, efficiency, theft, and transaction costs were but some of the areas he explored in Australia and overseas on water issues.

His expertise was recognised domestically when he was invited to give evidence to inquiries and a Royal Commission. He also provided insights into the management of Europe's largest irrigation dam. Adam won an ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) in 2015, and this allowed him freedom to explore, grow and become the researcher he was.

Adam held associate editor roles for the Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics and the Journal of Hydrology. His expertise in understanding and communicating research was a boon, especially for his postgraduate students.

Adam leaves behind a wife, a global network of friends, and numerous students who will remember his unwavering generosity, his humour, and the insights he shared.

I'm going to miss you, mate.

David Adamson

February 2025

AARES Annual Conference Wrap-up

The SA AARES state branch, along with the Local Organising Committee (Sarah Wheeler, Joshua Moore, Emilio Morales, Alec Zuo Lin Crase, Akwasi Ampofo, Di Zeng, Jeff Connor, Masood Azeem, Disha Gupta, Arif Watto, Constantin Seidl, Daniel Hill, Rida Akzar, Vandana Subroy, Stephanie McWhinnie, Bethany Cooper) **and our new conference organiser, Tara Cashman, proudly hosted AARES 2026 in Adelaide.**

The LOC was ably assisted by Lyn and around 10 other volunteers, plus support from

the Federal Council, all of whom played critical roles.

We had a full, jam-packed week of great research and fun activities, including:

- 2 Pre-conference workshops on Tuesday 10th Feb
- 2 Pre-conference tours (Adelaide Hills on Sunday 8th Feb and Beeronomics on Tuesday 10th)
- ECR day on Monday, 9th Feb
- 7 Keynote sessions which covered agricultural economics, environmental and institutional economics, and development economics (e.g., Dr Ken Henry, Prof Moriah Bostian, Dr Salomon Salcedo, A/Prof Nazmun Ratna, Dr Danielle Wood, A/Prof Tim Nelson, Dr Rick Llewellyn)
- 13 Special sessions across Wed and Friday
- 200 Contributed papers registered (from 354 submissions and 260 papers accepted)
- 30 Three-minute thesis participants,
- 20 Posters
- WEN: 80 attendees
- 91 Registrants involved in the mentoring program
- Conference Dinner, fun run/walk and Glenelg social night at the beach

The attendance by registration type (based on the total number of people) is shown in Table 1. A total of 417 people attended the event, which included the pre-conference workshops (9-10 February) and the conference (Wednesday 11 – Friday 13 February). Most registrations were for the full conference (78%), 20% of participants registered for either one or two days.

Table 1: Registration types

Registration	Count	Share
Full conference registrations	327	78%
Day registrations	80	20%
Only attended a workshop	10	2%
Total	417	100%

Table 2 shows the registrations by membership type. The highest proportion was shared by non-members and ordinary members, at 25% each.

Table 2: Registrations by membership type

Membership type	Count	Share
Non-member	105	25.17%

Distinguished Life	3	0.7%
Emeritus	6	1.43%
International Emeritus	0	0%
International Membership - Developing Country	73	17.5%
International Ordinary	21	5.03%
International Student	38	9.11%
Ordinary	105	25.17%
Student	58	13.90%
Total	417	100%

The majority of attendees were from Australia (66%), with 38% of those from South Australia. Attendees from the USA (5%), New Zealand (5%), and Indonesia (4%) represented the largest international groups. About 36% of attendees had presented at a previous AARES conference, and 26% were first-time presenters, including ECRs, established researchers, and professionals.

A post-conference survey was developed, and respondents generally reported a high level of satisfaction with the AARES 2026 conference, with an overall satisfaction rating of 4.55 out of 5. The Crawford Fund provided media for the conference, and estimates that stories from the conference had a potential reach of 3,820,000 potential audience impressions.

As a general observation, overall, our LOC was happy with the conference. Our overall goal for the AARES 2026 Adelaide conference was twofold: to uplift the young and to recognise the old. We did this by:

1) Supporting Students and Early Career Professionals

- We tried to create spaces for ECR networking, learning and mentoring as much as possible. We had a mentor/mentee scheme, held as many social get-togethers as possible to facilitate networking (e.g., ECR drinks, welcome reception, fun run/walk, Beeronomics and Adelaide hills tours, social night at the beach, conference dinner, WEN lunch, pre-conference workshops), plus having a Q&A ECR-only event with our keynote, Ken Henry
- We held an ECR day prior to the conference, which was strongly focused on advice/mentorship from senior AARES members who kindly volunteered their time and support, plus provided constructive feedback on student presentations
- Sponsored 10+ undergrad & postgrad students conference attendance

- Sponsored ~20 school students (a class of Year 11 economics students) for conference attendance. I believe this is one of the first times this has been done, and one reason we did this was to fulfil a request from one of our key sponsors, the Department of Energy and Mining, whose aim is to introduce young people to our discipline as early as possible.
- We gave away a lot of prizes, including an overall winner and 2 runner-ups, focused on 3MT, poster, and first-time best presenter.

2) Paying Tribute to Leading Australasian Agricultural and Resource Economists who have recently retired

Although our key focus was on the next generation of resource economists, given the 70th Jubilee theme, we wanted to recognise the leadership and contribution of many individuals who have played such a large part in our discipline to date.

Our conference dinner was privileged to have Prof David Pannell (UWA) write three songs for a special performance celebrating recent retired AARES members.

At the end of the first day, a short memorial for Dr Adam Loch commemorated and honoured his legacy.

Although the final budget of the conference is still not finalised, at this stage the conference is sitting on a very large surplus, which is fantastic for AARES and will allow more reinvestment back into a number of activities. We had strong sponsorship from SA Government (\$35,000 currently invoiced), DEM (\$25,000) Flinders University (\$5,000 cash + \$10000 in-kind), SA Drought Hub (\$5,000), Adelaide University (\$25,000, and 6 cases of wine from Waite Campus), ABARES (\$9,000), CSIRO (\$15,000), GRDC (\$10,000), BDO (\$5000), ACIAR (\$5000), PIRSA (\$5000), RAID (\$1000) and One Basin CRC (\$5,000).

Overall, the AARES 2026 conference can be considered successful in terms of its program, networking opportunities, and strong financial results.

The SA LOC wishes the VIC LOC the best of luck with organising the next conference in Melbourne!







Upcoming Events

Save the Date: NZARES 2026 Annual Conference - Christchurch

The New Zealand Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (NZARES) 2026 Annual Conference will take place at the Commodore Hotel in **Christchurch** on **27-28 August 2026**.

NZARES is also planning an exciting pre-conference field trip in the afternoon of 26 August, perfect for networking and exploring local insights. More details, including the call for papers, registration info and program highlights, will be shared in the March NZARES newsletter and on the NZARES website (www.nzares.org.nz).

We look forward to seeing you in Christchurch for what promises to be another great gathering of ideas in agricultural, resource and environmental economics!

ECR Webinar: What Makes a Paper Great (or at Least More Attractive to Editors)?

Webinar Presenters: Iain Fraser, John Rolfe, David Stern and Tiho Ancev

Webinar Description: Following the engagement and productive discussions at the recent AARES Conference and ECREW sessions, there is an opportunity to build on this momentum by offering a dedicated webinar on early career researchers. This initiative aims to continue fostering professional development and knowledge-sharing within the AARES community.

The format includes three to four experienced academic speakers, each delivering a short presentation of approximately 10 minutes, followed by a 20–30 minutes interactive session for questions, discussion, and sharing experiences.

The webinar will be held on **Friday, 12th June at 12:00pm (AEST)**.

AARES Annual Conference 2027

Agricultural and Resource Economics at 70: Lessons, Legacies and Futures

The AARES Annual Conference 2027 will be held at **Rydges Melbourne**,
186 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, from **3-5 February 2027**.

The pre-Conference workshops will be held at LaTrobe University's City Campus on
2 February.



Celebrating AARES Annual Conference Award Winners



Honorary Awards

Distinguished Life Member (DLM)

John Rolfe (above, left)

Distinguished Fellow (DF)

Steven Schilizzi (above, middle)

Distinguished Fellow (DF)

David Vanzetti (above, right)

Academic Awards

Henry Schapper Fellowship

Katrin Rehdanz, Kiel University

and

Jill McCluskey, Washington State University

Postgraduate Thesis Award

Daniel Hill

Quality of Research Communication Award

Elizabeth Heagney, Daniel Gregg, Dan Hill, James Radford, Grace Sutton, Fred Rainsford, Daniel O'Brien, Angela Hawdon, Imogen Semmler, Mark Gardner, Milly Taylor, Sue Ogilvy

Quality of Research Communication EMCRs Award

Bethany Cooper

Quality of Research Discovery Award

David Pannell, Robert Johnston, Michael Burton, Sayed Iftekhar, Abbie Rogers and Cheryl Day

Quality of Research Discovery EMCRs Award
Sarah Whitnall

AJARE Awards

AJARE Award
Cristiano Franceschinis, Riccardo Scarpa, Mara Thiene, Roselinde Kessels

AJARE Award - ECR
Odmaa Narantungalag

Travel Awards

Crawford Fund Scholar
Md. Monirul Islam

Heading North
Saima Rani

Heading East
Bernardo Cantone

Heading South
Stevens Azima

Heading West
Bowen Shen

Donna Brennan
Tho Quang Anh Nguyen

Student Research Awards

NSW
Aaron Humphreys
University of Sydney

WA

Yunita Wahyu Nur Wakhida

School of Agriculture and Environment, The University of Western Australia

NE

Isabella Mandic

Business School, University of New England

SA

Ryan Singleton

School of Economics, Adelaide University

Current AARES Opportunities

AARES Social Media Volunteer - Expressions of Interest

AARES is looking for a volunteer to help support the Society's social media presence. The role involves sharing announcements about Society activities, conferences, awards, and opportunities, and helping to connect our community of researchers, students, and policymakers in agricultural and resource economics.

Posts will be supported by content prepared by the AARES Office (e.g. announcements and graphics), making the role manageable and easy to integrate with other commitments.

There will also be an opportunity to help share highlights during the annual AARES Conference, with support from a small volunteer team.

If you enjoy social media and science communication and would like to contribute to the AARES community, we would love to hear from you.

Expressions of interest close: **15 May 2026**

For more information or to express interest, please contact office@aares.org.au.

Reflections from AARES Annual Conference Award Winners

Heading South Award

I am an agricultural economist originally from Haiti and Canada, and currently a postdoctoral researcher at Brown University in the U.S. under the excellent mentorship of Dr. Meredith Niles. I first learned about the Australasian Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (AARES) after my advisor encouraged me last year to join the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA).

Receiving the 2025 Heading South Award allowed my first visit to Australia, where I presented my research on food security in Vermont and Maine at the 70th AARES Annual Meeting. It was one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. From day one, I felt welcomed. The conference created meaningful opportunities to connect with colleagues, learn from senior economists, and participate in rich preconference and social activities.

What stood out most to me was AARES' intentional support for early-career researchers through dedicated events and the visibility provided to them. I was also grateful to be formally matched with Professor Risti Permani as my mentor. The Award did more than fund a trip—it integrated me overnight into a large and collegial scholarly community and laid the foundation for future collaborations.

To future winners: it is absolutely worth it.



Stevens Azima

Heading West Award

Attending the AARES Annual Conference in Adelaide as a Heading West award recipient was an energizing and genuinely valuable experience. The program offered a strong mix of methodological and policy-focused sessions, and I especially appreciated discussions that connected rigorous empirical work with real-world challenges in agriculture, food systems, and environmental management. Presentations on technology adoption, productivity, climate resilience, and behavioral responses to policy interventions provided timely insights and sparked new ideas for my own research.

Beyond the sessions, the conference created a welcoming space to connect with researchers across Australia, New Zealand, and beyond. Conversations during panels

and informal networking helped me refine my research questions, think more carefully about identification strategies, and identify opportunities for future collaboration. I am grateful to AARES and the Heading West support for making it possible to participate, and I leave Adelaide with fresh motivation, new connections, and clear directions for next steps in my work.

I would like to sincerely thank the AARES organizers and team for a well-run and welcoming conference. The thoughtfully curated program, smooth logistics, and supportive atmosphere made it easy to engage fully with sessions and connect with others. I am also grateful to the Heading West award for making my attendance possible.



Bowen Chen

Donna Brennan Award

Attending the AARES Annual Conference in Adelaide as the Donna Brennan Award recipient was a truly valuable and inspiring experience. The conference provided an excellent platform to present my research on income risk in agritourism enterprises using the GAMLSS framework and to receive constructive feedback from leading scholars in agricultural and resource economics.

Beyond the academic sessions, I particularly appreciated the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with researchers and practitioners from diverse countries. These exchanges have helped me refine my research direction, especially in linking risk modelling with policy-relevant insights for rural development.

I am sincerely grateful to AARES and the Donna Brennan Award committee for their generous support, which made my participation possible. I look forward to maintaining connections built during the conference and contributing further to the AARES research community.



Tho Quang Anh Nguyen

SA Branch Student Award

As a recent honours graduate attending and presenting at my first economics conference, I was unsure what to expect; however, I found myself pleasantly surprised by the friendly conference-goers and engaging topics. The earlier career day was a welcoming and useful affair, full of experienced academics providing practical advice and like-minded peers. The pre-conference workshops provided a taste of the conference to come.

As someone who was presenting for the first time, in the morning session of the first day, I would be lying if I said I wasn't nervous. My presentation went relatively smoothly, with some insightful questions from the audience. For the rest of the conference, I floated to any session that caught my attention. Each session and paper was compelling in its own way, from topics and approaches that I was familiar with, to topics that I had only just heard of. The welcoming attendees were especially memorable, with everyone happy to chat about their work and provide useful advice to someone starting out. The captivating keynote presentations from Dr Ken Henry and Dr Salomón Salcedo also stood out, with their ability to hold the room's attention for over an hour, sometimes without visuals.



Ryan Singleton

WA Branch Student Award

As a recent master's graduate, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to present my research at the AARES Annual Conference in Adelaide in February 2026, where I was also honoured to receive the Student Branch Award. The conference provided an exceptionally supportive environment for early-career researchers like me to grow academically and build meaningful connections with senior scholars.

One of the most memorable aspects of the conference was the mentoring program. I was paired with a mentor whose research interests closely aligned with mine, allowing for thoughtful discussions about potential research directions, future collaborations, and my plans to pursue a PhD. The experience was both encouraging and intellectually stimulating. Beyond its academic rigour, I found that AARES is not merely a venue for presenting theoretical research. The presence of government representatives, economic consultants, and other policy makers made discussions more grounded and policy-relevant. Research findings were consistently connected to real-world policy needs, enriching the overall dialogue.

Finally, attending AARES for the first time strengthened my confidence in communicating my research to a broader audience, provided valuable feedback from experienced scholars, and further motivated me to deepen my work in resource economics.



Yunita Wahyu Nur Wakhida

Branch Updates

New England Branch Inaugural ‘Applied Adventure’

On Wednesday 15 April, seven New England AARES members attended the Branch’s inaugural ‘Applied Adventure’ to a local medicinal cannabis growing and manufacturing facility. Australian Natural Therapeutics Group (ANTG) is a leader in the production of premium-grade, Australian-made medicinal cannabis.

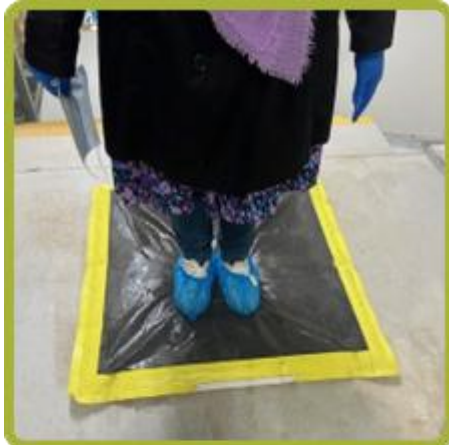
The Armidale facility provides employment for over 60 local staff and has cultivated well over 100 crops since operations commenced in 2019. Located on the outskirts of town, the operation runs from an undisclosed site and is highly regulated by the Office of Drug Control and the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Branch members toured the growing sheds, viewing varieties of ‘mother plants’, from which cuttings are cloned and grown into harvestable crops over a 10-week cycle. These are then manufactured on-site into retail-ready medicinal products such as oils, dried flower and edibles for domestic and international markets. Every aspect of the growing cycle is carefully controlled, including climate, nutrients, light and moisture.

No question was too difficult for our guide, ANTG’s Cultivation Manager, Duncan Simpson, and we had plenty. It was particularly interesting to learn how ANTG manages biosecurity risks, achieves zero water runoff from the property through careful water management practices, and is responding to the current fuel challenges.

Fun facts: cannabis plants are prone to many of the same pests that affect tomatoes; flowering is triggered when cannabis plants receive no more than 14 hours of light; and the operation could readily adapt to supply a recreational market, should it be legalised.

Branch members thoroughly enjoyed the Adventure, with enthusiastic discussions continuing over lunch. To thank Duncan, we presented him with one of our recently designed Branch caps.





Current Opportunities

Non-Executive Director with GRDC

Directors Australia is currently working with **Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC)** to recruit non-executive directors for up to a 3-year term, commencing in October 2026.

GRDC are seeking candidates who can demonstrate:

- Experience at a governing or board level, including a sound working knowledge of contemporary corporate governance systems and frameworks.
- An ability to analyse, critically assess and contribute to monitoring financial and non-financial company performance.
- Commercial acumen, including the ability to drive and contribute to setting the strategic direction of a large and complex organisation, ideally in the grains or a related industry.
- Well-developed interpersonal and communication skills to enable the director to work constructively with the board and executive management team.
- High-level personal reputation and standing

GRDC are seeking applications from experienced leaders with **expertise in one or more** of the following areas:

- grains production, processing or marketing
- communication and public relations
- environmental and ecological matters
- scientific research and development
- extension and adoption
- innovation and commercialisation
- conservation and management of natural resources
- technology and data (including artificial intelligence)
- development and delivery of complex, strategic corporate plans
- finance and business management
- public administration
- research and investment management
- strategic human resource management

Applicants are requested to complete an online application form and upload a current board resume and covering letter via grdc.directorsaustralia.com.au no later than **9am Tuesday, 7 April 2026**.

For further information, contact Glee Mitchell at glee.mitchell@directorsaustralia.com or 0417 065 408.

PAFTAD Young Scholars Fellowship

The PAFTAD Young Scholars Fellowship has just opened applications for the PAFTAD 43 Conference to be held in **Hanoi, Vietnam, from 9 to 11 November 2026**.

PAFTAD is a private academic conference series that promotes policy-oriented academic research on key economic, trade, and development policy issues in the Asia-Pacific region. The PAFTAD Young Scholars Fellowship is a one-time scholarship that supports early-career economists in attending the PAFTAD Conference and participating in a Young Fellows Seminar.

Five fellowships are being offered in 2026. Selected fellows will be entitled to:

- return economy airfare to Hanoi, Vietnam from your home institution
- registration for the Young Fellows Seminar and 43rd PAFTAD Conference
- accommodation for the duration of the Young Fellows Seminar and PAFTAD Conference
- publication of your paper as a PAFTAD Working Paper

Potential fellows are required to submit the following information to be considered:

- one unpublished empirical paper of 7000–10,000 words on themes related to Asia-Pacific trade and economic development
- The paper must also include an abstract of fewer than 300 words
- a current résumé, including citizenship(s), date of birth and gender

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the fellowship:

- be the individual author of the paper
- be aged 35 years or younger on 9 November 2026

- be available to participate for the duration of the Conference (9-11 November 2026)
- not have been previously selected as a PAFTAD Young Fellow

Applicants must email their paper and résumé to paftad@gmail.com by 5pm (AEST), **Friday, 1 May 2026**.

If you or any potential applicants have any questions, please contact **Kade Denton** at paftad@gmail.com.

Views

From Expansion to Consolidation: Policy Options for Rebranding the Australian Wine Industry

Professor Kym Anderson

Wine Economics Research Centre, School of Economics, Adelaide University

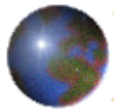
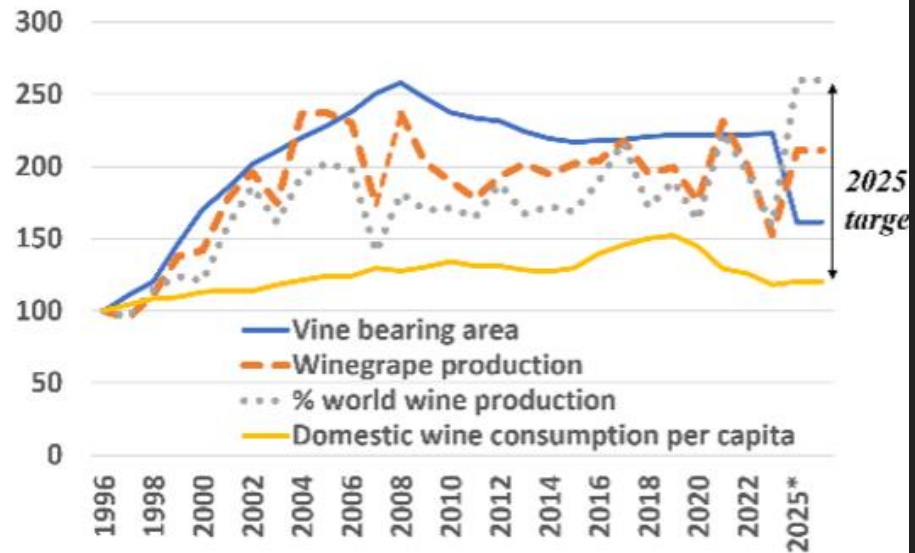
Australia's wine industry is facing a prolonged structural imbalance driven by an excess supply of red wine, a fall in global demand, and shifting consumer preferences. The current crisis is not merely cyclical but reflects past excessive investments leading to rapid vineyard expansion, and ups and downs in export markets. A coordinated strategy focused on structural adjustment, quality upgrading, market diversification, and smarter levy design is required to restore profitability and long-term sustainability.

The roots of the current surplus can be traced to the industry's expansion phase during the 1990s and early 2000s. Strategy 2025 launched in 1996, favourable tax concessions, and long-term supply contracts encouraged large-scale vineyard investment, particularly in red varieties. High grape prices and generous long-term grower contracts created strong investment signals, led to the rapid expansion. By the mid-2000s, production and export targets had already been achieved well ahead of the Strategy 2025 schedule. Today, subdued global demand growth, changing consumer preferences (including lower red wine consumption), and intensified competition have

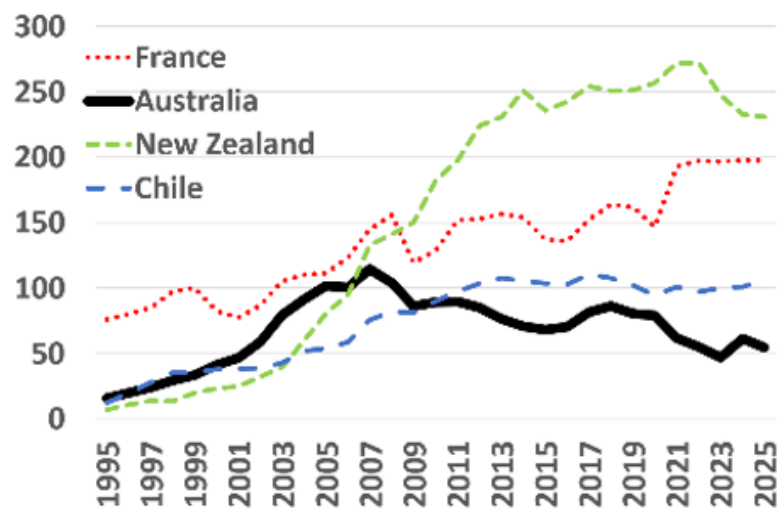
exposed this imbalance.



Most of Strategy 2025's 30-year goals were achieved within 7 years



Value of wine exports per capita (current US\$)



The industry now faces a huge oversupply of low-value red wine, low profitability for many growers, and increasing financial stress across segments of the value chain. Simply waiting for market recovery is unlikely to remove the imbalance very quickly. Without substantial structural adjustment, overproduction will keep prices suppressed and continue to weaken Australia's competitive positioning of its premium wines in global markets.

A priority for the industry is *facilitating structural rationalisation*. Persistently unprofitable growers, particularly those producing lower-quality, high-alcohol red winegrapes, should contemplate exiting. Temporary mothballing may simply delay necessary adjustment. Uprooting the least-profitable non-premium red vines and reallocating that vineyard land and water toward alternative crops is expensive but it may offer more sustainable long-term returns.

Second, *production must be better aligned with evolving consumer demand*. While there are opportunities to expand in white, rosé, and sparkling segments, any transition toward them should be made cautiously in case those segments also become over-supplied. The emphasis for those growers remaining should focus on premium production.

Third, there is a strong case for *reforming the industry levy structure*. Moving from a volume-based levy (per tonne) to a value-based levy (percentage of price) would insure against negative growth in investable funds for R&D and generic promotion. Raising levy rates is always a hard ask, but that too is needed if vigneron are to restore their competitiveness. More funds are required to strengthen domestic and international promotion efforts in the face of increasing competition in export markets and growing import penetration at home. Marketing strategies should modernise branding, packaging, and communication approaches, particularly to engage younger consumers whose preferences differ from previous generations.

Finally, *sustained investment in research aimed at raising the quality across the value chain* is essential. Improving grape and wine quality is only part of the solution; wineries must also effectively position and market their premium products if they are to secure price premiums. Stronger coordination between growers and wineries will be critical to ensure that quality improvements translate into improved profitability for all along the value chain.



References

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Quality government spending and results-based approaches are vital to improve poverty and food security outcomes

Salomón Salcedo-Baca

Rural poverty and food security SDG targets will not be achieved in developing countries, despite billions of US dollars spent every year on agricultural and rural development. Within current budgets, shifting government spending from private to public goods would significantly contribute to alleviating poverty and increasing food security. Political interests interfere with this shift, but they can be counteracted through more independent research, training, accountability, and the adoption of the RBM approach in public policy.

Developing countries are seriously off track to meet the SDG rural poverty and food security targets. In fact, in some countries, statistics are moving in the wrong direction. According to the latest SDG Report and FAO projections, by 2030 there will still be over 600 million people living in extreme poverty and over 500 million people chronically undernourished, far from the SDG targets of ending hunger and extreme poverty by 2030.

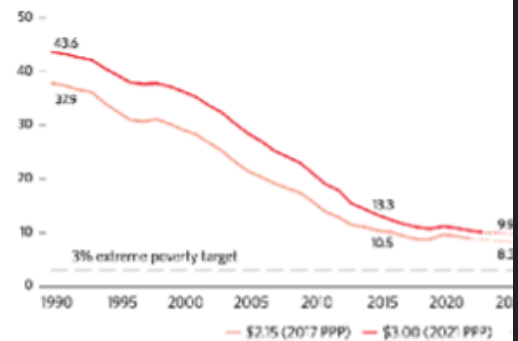
Progress towards SDG 1

Target:

By 2030:

- * No Extreme Poverty
- * Reduce at least by half the proportion of people living in poverty (2015 baseline)

Proportion of the population living below \$3.00/day in 2021 PPP and in 2017 PPP, 1990-2030 (percentage)



➤ Only 1 in 5 countries on track to achieve target of halving its national poverty rate by 2030

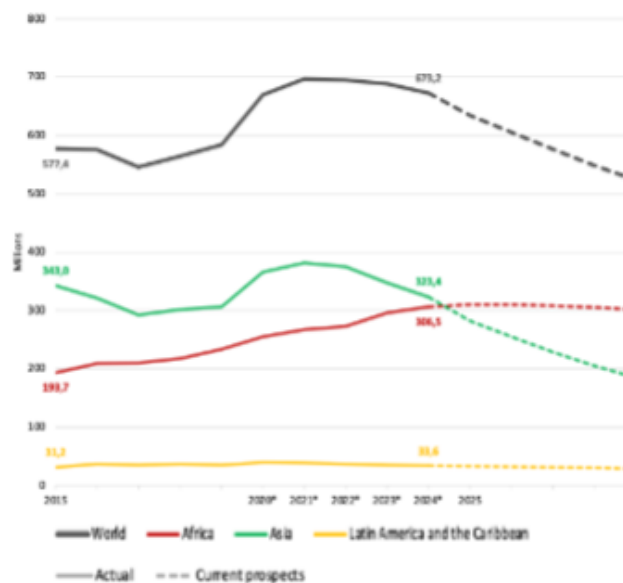
Source: SDG Report 2025

Progress towards SDG 2

• Target:

By 2030, Zero Hunger

Number of People Chronically Undernourished



Source: FAO, S

Paradoxically, developing countries spend billions of dollars every year on agricultural and rural development: Official Development Assistance for agriculture, social and economic infrastructure reached US\$ 108 billion in 2024, and developing countries' public expenditure in agriculture was US\$118 billion in 2023, five times more than in the early 2000's.

Rural poverty alleviation and increased food security could be accelerated within current budgets, by shifting government spending from private goods (for example, input subsidies, direct transfers and market support programs) to public goods (such as research and development, extension services, rural and agricultural infrastructure, and plant and animal health systems, among others). Several empirical studies conducted by the World Bank, Inter-American Bank, and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) confirm that this spending shift from private goods to public goods could make a significant difference in policy outcomes. However, the share of support to agriculture through public goods in emerging economies has shrunk from 43% in 2000-2002 to only 19% in 2022-2024.

Political interests interfere with improving the quality of government expenditure in the agri-food system, with consequences that can be catastrophic. For instance, over the past 7 years, the Mexican Plant and Animal Health Agency's budget was cut by almost 50%, jeopardising the agency's ability to conduct proper epidemiological surveillance on live cattle imports. After 33 years of being eradicated, a new world screwworm outbreak occurred in November 2024. Mexican cattle exports to the USA were immediately banned, incurring economic losses estimated at US\$ 1.3 billion.

More independent research, publicly available data, and training of policy makers and the public, where universities and thinktanks play a key role, will contribute to counteracting political interests by providing additional evidence on the true impacts of government spending: who is benefiting? What is the policy impact on agricultural productivity, farmers' income, rural youth, rural women, and the environment?

Empowering grassroots and local voices and demanding accountability and transparency will also contribute to more effective policy making. Truly adopting a Results-Based Management approach in agricultural and rural development policy is crucial to improve policy impacts. Results-based international financing, such as the Program for Results (PforR) lending instrument launched by the World Bank in 2012, is a rather promising instrument for developing countries to design the right policies that can effectively alleviate rural poverty and increase food security.



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