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AVOIDING AGRICULTURE IN DISARRAY

Media are welcome to register and attend and press releases are available on request. The [program](#) is online. Please contact [Cathy Reade](#) 0413 575 934 for releases or to arrange attendance or interviews.

While economic growth in many developing countries has been unprecedented in the 200 years since the Industrial Revolution began, there have been a number of impacts to this – positive and negative - which demand more careful and explicit attention by policy makers and economists.

This will be a key message by Dr Will Martin, the eminent Australian economist who is immediate Past-President of the International Association of Agricultural Economists, in his keynote address at the 63rd Annual Conference of the Australasian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES) from 12-15 February at the Melbourne Convention Centre.

“After nearly two centuries of lagging behind industrial countries, growth in many developing countries has surged since the early 1990s and this seems likely to continue. The higher growth in Asia forecast to 2023 has major implications, particularly in neighbouring Australia,” said Dr Martin, who is a Senior Research Fellow at the renowned Washington based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) after working at the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Economics; the Australian National University and the World Bank before joining IFPRI in 2015.

“Direct impacts of economic growth in many developing countries are being felt in terms of poverty, nutrition, productivity, structural transformation, the environment, as well as global demand, supply and prices of agricultural products, agricultural marketing, trade patterns, and policy.”

Dr Martin discussed each of these impacts and closed with a focus on trade patterns following his past work examining the impact of major trade policy reforms—including the Uruguay Round; the Doha Development Agenda; and China’s accession to the WTO.

“Despite a seemingly flawed agreement, the Uruguay Round turned out to be a watershed for the industrial countries, resulting in a gradual decline in protection and in the price insulation that contributes to world market price volatility. Meanwhile, income growth in many developing countries has contributed to a reduction, on average, of agricultural taxation and a level of average protection that is now in line with the industrial countries.”

“When the present firestorm in world trade relations subsides, we must focus on how to avoid a return to ‘agricultural in disarray’ as developing countries move towards agricultural protection and as policies of price insulation increase the volatility of world markets,” he warned.

The AARES conference theme is *Dynamic Change in Agriculture and Resources*, and it aims to promote interest in and understanding of the current economic issues affecting primary industries, resources and the environment.

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