

## 2026 AARES Distinguished Fellow Dr David Vanzetti



David grew up on a wheat–sheep farm in Western Australia, but gradually realised that counting sheep and driving around in squares wasn't quite his calling. He enrolled at UWA and, ignoring his father's advice to become an accountant, chose economics instead.

After graduating, he sought to apply economics to agriculture and joined the then Bureau of Agricultural Economics in Canberra in 1976 — the beginning of a long, if occasionally interrupted, relationship that lasted until 2001. The first break was for an M.Sc. in agricultural economics at Reading University in the UK. The second was a PhD at La Trobe University in 1985, where he applied game theory to the international wheat trade and picked up some programming skills that proved handy later on.

A chance meeting at an agricultural economics conference in Calabria, Italy, led to a job at FAO in Rome, and later to UNCTAD in Geneva. At UNCTAD, David's main role was to provide empirical analysis for developing-country negotiators during the Doha Round and related WTO talks. His modelling of alternative proposals for agricultural and industrial tariff reform offered quantitative evidence on the likely outcomes of different negotiating positions. To help countries build analytical capacity, he co-developed the Agricultural Trade Policy Simulation Model (ATPSM) and trained numerous trade officials and researchers across Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe in applied economic modelling. He also used general equilibrium models to analyse industrial tariff negotiations. His widely cited studies — including analyses of EU–US agricultural proposals and industrial tariff formulas — helped shape WTO discussions on fairer global trade rules. He denies responsibility for the failure of the Doha Round.

In later years, David worked on numerous free trade agreements, particularly in Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, China), and further afield in Latin America, Central Asia, and the Gulf States. His modelling has also tackled diverse topics such as desert locust control, commodity markets (coffee, cocoa, bananas), and climate change policies affecting agriculture.

Through his research, policy engagement, and global training initiatives, David has made a lasting impact on both the theory and practice of international trade policy. His work reflects a blend of academic rigour, practical influence, and a commitment to evidence-based policymaking. His motto is: "Be nice to people on your way up, so they will be nice to you on your way down."

David has made significant contributions to the operation and development of AARES through his long-standing contributions to the ACT Branch committee, his roles on two conference AARES Local Organising Committees, and his numerous AARES conference presentations, and as a reviewer for AJARE.

He currently serves as an Adjunct Senior Lecturer at the University of Western Australia — bringing the journey full circle.