



ABC Rural Report

Worldwatch Institute urges funding for Agriculture Innovation

Rural Report Canberra Region: January 11, 2011

By Sarina Locke, Canberra

The Worldwatch Institute is calling for more spending on agricultural innovation in developing countries.

Amid rising global food prices, the New York based group is releasing its annual State of the world 2011 report, called Innovations that Nourish the Planet.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation FAO says globally, food prices have hit record levels due to droughts and fires in Russia, untimely rain in Ukraine, and now floods in Australia.

Sugar prices are at an all time high, expensive also are soy beans, corn and wheat.

It's the poorer countries that suffer the most.

Danielle Nierenberg is their senior researcher with the Worldwatch Institute says rich nations have failed to meet their commitments to increase funding for agricultural research, made during the last food riots in 2008.

She says this report should "act as a road map for funding and donor communities, including national governments in Africa, including projects that deserve more attention and more investment.

"Simple things like solar driers, which help provide vitamin A throughout the year to really poor families by drying mangoes and papaya and other fruits.

"More technological examples of preventing food waste including hermetically sealed bags that can dramatically improve farmers income in places like Niger and Nigeria where cow peas are a staple.

"Often these crops are attacked by pests or moulds, fungus, so finding ways to protect these crops is more important than ever before."

Danielle Nierenberg says African farmers need more support from their regional and national Governments and huge foundations,

Philanthropic groups like the Rockefeller, the Ford and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations, she says, are now ramping up spending in agricultural innovation.

This report will feed into international policy.