



Region's rice leading way across globe

AGRICULTURE

BY HANNAH HIGGINS

EXPERTS suggested MIA rice production development is setting a global example while at the International Temperate Rice Conference in Griffith this week.

The importance of the work farmers in the region, including Leeton shire, do in helping feed the world was never more apparent than on Tuesday morning as keynote speaker Dr Matthew Morell addressed the crowd at the Griffith Regional Theatre.

Day two of the global conference had Dr Morell, who is the director general of the International Rice Research Institute, speak on the future of rice in a changing world, praising the advancements of local irrigators to date.

"Our goal, much like the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area ... is really about using systems for social and economic transformations, that is what has happened here in Griffith and that's our objective globally," he said.

"Global challenges, require global action."

According to the World Health Organisation rice is

the dominant staple food crop for an estimated half of the world's population, a demand Dr Morell says is expected to increase with projected population growth.

Speaking to the theatre, Dr Morell emphasised the importance of rice science in meeting such challenges like population growth as well as others the next 25 years are likely to bring.

It was a challenge he said required a co-ordinated ap-

proach to innovation across a number of platforms to maintain the ability of communities worldwide to continue producing rice.

"It is not just about economics, it is also about social factors, maintaining the vibrancy of rural communities," he said.

Dr Morell explained the importance of developing drought-resistant and salt-tolerant rice, and empowering women left behind in rural areas as male populations move to urban areas.

With two days still to go, the conference is set to further cover a range of different topics through Wednesday and Thursday.

They included the effects

of temperature on NSW rice, disease control and genetic variations for enhancing agronomic performance, to name only a few.

Organisers said this year's theme "Tradition, Technology, Productivity - A Balancing Act" had allowed the industry to return to the original home of rice in the Riverina.



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Dr Matthew Morell