

## RMAP RESEARCH SEMINAR

# LET THEM NOT EAT: CO<sub>2</sub>, FOOD AND CLIMATE

Mr Tim Curtin

Canberra-Based Economist

12.30–1.30pm Thursday 29 April 2010 – Seminar Room B, Coombs Building

### Abstract

This seminar challenges the quasi-Malthusian assumption going back to Wigley (CRU-UEA & CSIRO, Tellus 1993) and maintained by Sokolov et al (MIT, 2009), that there is a fixed limit to the volume of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that can be absorbed by land and ocean biospheres. Wigley's assumption is central to the MAGICC models relied on by IPCC to project global climate to 2100, as it results in more than doubling the projected rate of growth of the atmospheric concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>, from the actual 0.4% (1958–2009), to 1% p.a (2000–2100).

This seminar shows there is no evidence to support the Wigley assumption, and provides counterfactuals for no such evidence being likely to emerge in future, including regression analysis of the impacts of temperature and atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> on forestry, fisheries, and agriculture. Its data on incremental CO<sub>2</sub> content of increases in world food production per capita since 1960—e.g. over 40 percent of the world's daily cereal intake embodies carbon—shows how reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 40 percent of the level in 2000, is likely to reduce world food consumption pro rata. Policy implications of such unintended consequences of the drive to eliminate anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions conclude the seminar.

Bio: Tim was born in India 1937, brought-up and schooled in South Africa, BA at UCRN and M.Sc (Econ) at LSE. Economics lecturer UZim and York 1964–70, economic adviser 1970–99 Ford Foundation (Arusha), Lonrho (London), EU (Nairobi, Cairo, Lagos) and WB/GoPNG (Port Moresby); Visiting Fellow NCDS-ANU 1999–2002.

enquiries: [jacqueline.dechazal@anu.edu.au](mailto:jacqueline.dechazal@anu.edu.au) or 6125 3343

