



# Members in Profile

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## Fiona McKenzie

I've been following two paths in my career – one as a policy advisor and the other as a researcher/academic. In both realms, the common area of focus is my search for sustainable solutions that build upon the innovative capacity of individuals and groups across diverse networks - from local to global scales. I currently hold several roles including as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Sydney, a Strategy Advisor with the Australian Futures Project and an independent advisor to several organisations, including the United Nations Environment Programme. I am also a Councillor of the Geographical Society of New South Wales.



Building on my PhD (completed in 2011), which was on farmer-driven innovation in Australia, my academic research is now focused on participatory farmer-driven innovation in the Indonesian cocoa sector and the impacts of value chain interventions on the livelihoods of coffee and cocoa smallholders. As an undergraduate at the Australian National University, I also wore two hats – studying Science (ecology, biology, human and physical geography, wildlife management) as well as Arts (English, sociology, political science, history). I completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in 2002.

In my policy work, my main area of focus has been agricultural and environmental policy. In my current role as an advisor to the United Nations Environment Programme, I am working on how to facilitate greater cross-sectoral collaboration in the global food system. I am passionate about seeing the sustainable transformation of food and agricultural systems – from best practices at the farm level through to supportive national and international policy settings.

From 2009-2011, I helped establish (and was a policy advisor for) the Terrestrial Carbon Group, an international group of scientists and economists working to see terrestrial carbon included effectively in the global response to climate change. During my time with the Terrestrial Carbon Group, I was introduced to the dynamics of multilateralism and the United Nations. I was fortunate to attend several United Nations' climate change negotiations, including the pivotal conferences of COP 13 in Bali (2007), COP15 in Copenhagen (2009) and COP16 in Cancun (2010). I was also exposed to different efforts in a range of countries, attending meetings in places like Malawi, Zambia, China, Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom.

From 2006-2009, I was a policy analyst with the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, who have been influential in a range of natural resource management policy reforms across Australia. Prior to that, I worked for three years in various departments in the NSW Government – learning the ropes of the public service. All these experiences have given me an appreciation of the impacts of different institutional and policy settings and the importance of being part of the policy dialogue.

While my current role(s) take me away from where I grew up on my family's farm in northwest New South Wales, I still carry farming close to my heart. I lived the turmoil that farm families go through – the droughts, bushfires, floods, market collapses and more drought. A childhood framed by these events makes me sympathetic to the challenges facing farmers (in Australia, Indonesia and elsewhere) and the complex decision making context they must navigate. I've always been interested in the thoughts and perspectives of farmers – how do they manage their farm systems in the face of uncertain and rapidly changing natural, economic and social conditions? Decision making in all its forms fascinates me and elements of decision theory inform both my research and policy work.

With interests in both policy and research, Geography has given me a means to integrate different types of knowledge, ways of knowing, and understandings of how the world works. This is as crucial at the farm level as it is in the sphere of international policy making. It's given me the freedom to work across disciplinary boundaries and to incorporate insights from diverse sources. Whether it is in regard to policy or research, climate change or decision making, if someone asks me to describe myself, I'm proud to say I'm a Geographer.