

## Closing address

**Jim Watson**

Chairman, Riddet Institute

It is my great pleasure to close this most stimulating day with some comments. I appreciate that in this room we have together the key people who can make a real difference to the food industry in New Zealand. I would especially like to acknowledge the presence of Dr Dijkhuizen and the contingent from Wageningen University, and Hans Ramaker from the New Zealand Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Members of Parliament here. Together you have created a most memorable day.

We have heard from seven speakers, each providing a different perspective in terms of our research capability and our educational facilities to fully exploit our potential in agri-food.

We must make the transformational changes that are needed to ensure we do.

It is particularly important also that we work hard to grow our collaboration network internationally and ensure that the opportunity to take advantage of our close ties with Wageningen University. This is a time to show just what good partners we can be.

New Zealand is in a very fortunate position to be able to grow in an area that is so natural for us. As the world's population continues to grow, so does the demand for food and protein.

As developing countries lift their standard of living, the demand for protein is increasing disproportionately.

New Zealand is, foremost, a producer of protein. In recent years, the food industry in New Zealand has been referred to as a sunset industry. So many commentators have dismissed the growth in value of our primary industries as insignificant to the overall New Zealand economy. I believe that people are now beginning to realise the value of not just feeding the rest of the world, but the value of food itself to the health of the nation and to the growth of our export economy. The obesity epidemic and the poorer health of young people have been triggers for world food scientists to research foods that can promote health and wellness.

The mission of the Riddet Institute is to bring together the best expertise in food science to provide research that will underpin the future prosperity of our food industry.

Its new status as a Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) will allow it to be more influential. I can only applaud the very fine leadership provided by two visionaries, the co-directors of the Riddet Institute, Distinguished Professor Paul Moughan and Professor Harjinder Singh.

They are unique. They are bringing together New Zealand's agricultural science, food science, nutritional science and the new genetics, to capture leadership as developers of smart knowledge-embedded foods and specialised food ingredients.

The lesson from today is a simple one. The people in this room are the key to ensure we go forward positioning our nation to grow our research capability and our educational facilities to fully exploit our potential in agri-food and contribute in a major way to a healthy economic and social future in New Zealand.



**Dr Jim Watson** is well known in New Zealand scientific and business circles as the founder and CEO of Genesis Research & Development, a past-president of the Royal Society of New Zealand, and past Chair of the National Science Panel. He has had a long career in Health Sciences and has held professorships at the University of California, Irvine, and the University of Auckland. He may be contacted at [jim@caldera.co.nz](mailto:jim@caldera.co.nz)