

# Media Release

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FUTURE FARM  
INDUSTRIES CRC  
PROFITABLE PERENNIALS™ FOR AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPES

## Climate-adapted solutions crucial to agriculture's survival

Current political thinking about climate change is not considering the measures needed to ensure Australian farmers are ready to survive in a drier climate.

Speaking at the Rural Press Club of Victoria in Melbourne today, Future Farm Industries CRC (FFI CRC) Chief Executive Officer Kevin Goss said Australian agriculture is at a crossroads, one where it will take the brunt of climate change unless new sustainable farming systems are developed and introduced.

"If you take on board the statistics that surround the climate change debate, you quickly realise the impact it will have on Australian agriculture, but current climate change thinking is failing to consider practical options for farmers who need solutions in the shorter term," Mr Goss said.

"The thinking is focused on setting greenhouse gas emissions targets and trading schemes. Climate change modelling and impact assessments consume most of the resources."

He said Professor Ross Garnaut's recently released interim report put off until June his thinking on adaptation to climate change, despite making the point that climate change will continue to occur even after mitigation schemes have come into effect.

"These broader issues are all important but they don't give farmers a practical way forward in tackling the challenges of climate change. It's time we pulled together – the whole country – and developed practical solutions, and new forms of water efficient agriculture," Mr Goss said.

He said farmers, politicians and researchers need to work together to balance the policy thinking by creating on-the-ground solutions, as well as putting in place mitigation targets, climate modelling, impact analysis and risk assessment.

"And the fact is farmers can have options to adapt to climate variability sooner than you may realise."

The 'millennial drought' and recent unseasonal rain has given perennial plants a chance to prove themselves to be superior performers in grazing systems, he said.

"The timing is right, and if we continue to find new ways to adapt, I predict that in a few years we will see generational change in the make-up of Australian farmers – a change that will build the long-term capacity to cope with climate change."

Mr Goss is also concerned about the 'hype' in the farming community over the ability of farmers to sequester carbon and sell it through emissions trading.

"This is a distraction and it is my view that individual farmers and incremental improvements in soil carbon will not be in the market."

He said FFI CRC wants the future of agriculture to become more secure with farmers given a choice of climate-adapted production and grazing systems better suited to a drier Australian climate.

A public-private joint venture of R&D providers, industry and regional organisations, FFI CRC leads an accelerated effort to provide solutions with an emphasis on:

- Innovative systems and new crop industries better adapted to Australian conditions;
- New plant technologies and farming programs that efficiently use rainfall;
- Assessment of perennial plant-based farming systems for their water, carbon and energy balances, and their potential for contributing to the mitigation of climate change; and
- Expert leadership and service through a national training program that will build capacity to adopt new farming practices and adapt to a climate-impacted future.

Mr Goss is a big believer in the ability of farmers to adapt.

“The fact is that Australian farmers have an outstanding track record of innovation, productivity growth and adjustment, tells us they are ready for a new generational change to occur.

“There is a huge opportunity for mixed dryland farming to make breakthroughs in climate change adaptation while maintaining productivity and reducing their environmental footprint.”

He said practical and profitable plant technologies and farming systems are already well advanced with projects like Enrich and EverCrop investigating the potential of introducing shrubs and other perennial plants into farming systems to boost productivity.

“But to adapt to a variable and drying climate, we need increased R&D investment and to get these projects happening as soon as possible.”

*A high resolution photograph of Kevin Goss is available upon request.*

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