



FUTURE FARM
INDUSTRIES CRC

e-news

April 2008

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Welcome from the CEO

Welcome to the April edition of E-News, and congratulations to everybody involved in the highly successful Second International Salinity Forum. It was a most fitting celebration for the work of CRC Salinity. People from both CRCs, including many of our 45 postgrads who attended, gave excellent presentations. For those who didn't attend, the Governor-General, **His Excellency Michael Jefferey** opened the Forum with a description of FFI CRC's work in his speech. In particular, thanks to **Richard Price** who organised the event, **Alex Campbell** who provided strong leadership on our behalf, and **Anna Ridley, Phil Vercoe, Mary-Jane Rogers, Dave Pannell, Rana Munns** and **Richard George** who worked very hard on their papers.

Project development has been the focus of project leaders, Program Leaders and CRC management this month. The Project Evaluation Committee did the internal assessment on 15 April and observed the high standard of preparation. 34 projects were reviewed; one project was withdrawn, seven require further significant alterations. This week the Participants met to discuss the projects as a portfolio, and then the Board makes the funding decisions on 20 May.

Congratulations to **Serenity Hill**, a University of Melbourne postgrad supported by the CRC, for being selected to participate in the 2020 Summit along with **Lucinda Corrigan** and **Tim Reeves**, two of our Directors. We look forward to hearing the important ideas to come from their sessions.

Climate change is a recurring theme for the CRC now. I attended the Agriculture, Greenhouse & Emissions Trading Summit this week, and also met a number of senior people associated with the Commonwealth Government's climate change programs to discuss opportunities for FFI CRC. We offer a unique capability - drawing together research, education and training, and in general terms building the human capacity to deal with this challenge.

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Business matters

Research Contract Manager goes full time

FFI CRC has expanded **Julia Wilson's** role to full-time in order to manage the development and commissioning of the CRC's Foundation Projects.

Project evaluation meeting held in Melbourne

The Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) met on 15 April in Melbourne to assess a total of 34 projects.

Eight projects from Program 1 (Future Livestock Industries), four from Program 2 (Future Cropping Systems), six from Program 3 (New Woody Crop Industries),

four from Program 4 (Farming Saline Landscapes), four full projects and one placeholder project from Program 5 (Biodiversity and Water), four full projects and one placeholder project from Program 6 (Economic, Social and Policy Analysis) and two projects from Program 7 (Education and Training). Program Leaders are currently working with their project teams to include the changes suggested by the PEC.

Adoption Manager, **John Powell**, has been working closely with Program Leaders while they develop the Foundation Projects to ensure the Adoption and Commercialisation (A&C) aspects of these projects are carefully considered.

Kevin Goss, Mark Stickells and **Mike Ewing** have presented an updated portfolio of FFI CRC Projects at the Participants' face-to-face meeting in Melbourne on 23 April.

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- * Julia Wilson, Research Contract Manager: (08) 6488 1846;
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Adoption & Commercialisation

East meets west to embed Adoption & Commercialisation in *Tropical Grasses* foundation project

A&C activities have been successfully embedded in the *Tropical Grasses* foundation project during a three-day workshop in northern NSW.

The workshop was extremely valuable in bringing together the collective wisdom of the most experienced tropical grass researchers and extension specialists in Australia to plan future research, adoption and commercialisation activities.

During the workshop, Tropical Grasses Project Leader **Geoff Moore**, Program 1 Leader **Joe Jacobs**, and Adoption Manager **John Powell**, together with tropical grass researchers and extension specialists from NSW and WA and local producers, inspected existing tropical pasture research plots and paddock-scale on-farm trials.



Researchers and extension specialists in a spectacular tropical pasture, only four months old!

Following the field inspections, John Powell led an inside session where researchers, extension specialists and leading producers finalised A&C activities for incorporation in the *Tropical Grasses* foundation project proposal.

The workshop was organised by senior researchers in the *Tropical Grasses* project team **Carol Harris** and **Suzanne Boschma** (NSW DPI), and closely involved extension specialists **Lester McCormick** and **Bob McGufficke** (also with NSW DPI), **Tim Wiley** from DAFWA, and **Phil Barrett-Lennard** from Evergreen Farming, WA. **Greg Lodge**, the *EverGraze* northern NSW 'proof site' leader, and Heritage Seeds representatives also participated in the workshop.

Adoption planning for *Evercrop* uniform rainfall project progressed

In April, *EverCrop* uniform rainfall project leader **Brian Dear** convened a planning meeting to discuss the utility of models in dealing with *EverCrop* issues, and to identify people to champion the use of modelling in adoption activities.

It was a very constructive meeting of modellers, researchers, and extension specialists. Program 2 Leader **Ali Bowman** and Adoption Manager **John Powell**, along with Landmark's **Warwick Nightingale** and **David Armitage** participating with everyone reaching consensus on the way forward.

Due to the complexity and the range of possible options in the mixed farming zone, the meeting considered that exploring different rotations, perennial species and feed sources through modelling various scenarios is most likely to provide the flexibility needed, in preference to field experiments based on limited options.



Field experiments in the EverCrop Uniform Rainfall project zone

Although a modelling approach will be followed, some additional field research will be required to ensure the models can adequately consider some new potential perennial options and quantify some important NRM outcomes.

A Steering Committee to oversee future planning and progress of the project is to be established. It will have three groups - research, modelling and extension/adoption/training.

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Node activities

SA Node

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WA Node

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* David Bicknell: (08) 9881 0222; dbicknell@agric.wa.gov.au

VIC Node

Victorian lucerne and chicory field day proves popular



More than 70 producers and agribusiness staff attended a recent field day focussing on lucerne and chicory on **Don Price's** property at Cavendish in western Victoria (pictured above).

Don is on the advisory group of the Hamilton *EverGraze* site. The field day provided an opportunity to showcase his own management of lucerne and findings from the *EverGraze* project. The total number of visitors to the Hamilton *EverGraze* site and associated activities is now nearly 2,600 since the project began in July 2005.

Lucerne has not been commonly grown in southern Victoria, because of waterlogging and the poor winter growth of older cultivars. Newer cultivars have helped overcome these problems and winter growth rates are now comparable to perennial ryegrass pastures.

The most common take-home message reported on feedback sheets received was that lucerne and chicory work well in a mixture. The mixture helps transition livestock to a lucerne diet, as well as increasing the agronomic resilience of the farming system.

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* Austin Brown: (03) 9742 8728; Austin.Brown@dpi.vic.gov.au

NSW Node

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Communication

FFI CRC under media spotlight



The Sydney Morning Herald profiles a story about FFI CRC on their website in April

FFI CRC Communications has had significant engagement with the Australian media in early April due to the ongoing FFI CRC *Real Choices In A Changing Climate* campaign led by Currie Communications and publicity associated with Second International Salinity Forum:

(<http://www.futurefarmcrc.com.au/MediaCoverage.htm>)

Included among the recent media interest in FFI CRC was the filming of an ABC TV Landline story on saltbush featuring FFI CRC Researcher **Hayley Norman** (yet to be aired) and a WA ABC TV Stateline story on the Centre's research in making new drought-tolerant industries. The Stateline story is expected to air in Western Australia on Friday, 25 April:

(<http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/wa/default.htm>)

New Case Studies section for FFI CRC website

The FFI CRC website has been updated to include a section dedicated to case studies that have been successfully trialling FFI CRC farming systems. Some of the studies profiled also feature video presentations that provide an overview from a researcher and farmer perspective:

(http://www.futurefarmcrc.com.au/case_studies.html)

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Program activities

P1 Future Livestock Production

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P2 Future Cropping Systems

For further information contact:

* Alison Bowman: (02) 6938 1628; alison.bowman@dpi.nsw.gov.au

P3 New Woody Crop Industries

For further information contact:

* Mike Bennell: (08) 8303 9674; bennell.mike@saugov.sa.gov.au

P4 Farming Saline Landscapes

For further information contact:

* Ed Barrett-Lennard: (08) 9368 3441; egbarrettlennard@agric.wa.gov.au

P5 Biodiversity & Water

For further information contact:

* Ken Wallace: (08) 9334 0341; ken.wallace@dec.wa.gov.au

P6 Economic, Social & Policy Analysis

For further information contact:

* Bill Malcolm: (03) 8344-5015; b.malcolm@unimelb.edu.au

P7 Education & Training

EverTrain update

The EverTrain project team have recently signed up with a partner to develop and establish the Content Management System (CMS) which is at the heart of the EverTrain project plan. This decision was the result of an exhaustive selection process that concluded with interviews with the final two bidders.

The platform selected, DOTS (Dynamic Online Training System), was developed by Web Raven, a Brisbane-based company whose clients include several government departments, the Bank of Queensland, NEC, Zurich Insurance and QBE. At present, we are in the process of developing the EverTrain portal which will provide customised access to training to our client group.

Training of the EverTrain administrative group will commence in late May, or early June, with the CMS fully functional prior to commencement of EverTrain Phase II on 1 July. Thanks to Scott Glyde (CSU), Deb Slinger and Tania Midgley (DPI NSW) for their input into this process.

Also in the process of development is a logo for the program. It is possible that given the 'Ever' theme is so strong in the new CRC that we will borrow from the concept of the 'EverGraze' program, to re-enforce this branding throughout the CRC. However, this decision is yet to be finalised.

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Snippets

FFI CRC well represented at 2020 Summit



Future Farm Industries CRC was well represented at the recent 2020 Summit that brought together 1000 leading Australians from across the country.

FFI CRC Deputy Chair **Lucinda Corrigan**, CRC Board Member **Tim Reeves** and PhD student **Serenity Hill** were successful in gaining attendance to the Summit. Lucinda and Serenity participated in the Summit's Rural Stream where they were involved in discussing the many issues affecting Australian agriculture and rural communities, and worked together with other experts in the field to formulate new policy initiatives to address them. The Summit's 'Rural Stream' was made up of about 100 farmers, scientists and community leaders.

Before going to the Summit, Lucinda consulted with FFI CRC PhD students on what were their main issues of concern in their area of expertise.

Issues that came up during the discussion were the need for better research and education on climate change, concerns about the impacts of the carbon market on crop industries and the need to assess the agricultural potential of Australia's high-rainfall north in response to the anticipated drying out of the southern regions by climate change. The main outcome from the climate change agenda was the need to develop a strategy to deliver whole-of-government investment into research, development and delivery in relation to climate change adaptation.

In the coming months, the Commonwealth Government will decide which ideas from the 2020 summit will be implemented and which will be discarded.

* For more information about the 2020 Summit, go to their website:
<http://www.australia2020.gov.au/>

FFI CRC student takes out the 2008 AW Howard Memorial Trust Fellowship



AW Howard Trust Chair Dr Rob Lewis (left) presents PhD student Dion Nicol (right) with the 2008 AW Howard Trust fellowship

FFI CRC PhD student (University of Western Australia), **Dion Nicol**, has won the 2008 AW Howard Memorial Trust Fellowship.

The AW Howard Memorial Trust Fellowship is awarded to students in agricultural science, natural resource management, agricultural economics and social science who have begun post-graduate tertiary studies (Masters or Doctorate degrees) that relate to the development, management and use of pastures.

Dion's awarding of the Fellowship continues what has become a long and well-established relationship between the former CRC Salinity and the Trust with five CRC Salinity PhD students being granted the prestigious award since 2003.

At the presentation for this year's award, held earlier this month at the Urrbrae Plants Genomics Centre, South Australia, previous CRC Salinity student fellowship recipients were invited to provide updates on their research before Dion officially received his award.

At the ceremony, Dion also provided an overview of his PhD project into examining the potential of using *Cullen cinereum* and *Cullen graveolens*, instead of lucerne, on alkaline heavy clays near Mukinbudin, Western Australia.

For more information about Dion's research, read the recently released media statement from Curtin University: http://campusnews.curtin.edu.au/media_centre/

Previous CRC Salinity PhD student AW Howard Memorial Winners have been:

- 2007 – Margaret Raeside, Charles Sturt University (CSU)
- 2006 – Richard Bennett, The University of Western Australia (UWA)
- 2005 – Natasha Teakle, UWA
- 2004 – Alison Southwell, CSU
- 2003 – Lindsay Bell, UWA.

* For more about the AW Howard Memorial Trust, visit their website: http://www.sardi.sa.gov.au/pages/organisation/links/awhoward_fellowship.htm:sectID=309&tempID=1

Second International Salinity Forum highlights CRC Salinity successes



The Kuarna people of South Australia perform a welcoming ceremony for the opening of the Second International Salinity Forum, Adelaide

Held in late March and early April in Adelaide, the Second International Salinity Forum provided researchers from the former CRC Salinity and FFI CRC with a great opportunity to share their research. FFI CRC had a highly visible presence with a perennially-green booth in the Forum's Expo area.

The CRC was well represented with a large number of researchers and postgraduates students attending, giving papers or presenting posters at the Forum. The quality of their work was reflected by the proportion of prizes won by FFI CRC staff and students:

- * Best Poster Award (Ed Barrett-Lennard, Tim Colmer and Sarita Bennett)
- * Best Student Poster (Bree Wilson).

The Forum also featured the official launch of the CRC's *Saltland Prospects* publication and a speech from the 2008 Farrer Memorial Medal winner, and former CRC Salinity CEO, Emeritus Professor **Philip Cocks**, on climate change and the failure of democratic institutions.

In general, a variety of interesting subjects were discussed by the Forum's plenary speakers and other presenters such as:

- * Climate change and salinity
- * Salinity management comparisons between the Colorado and Murray-Darling basins
- * Plenary sessions on Managing Salinity in the Ground (**Mike Ewing**) and Lessons from dryland Salinity Policy Experience in Australia (**David Pannell**)
- * Salinity in the context of other Australian environmental challenges
- * Origins of and the current challenges facing global salinity
- * Surviving the Anthropocene – a new geological age (challenges for the 21st century)
- * Desalination (the choice for the environment and human health or the easy option).

Visit the Second International Salinity Forum website for more information:

<http://www.internationalsalinityforum.org/>

FFI CRC Annual Postgraduate Program Meeting held in Adelaide

In early April, the annual FFI CRC Postgraduate Meeting was held in conjunction with the Second International Salinity Forum in Adelaide.

More than 40 past and present postgraduates students from FFI CRC or CRC Salinity attended the event – an outstanding effort. Of the CRC student contingent present at the Forum, 18 gave oral presentations and four presented posters. Postgraduate researchers, Richard Bennett (UWA) and Nikki Mouat (UWA) won two out of the three student awards given at the Forum. Bree Wilson (CSU) also won the award for best student poster.

The postgraduate group also benefited greatly from the interactions with senior researchers in the fields of salinity science and natural resource management. Many students have provided unsolicited feedback regarding the value and the opportunities the event provided them, and the many new networks that were developed during the week.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for the postgraduate group to get up to speed on what the CRC is really about. Presentations by Kevin Goss, Mike Ewing, Mike Bennell, Ed Barrett-Lennard, Ken Wallace, Scott Glyde, Mark Stickells and Greg Lawrence were greatly appreciated by the group.

In the afternoon, students and staff alike were treated to some top class presentations by postgraduates, Peter Hutton (UWA), Mel Fraser (UA), Emily Mendham (CSU) and Davide Cammarano (UniMelb), which equalled anything presented at the Forum next door.

The day was then rounded off with a fantastic talk by Mike Young, a Professor in Water Economics and Management from The University of Adelaide. His presentation gave an excellent insight into the politics of Australian water management from the perspective of a Wentworth Group member – an Australian think-tank organisation – and was subsequently well received by the students.

Planning will shortly begin for the 2009 Annual postgraduate meeting.

It was also good to see that FFI CRC participation in the unofficial activities of the Forum was embraced with as much vigour as the official ones.

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WA celebrates 'Women in CRCs' contribution at breakfast



FFI CRC Research Contract Manager Dr Julia Wilson (right) receives a thank you gift from the WA Chief Scientist Dr Lyn Beasley (left) at the 'Women in CRCs' Breakfast

FFI CRC featured prominently at a 'Women in CRCs' networking breakfast put on by the Western Australian Government in late March at the Maritime Museum, Fremantle.

Aimed at raising the profile of women working in science in Western Australia, the breakfast featured presentations from two women leading the way in their field of science, WA Geological Survey Geologist, Dr **Kath Gray**, and FFI CRC Researcher **Di Mayberry**. FFI CRC Research Contract Manager, Dr **Julia Wilson**, was also the Master of Ceremonies for the breakfast.

Julia said that the breakfast provided a great opportunity to meet other women working in science and share experiences.

"One of the things that came out at the breakfast is the realisation that women who have a career in science don't want any special treatment. But in order to keep them, or encourage other women into new science careers, their needs to be some reconciliation between the balance of work and life," Julia said.

FFI CRC work experience leads to UWA traineeship



Suzi learns her way around the office thanks to mentoring from FFI CRC/CLIMA Administration Officer, Greg Madson

Suzi Westwood, a blind student from Leeming Senior High, has been given a traineeship at the University of Western Australia's Molecular and Chemical Sciences building following her participation in a summer of work experience at FFI CRC and the Centre for Legumes in Mediterranean Agriculture (CLIMA).

Her traineeship appointment, which started earlier this month, followed soon after 15 weeks of work experience at FFI CRC and CLIMA reception desk finished. During her time on reception, and under the supervision of Administration Officer **Greg Madson**, Suzi learnt how to do a myriad of administrative tasks needed to keep an office functioning. Through the use of specialised screen-reading software, she learnt how to sort through mail, scan documents, read computer screens and perform other vital office tasks.

The successful outcome from Suzi's work experience program and the guidance she has received from Greg is the focus of a feature article in the 21 April edition of UWA News. A copy of this edition can be downloaded here:

<http://uwanews.publishing.uwa.edu.au/?f=219375>

Congratulations Suzi!

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Coming Events

Institute of Agriculture Lecture: Climate change and the failure of our democratic institutions

28 April 2008, Molecular & Chemical Sciences Lecture Theatre, UWA Perth
Email: ioa@fnas.uwa.edu.au

Cooperative Research Centres Association (CRCA) Annual Conference

21-23 May 2008, Australian Technology Park, Sydney
Email: caroline.jones@optusnet.com.au

FFI CRC Board meeting

20 May, Sydney
Email: sarah.colombera@futurefarmcrc.com.au

21st International Grassland Congress and 8th International Rangelands Conference

29 June - 5 July 2008, Huhot, China
www.rangelandcongress.com

2nd Annual Climate Change Summit 2008

23-24 July, Dockside, Darling Harbour Sydney
Email: glenfrost@frocomm.com.au

<http://www.climatechangesummit.com.au>

14th Australian Society of Agronomy Conference

21-25 September 2008, Adelaide
www.agronomy.org.au/2008

STIPA Native Grasses Association Inc 2008 Conference

9 -11 November 2008, Horsham Town Hall, Victoria

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