

Future Farm News

Newsletter of the Future Farm Industries CRC

November 2009

In this issue ...

[Report shows CRC provides a positive postgraduate environment](#)
[Saltbush does well in the Victorian Mallee Enrich trial](#)

[New Education Manager appointed](#)

[Board Directors re-appointed](#)

[Congratulations to Alison Bowman](#)

[From the CEO](#)

[New guide to identify sub-tropical grasses in WA](#)

[UWA crop breeding course](#)

[Third Year Review](#)

[CRC represented on weed risk debate at Bioeconomy conference](#)

[What's new on the *EverGraze*® website](#)

[Coming Events](#)



[back to top](#)

Saltbush does well in the Victorian Mallee Enrich trial



Rhagodia preissii (Mallee Saltbush) one of the fastest growing shrubs in the Walpeup Enrich trial

Enrich's Walpeup Trial Site in western Victoria is beginning to reveal which plants perform well in the Victorian Mallee environment.

Report shows CRC provides a positive postgraduate environment



CRC postgraduate students in the field with Education Manager, Daryll Richardson.

A recent Future Farm Industries CRC report has shown that the education program of its predecessor, the CRC for Plant-based Management of Dryland Salinity (CRC Salinity), was successful in providing the right environment for postgraduates to complete their studies and gain employment.

A comparison of statistics from CRC Salinity with the results of an eight year study by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs conducted by Education Manager, Daryll Richardson, has shown the CRC had a significantly higher rate of study completion and lower withdrawal rates when compared to non-CRC postgraduates.

The national study showed that 53% of PhD students completed their studies between 1992 and 1999 with 27% of them withdrawing. This compares to the CRC Salinity data, collected between 2001 and 2006, where 69% of PhD students completed their studies with only 10% withdrawing. A similar but more pronounced difference exists for Masters students. Another stand out statistic within Daryll's report is that as of 25 August 2009, CRC Salinity and Future Farm Industries CRC,

From the 16 species planted in June 2008, *Atriplex nummularia* (old man saltbush) has been the fastest growing shrub reaching heights around 100cm. Other fast growing shrubs include *Atriplex rhagodioides* (silver saltbush) and *Atriplex cinerea* (grey saltbush). According to the preliminary findings, the *Atriplex nummularia* growth has not been compromised when grown in a mixture with *Convolvulus remotus*. Shrub suitability at Walpeup is being assessed by other parameters besides height. For example, plants like *Atriplex semibaccata* are proving to be useful groundcovers that protect soils from erosion. Evaluation will continue next year when livestock are introduced to the site and data on shrub performance under grazing conditions is collected.

The Walpeup Site is funded through the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA), the Victorian Department of Primary Industry's Future Farm Systems Research Division and the Future Farm Industries CRC.

For more information, contact Mallee CMA Biodiversity Project Manager, [Karen Nalder](#) or visit: www.malleecma.vic.gov.au.



Board Directors re-appointed

Future Farm Industries CRC Directors Lucinda Corrigan, Tim Reeves, Andrew Campbell and David Sackett were re-appointed at the Annual General Meeting of Company Members held in Canberra on 12 November. Member Representatives expressed their full support and confidence in the Board, following a detailed report and discussion at the earlier Participants' Meeting on the CRC's activities and achievements for 2008-09.

Each November Future Farm Industries CRC holds a round of meetings – Board, Participants and Company AGM – where the CRC's performance is put in the spotlight. The results were impressive – 80% of milestones met, 48 articles published and another 10 accepted in journals, 43 postgrads supported with 15 joining and 21 graduating, and more than 200 extension and training activities supported or shared with Participants.

Directors and Participant Representatives had a very good discussion at a workshop on the

postgraduate students had a 100% employment rate once their studies had concluded.

Comments collected from former students support the statistics by stating that the *Professional Postgraduate Development* program has provided the right mix of personal development, financial support, mentoring, networking opportunities and hands-on experience to provide the right skill sets needed by industry. A more in depth story on the positive experiences had by postgraduate students within the CRC will feature in the December edition of *Focus on Perennials*.



New education manager appointed



Some important changes have been made to the CRC's *Postgraduate Education* and *Postgraduate Professional Development* programs. Starting Monday 14th December, Dr John Harper (above), based at Charles Sturt University, will take over from Daryll Richardson as Education Manager. In this position, John will lead the *Postgraduate Professional Development* program and continue to provide support to postgraduate students as required.

John has come highly recommended by Charles Sturt University, is passionate about supervising and assisting postgraduates and will draw upon his recent faculty responsibilities in this position. Please welcome John to the organisation.

John's contact details are:

Email: jharper@csu.edu.au

Phone: (02) 6933 2837.

The CRC sincerely thanks Daryll for doing such a great job with the outstanding Postgraduate Education program and welcome his continued involvement with the *EverTrain* project.



From the CEO:

The new *who's who* in Perth

Head Office has some important staff changes coming up. First up, A/Prof Mike Ewing has made the decision to

ramifications of the rapid decline in the national sheep flock for future research in Future Farm Industries CRC.

Excellent presentations on this issue were given by Kimbal Curtis (Department of Agriculture and Food WA), Alex Ball and Kara Tighe (both Meat & Livestock Australia) and Sandy McEachern (Holmes-Sackett) with responses provided by Bruce Cairns (Landmark) Renelle Jeffrey, (Australian Wool Innovation) and Mike Ewing, Future Farm Industries CRC. These presentations have provided the Board with good material to work through before their next meeting in February 2010. This information will also form the basis of an article in the December edition of *Focus on Perennials*.



[back to top](#)

Congratulations to Alison Bowman

Alison Bowman has been promoted to a senior research director position within the NSW Department of Industry and Investment and consequently, but reluctantly, she will resign as Future Cropping Systems Program Leader. The CRC has really appreciated how Alison has galvanised Program 2 and supervised the initiation of a challenging suite of projects. We wish her well.

A call for expressions of interest to replace Alison has already gone out. Anyone interested should contact CEO, [Kevin Goss](#).



[back to top](#)

New guide to identify sub-tropical grasses in WA



The Department of Agriculture and Food, WA (DAFWA) has released a publication to help farmers identify sub tropical grass seedlings.

retire as Research Director from 31 March 2010. You will immediately agree with me that his are very big shoes to fill: he has been such an effective research leader, adviser to me and mentor to many. I'm now calling for applications for a new Research Director to be decided by Christmas and spend the New Year picking Mike's brains. I welcome Graeme Stewart to FFI CRC as our Accountant.

Graeme comes with extensive experience in financial administration, including with one company heavily involved in agriculture. Our contract Accountant, Mildred Wong, has done a marvellous job putting new processes and policies in place over the past five months, to meet new standards required by the Board. Thank you Mildred, and welcome Graeme.

Julia Wilson, our Research Manager, will take parental leave from 6 January 2010. We will miss her greatly, although she will be back in 12 months. I have appointed Sarah Colombera to Julia's position during this time. Sarah is really keen to continue the momentum Julia has built around our project management information system.

Our CRC in 2010

Now that FFI CRC's 30 Foundation Projects are well established and progressing well, it's time to ramp up the communication of our activities across programs and the whole CRC. To achieve this, the Management Committee has agreed to a series of important events next year, endorsed by the Board:

- A round of node meetings at a regional location in each state to share knowledge from project activities
- The first of three technical conferences, most likely immediately preceding the Third Year Review in November
- Rescheduled professional development activities for postgraduates from July, and
- Continuation of special workshops associated with Board meetings. The next Board-sponsored workshop will be on woody biomass for renewable energy, including the exciting launch of the prototype mallee harvester, in Narrogin on 18 February 2010.



[back to top](#)

Third Year Review

The CRC has started working towards the compulsory Third Year Review to be held in November 2010. This is a big event in the life of a CRC where an independent Review Panel looks at the organisation from top to

Called [Identifying sub-tropical grass seedlings](#), the DAFWA Bulletin (shown above) is a valuable aid for farmers wanting to use sub-tropical grasses for out-of-season feed in the south coast and the northern agricultural regions of WA. The publication contains page by page descriptions and high-resolution photographs with captions that explain the uniquely identifying traits of grass seedlings of Panic, Rhodes, Signal, Setaria and Kikuyu, which are often sown in a mixture comprised of two or more species for best effect.

The publication has been produced as part of the *Reliable establishment of non-traditional perennial pastures species* project with funding from the Future Farm Industries CRC, Meat & Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovation, and Land and Water Australia.



UWA crop breeding course

The International Centre for Plant Breeding Education and Research (ICPBER), based at the University of Western Australia, is holding a new workshop for plant breeding professionals and students early in December.

Entitled *Optimising Evolutionary Potential Through Population Breeding – generating and maintaining diversity at the elite level in crop breeding*, the workshop will be presented by Assoc Prof. Duane E. Falk and Assoc Prof. Wallace A. Cowling.

Duane Falk is Associate Professor for the Department of Plant Agriculture at the University of Guelph, Canada, as well as an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Western Australia's School of Plant Biology. Wallace Cowling is Associate Professor in the UWA School of Plant Biology, and is Research Director with Canola Breeders Western Australia Pty Ltd.

This course will build upon previous courses in Population Plant Breeding that Duane and Wallace have conducted over the years at UWA, University Sydney, and Lincoln University NZ. It will be held between 8 -10 December 2009 at the University of Western Australia. The cost of the workshop, including lunches and morning/afternoon teas, is \$220 (inc. GST), and \$120 (inc. GST) for full-time enrolled students. Go

bottom, and may recommend to the Board of Directors changes in strategic direction and priorities for the second half of our seven-year term. The CRC expects to know the Panel's composition by Christmas. As part of this process, Amir Abadi has the job of conducting an economic impact assessment and pulling together data to meet Review Panel requirements. He will report to the CEO and a Board Steering Committee of Andrew Inglis (Chair), Kathryn Adams, Mick Poole. The whole process will be overseen by the CEO. Many program leaders, project leaders, key scientists, postgraduate students, and key stakeholders are likely to be interviewed by the Review Panel.



CRC represented on weed risk debate at Bioeconomy conference

Program 4 researcher, Dr Margaret Byrne, presented an invited talk on the Environmental Risk Management Policy of FFI CRC at the New Bioeconomy Conference held in Canberra between 19 and 21 November. The conference focused on the biosecurity issues facing emerging industries that use plants for fuel production. Dr Byrne also sat on an expert panel for a public debate on the weed risk issues associated with introduction of species used to create biofuels. The conference also highlighted a developing understanding of the need to consider all aspects of utilisation of new species early in the development of production systems. Dr Byrne said the CRC's recognition of environmental risk is acknowledged as being progressive.

"However we cannot be complacent, as there was specific criticism of the CRC by one speaker at the conference for not putting more emphasis on the weed risk of species assessed as high or medium risk," Dr Byrne said.

"This reinforces the need for further evaluation of the benefits and risk of these species to ensure informed decisions about their use."

There was considerable interest at the conference on progress made by FFI CRC with mallee production systems, particularly as they are based on native species.



[here](#) to enrol.



[back to top](#)

What's new on the *EverGraze*[®] website

Several fact sheets have been developed over the last couple of months and can be downloaded from the [EverGraze website](#).

New publications include:

- EverGraze Action - Management of native pastures
- EverGraze Exchange - Grazing systems explained
- Poster on identifying native grasses
- Southern NSW - Murrumbidgee catchment.

EverGraze is a Future Farm Industries CRC, MLA and AWI Research and Delivery Partnership.



[back to top](#)



Coming Events

Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society 2009 Conference (53rd)

10-12 February 2009, Adelaide, SA

Further information: www.alloccasionsgroup.com/AARES2010

Seymour Alternative Farming Expo

19-21 February 2010, Seymour, Vic

Further information: www.seymour-expo.com

Outlook 2010 (ABARE)

2-3 March 2010, Canberra, ACT

Further information: mfinnegan@abare.gov.au

Wimmera Machinery Field Days

2-4 March 2010, Wimmera, Vic

Further information: www.wimmerafielddays.com.au

WANTFA Annual Conference

10 March 2010, TBA

Email: kaye@wantfa.com.au

Further information: www.wantfa.com.au

2010 National Landcare Forum

23- 24 March 2010, Adelaide, South Australia

Farm World 2010

25-28 March 2010, Warragul VIC

Further information: www.lardnerpark.com.au

2010 Australian Summer Grains Conference

21-24 June, Gold Coast, Qld

Further information: www.australiansummergrains.com.au/contact-us.html

2010 International Climate Change Adaptation Conference - Adaptation Futures

29 June - 1 July 2010, Gold Coast, Qld

Further information: www.nccarf.edu.au/conference2010

Enviro 2010

21- 23 July 2010, Sydney, NSW

Further information: www.enviro2010.com.au

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