



e-news

October 2008

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*EverGraze*TM proves the worth of perennials at Field Days



EverGraze Researcher, Dr Jim Virgona, shows a curious visitor how to identify a perennial grass species at a recent *EverGraze* Field Day

With spring in the air, *EverGraze* is showing the farming communities of southern Australia the positive progress made using perennial pastures at its Supporting Sites and Proof Sites through a series of Field Days, Open Days and the *EverGraze* Roadshow.

More than 40 people attended the first *EverGraze* Roadshow at Seymour, Victoria, on 5 September. The show provided examples of a whole-farm management approach to the use of perennials, including hill country management and native pastures, and using lucerne to fill the feed gap.

At the show, Dr Jim Virgona (*EverGraze* Holbrook Proof Site Leader from Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga) presented his research findings on integrated management of native hill country pastures and more productive flats underway at the Albury Wodonga *EverGraze* Proof Site in Holbrook. Jim highlighted the fact that native pastures play an important role on hill country saying that the number one tool is grazing management.

South West EverGraze Extension Coordinator, Anita Morant (DPI Hamilton), presented results from the *Hamilton EverGraze* Proof Site. The stand-out result from Hamilton was an increased year-round feed supply and reduction in supplementary feed costs by putting the right plant in the right place. This is the crux of the *EverGraze* system which included summer active perennials such as lucerne and chicory into the farming system. Anita also presented results from one of the experiments at the Wagga Wagga Proof Site which has demonstrated increased ovulation rates in

synchronised Merino ewes grazing on summer active perennials.

To find out about what *EverGraze Field Days* or *Road Shows* are in your region, visit the [EverGraze website](#).

EverGraze – More livestock for Perennials is a FFI CRC, DPI, MLA and AWI research and delivery partnership.

CRC workshops provide insights in the real issues of farm management



Students from Muresk College watch the progress of their virtual farm business at a recent Future Farm Business workshop

During September, two FFI CRC workshops held in Western Australia have helped its participants gain a better insight to the real constraints and concerns of running a farm.

The Future Farm Business (FFB) workshops were attended by third-year students from Curtin University's Muresk Agricultural College and a selection of other interested people from WA's central wheatbelt region, including farmers and natural resource managers.

Workshop facilitator, business analyst and FFI CRC Researcher, Dr Amir Abadi (Department of Environment and Conservation WA), said the workshops are an interactive group-based simulation exercise specifically developed to help participants learn about managing a farm business under risk and uncertainty that is also subject to several natural resource constraints.

"Faced with several perennial and annual plant-based and engineering options, participants usually work together to find the best ways to manage their farms, over a 25-year timeframe, that will increase both sustainability and productivity," Amir said.

"Through my facilitation and by using a software package based on real data, participants became aware of the actual trials and tribulations faced by farmers. For example, annual variability in crop and pasture yields, fluctuations in commodity prices of annual and perennial farming enterprises along with seasonal and rainfall variations."

Amir uses a computer model that guides participants into deciding which crops to grow and what other inputs are needed, and to see how their farm responds to the seasons and market conditions.

"Once these options have been selected, the computer model demonstrates what it is like for a grower to manage their own farm by tracking consequences such as profitability, hydrology and sequestered carbon for traditional, as well as innovative land uses such as oil mallees, sandalwood, lucerne and saltbush based pastures," Amir said.

“So far the workshops have been very successful and a fun and enjoyable way for a group of growers, agronomists or finance managers to share and experience running a virtual farm for themselves.”

The FFB workshops are also timely exercises to be involved in, as they take into consideration an Emissions Trading Scheme as a potential income source for farmers and deals with the issue of sustainable use of natural resources – a concern that is becoming greater in importance because of the changing and drying climate.

The next FFB workshop facilitated by Amir will be held in November or December this year with another one planned for NSW earlier in the new year. If you would like to attend or find out more about the FFB workshops, email [Amir](#).

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From the CEO

Welcome to the October edition of e-news.

When FFI CRC won its initial funding from the Commonwealth Government in 2006, we said we would attract \$13 million of additional investment to build on the \$20 million already promised by Participants. This funding is vital for the CRC to fully realise its outcomes and provide sufficient resources to all projects agreed in the 2008-09 Annual Operating Plan.

My job is to lead this Business Growth Strategy supported by Program Leaders and enterprising Project Leaders. Already, we have made some headway securing \$2-3 million of additional funds. However, there is still much to do, as we have some great projects worthy of additional support. Currently, the CRC is developing its Climate Change Research, Education and Adoption Strategy, which will support the CRC in securing additional funding sources. This strategy's funding will not be at the expense of business growth for the existing projects.

I invite and welcome suggestions on new sources of investment in our excellent suite of projects.

Kevin

* Kevin Goss: (08) 6488 2555; kevin.goss@futurefarmcrc.com.au

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Business matters

The first FFI CRC Annual Report has been completed and will be submitted to the Commonwealth Government's CRC Program by the end of this month. The CRC also completed its first independent audit, passing with flying colours with KPMG only making minor improvements to the system.

Preparations are well underway for the face-to-face management committee meeting to be held in Melbourne on 30 October and the November Board and AGM/Participants meetings also in Melbourne on 12 and 13 November, respectively.

Also during the month, Mike Ewing was also appointed as the New Program 6 Leader and will be responsible for overseeing the CRC's economic, policy and social orientated projects.

Project commissioning has continued during October with the first two project details signed off during the month for *Weed and genetic risk* and *Understorey*. Two project Leader workshops have been run in Perth and Adelaide during October with another workshop planned for Melbourne on 31 October and a Wagga Wagga visit and workshop on 11 November.

For further information contact:

- * Mike Ewing, Research Director: (08) 6488 1876; mike.ewing@futurefarmcrc.com.au
- * Mark Stickells, Commercial Director: (08) 6488 1429; mark.stickells@futurefarmcrc.com.au
- * Christina Sanderson, Finance and Operations Manager: (08) 6488 1954; christina.sanderson@futurefarmcrc.com.au
- * Julia Wilson, Research Contract Manager: (08) 6488 1846; julia.wilson@futurefarmcrc.com.au

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Adoption & commercialisation

State adoption managers

SA Node

For further information contact:

- * Anna Dutkiewicz: (08) 8303 9735; dutkiewicz.anna@saugov.sa.gov.au

WA Node

For further information contact:

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

VIC Node

For further information about the Victorian Node contact:

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

NSW Node

For further information contact:

- * Nigel Phillips: (02) 6398 1981; nigel.phillips@dpi.nsw.gov.au

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Communication



FFI CRC CEO Kevin Goss as seen in a recent Countryman article on woody perennials

Media coverage

This month's media coverage has largely focused on the CRC's capacity to provide new technologies and farming systems to improve Australian agriculture's resilience to a drying and variable climate along with the development of biofuels. One such article entitled 'Getting Smart On The Farm' featured in the University of Western Australia's [October edition](#) of Uniview. FFI CRC CEO Kevin Goss was also interviewed for an in-depth article about the role of woody perennials in future farming systems for the WA-based newspaper, the Countryman.

Website

Work will soon begin on the redevelopment and enhancement of the FFI CRC website. The new-look website should be ready sometime early in the new year.

For more information contact Communication Manager:

* Greg Lawrence: (08) 6488 7353; greg.lawrence@futurefarmcrc.com.au

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Program activities

P1 Future Livestock Production

For further information about Program 1 contact:

* Joe Jacobs: (03) 5561 9946; joe.jacobs@dpi.vic.gov.au

P2 Future Cropping Systems

For further information about Program 2 contact:

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

P3 New Woody Crop Industries

For further information contact:

* Paul Turnbull: (03) 5441 7301; Paul.Turnbull@dpi.vic.gov.au

P4 Farming Saline Landscapes

Project profile: *Understorey*

The *Understorey* project is developing a new salt tolerant pasture legume cultivar as part of the CRC's PastureSearch initiative.

The project's research focuses on the development of *Melilotus siculus* (Sicilian sweet clover), a herbaceous under-storey species that grows well on salt-affected land. Earlier research identified *Melilotus siculus* as a legume that is well suited to improving the productivity of saline-land. However, its potential use has been hampered by nodulation failure which identified through a yellowing and poor growth of the plant. This has occurred repeatedly in regenerating plots across several trial sites and seasons in South Australia and Western Australia. Recent measurements showed about 70% of plants are failing to nodulate in the year after establishment.

Eliminating or significantly reducing nodulation failure is therefore the first research priority for this project. Considerable effort is being directed towards identifying a rhizobial inoculant that will persist in highly saline pastures. In addition, studies of various agronomic practices that may increase rhizobial survival and reduce the impact of salt are being assessed. Once these constraints are overcome, research from this project will result in the release of a new salt-tolerant pasture legume cultivar and an accompanying salt-tolerant rhizobial inoculant. This will represent a significant advancement for Australian agriculture and allow greater utilisation of this

marginal land.

For further information contact about the *Understorey* project contact::

* Andrew Craig: craig.andrew@saugov.sa.gov.au

For further information about Program 4 contact:

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

P5 Biodiversity & Water

Project Profile: *Managing Weed and Genetic Risk*

FFI CRC's research focus of developing profitable perennials for the Australian Landscape, while largely beneficial, also poses risks to the natural landscape including the establishment of plant species as weeds.

The *Managing Weed and Genetic Risk* project follows on from the CRC Salinity's weed risk policy work which established the CRC as an industry leader in weed risk management. With a focus on assessing the risk of transferring unfamiliar germplasm within Australia, the project will specifically address the weed risks of CRC test species by monitoring their persistence and naturalisation from experimental sites. It will develop genetic risk guidelines and trial hygiene guidelines to assist researchers in the use of environmental and weed risk decision tools. The project will also ensure that management guides to minimise plant and gene escape into natural ecosystems from planted stands are developed for all species promoted by the CRC.

Development of experimental site hygiene guidelines, continued risk assessment of key species, development of risk management guides for species and general promotion of responsible adoption of new technologies, will further establish the FFI CRC reputation as an industry leader in best-practice research and management and ensure environmental sustainability of new land use systems based on perennial species.

For further information contact about the *Managing Weed and Genetic Risk* project contact:

* Margaret Byrne: margaret.byrne@dec.wa.gov.au

For further information about Program 5 contact:

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

P6 Economic, Social & Policy Analysis

For further information contact:

* Mike Ewing: (08) 6488 1876; mike.ewing@futurefarmcrc.com.au

P7 Education & Training

EverTrain™ Online Begins



The EverTrain team fine tuning the CRC's online training delivery systems

There has been activity on the *EverTrain* project this month resulting in progress towards the CRC's first on-line training course. Progress was made towards an *EverTrain* business plan following input from the project team, Deb Slinger, Scott Glyde, Daryll Richardson, Paula Charnock, Tania Midgley, Kathy Tenison and Elizabeth Madden, at a recent meeting in Wagga Wagga.

Initially, a team consisting of Kathy Tension, Paula Charnock, Tania Midgley and Elizabeth Madden spent three days at Yanco developing the framework for delivering accredited, on-line training by adapting existing face-to-face courses to the *Dynamic Online Training System (DOTS)* program. Note, participants can undertake the course and choose to be assessed if they wish. FFI CRC Education Manger, Daryll Richardson, then joined the same team at Yanco for another two-day stint working on the finer points of delivering training online. For example, how to assess effectively, costing course delivery and how to make courses nationally applicable and ironing out any difficulties using the new DOTS program. The team is now applying their newly acquired DOTS skills by putting the Stage 1: *Salinity concepts* course online.

Online training, or e-Learning, is another useful tool for FFI CRC to increase adoption of research outcomes. It allows training to be undertaken using the internet and a computer, rather than through attending a course in person. It may also blend the two training methods i.e. a combination of on-line and face-to-face work.

The cost and ease of management (updating, assessing, adding new courses) by providers, and access by users, makes online training a useful option. This is especially the case when considering the location of the FFI CRC target audience, the differing capacities of states to develop and deliver training, and the growing use of computers and the internet in society. Undertaking online training allows participants to learn at their own pace and to their own timetable. It also cuts out most travel costs.

For researcher scientists, online training provides a framework for adding value to their research outcomes by developing research papers into training programs and connecting newly-developed resources to the resulting course. This also increases the accessibility of schools, universities and TAFE teachers and students to research outcomes.

For more information about CRC postgraduate students and activities contact:

* Daryll Richardson: 0409 312 574; drichardson@agaveeducation.com.au

For further information about Program 7 contact:

* Scott Glyde: (02) 6933 2385; sglyde@csu.edu.au

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Snippets

Understanding Practice Change by Farmers – a national symposium

Understanding Practice
Change by Farmers
- a national symposium

Due to a high demand for places, the venue for *Understanding Practice Change By Farmers* symposium has been relocated to the Copeland Theatre located in the University of Melbourne Economics and Commerce Building, Melbourne, on 14 November 2008 between 9am to 4pm.

If you are unable to attend, vodcasts and podcasts of each presentation will be available soon after the symposium.

For more information about the symposium, go to the Understanding Practice Change [Website](#).

Salinity Exchange Conference



The Salinity Exchange Conference will bring scientists and landholders together to talk about the lessons learnt from the past and consider where salinity is today. Those that attend the conference will have access to a collective knowledge which will be a useful resource to guide future initiatives for effective and efficient management of salinity.

The conference will be held on 19-20 February 2009 at Albury, NSW. To secure your place at the Salinity Exchange conference or to obtain further information contact Emily Brewer on (02) 6051 2211 or download a registration form from the [Murray CMA](#). A conference flyer and program guide can be downloaded [here](#)

Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations Funding Now Available

An opportunity for small groups to gain funding for executive officer salary, administration and rent along with all the other things needed to run a small organisation through the *Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations* (GVEHO) program is currently available.

The multi-year grants will allow new organisations to undertake forward planning will help cut the administrative costs of reapplying each year. Grants cover daily running costs such as office rental, utilities, office supplies, staff and volunteer training and are open to national, state/territory, regional and local organisations geared towards:

- * The protection and/or enhancement of the natural environment; or
- * The protection and /or conservation of Australia's historic heritage.

Applications are available from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts at www.environment.gov.au/about/programs/gveho or email gveho@environment.gov.au.

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Coming events

STIPA Native Grasses Association Inc 2008 Conference

9 -11 November 2008, Horsham Town Hall, Victoria

Email: vivienne.stipa@bigpond.com

EverGraze Proof Site Open Day (Hamilton)

12 November 2008, Hamilton, Vic

Email: ralph.behrendt@dpi.vic.gov.au

MLA Orange Profit Meat Day

12 November 2008, Orange, NSW

Email: lallen@mla.com.au

Understanding practice change by farmers symposium

14 November 2008, Melbourne, Vic

Email: fay.davidson@uwa.edu.au

Dubbo Weeds Conference

13 November 2008, Dubbo, NSW

Email: rnajar@mda.asn.au

EverGraze Proof Site Open Day (Albury-Wodonga)

25 November 2008, Albury-Wodonga, NSW, Vic

Email: meredith.mitchell@dpi.vic.gov.au

Salinity Exchange Conference

19-20 February 2009 Albury, NSW

Further information: www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au

2009 CRCA Conference

May 2009, Canberra, ACT

Email: ceo@crca.asn.au

Further information: www.crca.asn.au

2009 APEN Conference

11-13 November 2009, Busselton, WA

Further information: www.apen.org.au

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Feedback is always welcome: greg.lawrence@futurefarmcrc.com.au