

# Future Farm Industries CRC

Profitable Perennials™ for Australian Landscapes

Future Farm Industries CRC Media Release

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## **\$114M FOR NEW FARMING SYSTEMS TO TACKLE DROUGHT AND SALINITY, AND BOOST FARM INCOMES**

Australia is to develop revolutionary farming systems which will boost returns to livestock and cropping, minimise the impact of drought and climate change while restoring a healthy landscape.

The new approach has received approval from the Australian Government in the form of \$34m support for the Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre (FFI CRC) which will carry out research into novel dryland farming methods and industry opportunities based on perennial plants.

The FFI CRC was among research centres to receive the funding green light in an announcement today by the Federal Minister for Education Science and Training, The Hon. Julie Bishop MP.

The FFI CRC will integrate perennial plants – including native plants – into broadacre farming systems to improve profits, combat a variable and changing climate, fight salinity and generate new regional industries and jobs.

“This is a tremendously important step forward for rural Australia,” says FFI CRC Chairman Elect Andrew Inglis. “The Federal Government has clearly seen the vital importance of developing new farming systems that combine profitability with adaptation to the climate and geography of Australia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and we commend their judgement.”

CEO Designate for the FFI CRC, Mr Kevin Goss says: “The Future Farm Industries venture is about creating opportunities. Through national R&D, education and training programs we will make millions of hectares of land more productive, restore water quality and biodiversity, enhance mainstream industries – and build new ones.”

“Our vision is to transform Australian agriculture and rural landscapes by developing and applying Profitable Perennials™ technologies to innovative farming systems and new regional industries.

“These technologies are already well advanced in some areas, thanks to previous work carried in the CRC for Plant-based Management of Dryland Salinity. We’re now taking that work a giant step further, and turning it into a new approach to farming.”

The CRC’s target market is 60 million hectares of farms and agricultural businesses in the crop-livestock and the high rainfall zones. Mr Goss says: “If we convert even 10 per cent of this to the new system it will deliver over a billion dollars dividend into the rural economy.”

Potential new industries flowing from the changes to farming practices include bio-energy, timber products, charcoal for mineral processing, and seed and technology exports.

The FFI CRC is a powerful alliance backed by the grains, wool and meat research corporations, the Landmark agribusiness company, the Kondinin Farm Improvement Group, six State Government departments, CSIRO, four universities and individual Catchment Management Authorities. Together they bring \$80m in resources, leading researchers and educators to match the Australian Government's investment of \$34m over seven years.

"Times are tough over much of rural Australia at the moment, and the new CRC represents a major shot in the arm for dryland agriculture," Mr Inglis says. "It gives great confidence in our ability to shape a sustainable future for our cropping and livestock industries, and to develop robust enterprises to deliver it.

"Most importantly, perennial plants are better suited than annuals to adapt to the climate variability and soil infertility so typical of much of the Australian continent. Perennials develop deeper root systems, exploit soil moisture better, have structures that better intercept rainfall, and can alternate between dormant and growing phases depending on water availability.

"And, of course, perennial plants are a proven source of production in Australia in more intensive industries such as horticulture and viticulture. The only question is why we haven't made greater use of them in broadacre systems – and the answer is that reliable and profitable plants and systems to do so were not available.

"Well, now they will be, thanks to FFI CRC," Mr Inglis says.

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